

ENGL1102M

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****A photo taken of me and my cousins at a birthday party. From the top left to bottom right: John, Tommy, Me (Anita), and Reema.*

At first glance, most people have difficulty discerning what my race is. My name does not help matters, either. Every year since kindergarten, I have had to answer the same three questions: What are you? But if you're Indian, why is your name "Anita George"? How can you be Catholic if you are Indian? Who am I? Let's start with what I am not. I am not Native American. I am not a 'dot-head' Indian. I am not a Hispanic of any sort. I am not a mix of different races; at least as far as I know. I am not Hindu or Muslim. Honestly, to me, cows are just cows and I happen to enjoy a side of bacon in the morning. I am not, nor have I ever seriously considered being the following: pre-med, pre-pharmacy, pre-law, or pre-business. Not every Indian wants to be a doctor. In case you're wondering, I am pre-journalism. I do not speak Hindi or Punjabi.

Why does my identity seem so counterintuitive? It is because the kind of Indian most Americans are familiar with is only representative of one of many regional cultures that reside in India. India is made up of twenty-eight states and seven provinces. Travel from state to state and you'll realize what I mean. A different language is spoken in each state and different religions,

from Buddhism to Sikhism, dominate each region. Most Americans are not even aware that there are regional distinctions between Indians, that there are North and South Indians. I am South Indian. My family and I are from the state of Kerala. It is a state that is mostly comprised of Christians and Hindus that all speak Malayalam, a language that is deeply rooted in Sanskrit, the language of our ancestors: the indigenous people of India that existed before the Aryan Hindus and European imperialism.

Speaking of European imperialism, that is where the origins of my faith and name lie. Heavily influenced by the British and the Portuguese, it is no wonder that so many South Indians are Christian and have European-sounding names like mine. In addition to this, there is yet another tradition that adds a degree of complexity to my name. It is tradition amongst most South Indian Catholics to take the father's or husband's first name as their last name instead of the almost universal way of keeping the same last name generation to generation. My father's first name is "George," and so it follows that my last name is "George." His father's first name is "Chacko," and so my father's name is "George Chacko." and so on. While there may not be a continuing last name, there is still a family name that binds us all. On my father's side of the family the name is 'Pottakeril' and both my father and brother keep that name alive by using it as a middle name.

Who am I? I am a product of both imperialism and primal tradition. I am the opposite of everyone's expectations. I am Anita George.

Anita George's Introductory Reflective Essay

Remember Me

It is not enough to be "Competent, Credible, and Complete." Merely mastering the technical skills of language is not going to get you hired at today's newspapers and magazines. The syntax could be perfect, maybe even poetic. The diction might be vivid and compelling. But it's not enough. Perfection doesn't sell newspapers. If anything, that's the concern of the copy editor: to revise the paper for any mistakes. As a journalist, your job is to answer the "Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How?" of a given story, and yet be intriguing enough so that people will want to buy the paper on which that story is printed. To be a successful writer, you need to have elements of salesmanship and artistry. Talent and the brains to capitalize on it. This profession is all about getting noticed first and creating the product later.

As a pre-Grady Magazines major, I've got to take advantage of every opportunity possible to showcase my work and then some. Even in such low-visibility media outlets as the Multicultural English 1102 course at the University of Georgia, it is imperative that I hit that "Distinctive" mark every time. But even that's not enough. It shouldn't be enough. Writing is an art that can never be perfected, only constantly revised. A successful journalist can't afford to get complacent. For the minute that your writing starts to fade into mediocrity is the same moment you'll get fired. Keep it fresh, lively, and to the point. But most of all, keep it memorable. Most

people won't remember what you say or how you say it, but rather how you made them feel. What separates the average news report found on page A11 of *The Podunk Times* from a Pulitzer prize-winning one is warmth, an essence of humanity that touches the hearts of its readers— not cold, hard facts.

But that's exactly what I lacked at the start of this semester. I kept it cold, calculated, and academic. I had been trained well in high school. The act of writing was like a business transaction: the teacher placed an order and I served it up, just the way he liked it. I checked my emotions at the door when I sat down to write a paper. I came to UGA with an arsenal filled with formulas, idioms, and literary devices. A veritable rhetorical cookbook. I had writing down to a science, but not to an art. And who's going to want remember a lab report, anyway? Facts, figures, and graphs? Ew. People want to remember evocative writing, writing that they themselves can relate to. Good writing should stimulate thought, dialogue, and action about a given situation, not simply describe it.

I wanted exposure. I want my writing to have an impact. To accomplish that, I need to be remembered. But like with any other artistic vocation, I have to pay my dues. I may have to do things I'm not exactly comfortable with. I just might have to be vulnerable for once and share with the world who I truly am, flaws and all. This portfolio is an evolution— a gradual flowering wherein each work displayed is a stage in my development as an artist. Each paper successively shows the marked improvement and pitfalls that I have encountered in my endeavor to create moving, unforgettable writing.

My biography was originally a journal entry in response to a prompt that simply asked: "Who are you?" This journal entry was the first assignment of the semester, and I had every intention of making the perfect first impression. Bearing in mind Dr. O'Neal's preference for interesting yet pithy writing, I kept it relatively short and jocular. I relied on historical context, jokes, and geographical data to illustrate my points. Though all of these devices made for entertaining and informative writing, it also allowed me to remain detached. If anything, I danced around the question. I relied on my extensive book-learning to explain who I am. This piece sounds more like an anthropological study on the elusive Anita rather than the heartfelt, self-examination it should have been. It answers the question, but hinders me from establishing any sort of emotional bond with the audience. Though my biography was well-received by my teacher and peers for its sense of humor, it is unlikely that she or anyone else felt connected to me, and so it's even less likely that they will remember it years later.

Entitled "For Our Own Sake," the first revised essay I chose to include in my portfolio was a literary analysis of the poem "Julia," by Wendy Rose. Though in this essay, I remain mostly detached from the audience through my use of formal diction, conventional, syntactical structure, a dry humor, and a historical context to elucidate and bolster my thesis, there are, as my teacher often says, "nuggets" of hope. There are signs of an author breaking out of her shell, no longer shying away from taking creative risks and infusing her academic analysis with her own opinions and passions. In what was supposed to be a purely objective and analytical essay, I essentially preached my own brand of ethics, my own standards for what it truly means to be human and interwove that sermon with a rich analysis of the poem.

The second revised essay, “Juggling Apple Pies and Samosas,” is a research paper on Jhumpa Lahiri’s short story, “The Third and Final Continent.” It is an explosion of emotion, a bold statement of who I am. Maybe too bold. Here I discussed my struggle to culturally define myself as an Indian-American and reminisced about childhood travels to India. In previous drafts, it had plenty of emotion, but not enough analysis of the text. But by the final draft, the one now included in my portfolio, I was able to, although not perfectly, strike a balance between writing from the heart and writing for the sake of analysis.

Speaking of the previous drafts of “Juggling Apple Pies and Samosas,” the revision process exhibit of my portfolio focused on editing the introductory paragraph of that paper. Although it was important for me to have a balance of emotion and analysis in the essay, the main focus of the revision process was on strengthening the thesis and rendering the language more concise. The first draft was much too long. The second draft was more succinct, but still had a weak thesis and lacked any background information on the story itself. The final draft was a great deal more concise, organized, and even included a thesis that was far more prominent and informative without detracting from the personal touch that I wanted to convey.

In revising the work of my peers, I make an effort to give as much feedback as I would want to be given. Hence the title of my peer revision exhibit, “The Golden Rule of Peer Editing.” I see the peer editing process as a reciprocal arrangement: as my peers, Anne and Elena, in particular, are often better at certain things than I am and vice versa. Anne is better at making sentences more succinct and is able to catch fluency errors in my papers. Elena has a flair for personal style and content analysis. What I bring to the table, especially in Elena’s paper as displayed in the portfolio, is a comprehensive, technical review of their work. Everything from diction to syntax, from content to grammatical errors is covered in each of my peer reviews. For me, peer editing has proven to be an invaluable source of constructive criticism as well as encouragement.

By far, the most revealing and certainly the most unforgettable of my essays is my wild card, “Facing Death,” a personal narrative about the death of my grandfather. I delved deep into the recesses of my memory and finally wrote the story I’d been meaning to write for years. Once I started writing, I couldn’t stop. I’d finally been able to really tap into this reservoir of emotions, and everything just came pouring out: anger, grief, joy, love, acceptance. It was a quest for closure on a profound loss. The comparison to Michael Lasell’s poem “How to Watch Your Brother Die” lent credence to my words. The rhetoric itself, the result of my deft command of language, gave shape and clarity to the otherwise abstract concept of death. And yet, it was my candor, that unencumbered outpouring of raw emotion that ultimately sealed the bond between me and my target audience.

Ironically, as the narrative’s quest ended with the touching realization that closure is only achieved through the celebration of memories, it was that moment that my own writing became memorable.

Anita George’s Introduction to her Peer-Review Exhibit

The Golden Rule of Peer Editing

When I peer-review someone else's work, I do so bearing in mind how I would want to be reviewed. I would want the reviewer to be as detailed as possible. Style, content, grammar: the whole nine yards. In editing Elena's paper, I tried to cover all three areas as best as I could.

Stylistically, Elena seemed to have trouble with varying her diction and using her words correctly. To help correct that, I tried to suggest synonyms that might be more precise as well as diverse. I also advised her to look up some of the words that she chose to make sure that they made sense in the sentence. Syntax was another issue that I tried to point out to her. Oftentimes, I found it hard to understand some of her sentences because they were worded awkwardly, punctuated incorrectly, or so wordy that the meaning of the sentence got lost underneath piles of convoluted phrasing. To fix her syntax, I offered her alternate ways of phrasing her ideas, trying to make them more concise, coherent, and fluid.

As far as content, Elena always had good ideas, but I felt as though her analysis lacked depth and sometimes her arguments did not have a logical flow. Again, I would try to help her re-phrase her sentences but, for the most part, the underdeveloped analyses of her rough drafts left me wondering where she was going with her argument. It's hard to correct someone's analysis, if the language used to convey it impedes your understanding of it.

Elena's grammatical errors tended to interrupt the flow of her essay and distract me from her argument. Overall, they were mostly punctuation errors like missing commas, or periods or question marks. I pointed these out to her as well.

In addition to the criticisms I gave, I also made sure to praise her. Elena has a knack for attention-grabbing introductions as she directly speaks to the audience in informal tones and invites them to experience intriguing hypothetical situations.

In peer-reviewing the work of others, and being peer-reviewed, I have become more aware of my own mistakes and how to correct them. I found the peer-review process to be an invaluable source of constructive criticism. In peer editing my classmates' work as I have, I hope to demonstrate what I've learned, sharing it with those who have been so willing to help me.