

## TEACH TO LEARN

"I have just three things to teach: simplicity, patience, compassion.  
These three are your greatest treasures."  
~ Lao Tzu

I have always believed that the most efficient way to learn something is to teach it to others. Because of this belief, I intentionally look for the same mistakes in others' papers that I often find in my own when I am peer-editing. The more I began to look for specific mistakes in other essays, the more I caught myself when I made these same mistakes. During my own essay drafting, I would often find myself thinking "Oh, Sarah, if you read that in one of your classmate's papers, you'd mark it!"

In my peer-editing, the three main issues I focused on were simplicity, patience, and compassion. Well-crafted essays are simple and easy to read, and flow nicely without the distraction of extra diction detracting from the argument. As my writing developed from high school to college, I began to slowly cut out all of the unnecessary adjectives that I once thought made my paper sound smarter, but in reality took away from my main argument. When I notice others making these same mistakes, I immediately try to highlight them in an attempt to help my peers make this transition, while reminding myself to do the same. However, permanently fixing a mistake is a process. Because of this, I exercise patience when peer-editing, as repeated mistakes are great opportunities to notice where your weaknesses are and improve. Finally, I make sure to provide compassion when peer-editing. Oftentimes people become discouraged if all they see are mistakes marked all over their papers; a little bit of encouragement and acknowledgement of their strengths can make the difference between a student accepting your suggestions or rejecting them!

*The following are excerpts from a few of my peers' essays that I reviewed over the semester, broken up by sections of my different areas of focus.*

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### **Simplicity**

By establishing a sense of trust and indirect guilt, the boss confronts Gregor and his family regarding missing cash payments which cause the Samsa family to overreact and become more discontent with Gregor **as the business tyrant asserts his dominance during his time present at the Samsa house.** (Kwan, The Undeserved Fall, Draft 1)

***My Marks:*** *The portion highlighted in red is what I suggested be removed from this sentence. Over-explanation can often lead to confusion and run-on sentences, and unnecessary details can retract from the main argument.*

Gregor's motivations can be seen in the internal conflict he faces as he states "[b]ut what's the use of lying idle in bed" (Kafka 181) which is then followed by the next statement "[a]nd at all costs he must not lose consciousness now, precisely now; he would rather stay in bed" (Kafka 181). (Kwan, The Undeserved Fall, Draft 1)

**My Marks:** *When too many transition words are used within a short range, it becomes repetitive and the reader would be much more at peace with these words simply deleted. The portions highlighted in green are what I suggested be deleted from this sentence.*

Hamlet himself, however, is not the only victim of these grueling sensations as many other characters in the play experience feelings regarding these emotional components, thus confirming Shakespeare's focus on these specific emotive struggles felt by all of humankind. 2. This is a little wordy - maybe just delete this section and work it into your previous sentence saying "as protagonist Hamlet, and several other characters throughout the play, experience these emotions and motives" (Kwan, Essay 3, Draft 2)

**My Marks:** *Overall, too many filler words make it difficult for the reader to understand the point being argued by the reader. Simplify, simplify. It is better to write a concise and understandable paper than over-articulating. The section written in blue is my suggestion to my peer.*

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## Patience

Each time the ghost appeared to the watchmen, it was in the middle of the night. At night it is dark and foggy, thus making it hard to make out shapes. It is quite possible that what the watchmen and Horatio saw and thought was the 6. a ghost was actually just a mirage of fog and light in the midnight air. (Lobl, Essay 3, Draft 1)

***My Marks:** Mistakes are like history: If you do not know of them, you are bound to repeat them. However, it takes time to correct repeated mistakes, and when peer-reviewing, you must exercise patience when marking the same issue multiple times. The words highlighted in pink are what need to be changed to literary present tense.*

Although there was no turning back physically, Gregor begins to recollect his memories of being human before letting his physical manifestation overcome his past thoughts and feelings as a human being. Gregor begins to adapt to his new physical form as his mentality changes from human being to "bug brain" as Gregor begins to enjoy his newfound vermin instincts including crawling on walls and between/ 4 and under furniture. (Kwan, The Undeserved Fall, Draft 1)

**My Marks:** Similar to repeated mistakes, repeated words or phrases can create annoyance. It is with a patient mind that you must approach these repetitions, as they are easily fixed to create a stronger paper. The words highlighted in **blue** are what are repeated.

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## Compassion

Perhaps the night is prominent because the narrator prefers to stay in the dark and keep to himself, rather than the center of attention . 10 This is a great point and I think you should expand more upon how the "the night" element is related to the narrator's self-doubt and indecisiveness! (McPherson, Essay 1, Draft 1)

***My Marks:** Criticism without compassion can be more detrimental than beneficial. Critiques can be difficult, as people tend to only focus on what needs to be improved rather than highlighting what is already great. When I spot a great idea, I always try to encourage my peers to expand upon these ideas. The portion in **blue** is my commentary.*

Allen Ginsberg is one of the most revered American poets of his generation. He was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey and eventually graduated from Columbia University. Ginsberg was viewed as a revolutionary by many of his peers because of his radical political views, which often carried over into his writing. He is known for his most famous poem, "Howl," published in 1956 in San Francisco. In Part I of this lengthy

poem, Ginsberg examines many of the downfalls of American society using explicit language, **very** uncommon at the time when the work was published. Although many older critics were appalled by the diction used in Ginsberg's work, it resonated with many of his peers in the younger generations ("Allen Ginsberg"). In Part I of "Howl," Ginsberg references religious figures, sexuality and substance use, and numerous geographical locations in order to suggest the absence of meaning in American society.

1 This is a wonderful introduction! You gave background, context, and have a strong thesis by stating not just the methods he used but also why he used them. Great job!

(Condon, Essay 1, Draft 2)

**My Marks:** *When I read a well-developed section in a paper, I always make sure I comment on not only the fact that the ideas are great, but also why this section is particularly outstanding. It is important to let your peers know what they are doing right so they can continue to write the rest of their papers just as well! The portion in **blue** is my commentary.*

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## The Balance

*This excerpt from my peer Jayna Lobl's first draft of her third essay contains all three areas of focus for my peer-review process. It represents the balance of criticism and encouragement that I try to create in each review I make.*

In the play *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, the main character **of** Hamlet encounters the ghost of his father. Although two of Hamlet's friends see the ghost also, it is unclear whether it is real or just a fantasy inside of Hamlet's mind. **Shakespeare uses Hamlet's encounters with the ghost of his father to show that everyone has different ways of dealing with trauma.**

The only characters in the **show** **1** **play** who see the ghost **2** **of King Hamlet** are Horatio, Marcellus, Bernardo, and Hamlet **3** . **However** **4** , the only one who truly speaks to the ghost is Hamlet **5** ; **This is because** the ghost was created in his imagination. Each time the ghost **appeared** to the watchmen, it **was** in the middle of the night. At night it is dark and foggy, thus making it hard to make out shapes. It is quite possible that what the watchmen and Horatio **saw and thought** was **the** **6** a ghost was actually just a mirage of fog and light in the midnight air. The ghost **also** never speaks to these three men although they beg it to. This could be attributed to the fact that it is not actually the ghost of the late king Hamlet, but a collection of fog from the atmosphere. The ghost does, however, talk to Hamlet. Hamlet's first speaking encounter with the ghost occurs soon after his father's death, so it makes sense for him to use a coping

mechanism, like pretending that his father is still alive, in order to come to terms with his death. Hamlet imagines the whole conversation between him and his father's ghost as a way of getting closure after his death. 7 I like this idea! Just add examples and elaborate in your next draft. It might be helpful to talk about how Hamlet is the only one who sees the ghost appear when he confronts Gertrude in the Closet scene (3:4) as well as how the ghost confirms what he WANTS to believe (Lobyl, Essay 3, Draft 1)

***My Marks:** The marks in **red** are my suggestion that this portion be removed. The marks in **pink** are the mistakes that are repeated. The marks in **green** are complimentary, saying "great job!" and the portion in **blue** is my commentary.*