








## English 1102

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*Meredith Elder's English 1102 portfolio is centered around her growing understanding of the differences between art and writing, which becomes the theme of her Introductory Reflective Essay. Within the ePortfolio's individual exhibits, Meredith*

*demonstrates both her artistic talent (as in the self-portraits and stylish Wild Card) and her ability to reflect on and articulate important concepts in her own writing practice, most notably the importance of "links" between one idea and another, between the explication of an image and statement of a theme, and between one exhibit in the portfolio and the other. Meredith's emphasis on the virtues of linking gives the whole ensemble an impressive unity and depth of reflection.*

Meredith Elder's Portfolio	
 Pursuing My Portrait of Words	Biography
 Breaking Barriers and Beholding Balance	Introductory Reflective Essay
 A Human and a Spider	Revised Essay 1
 Escape Artistry and Other Magic	Revised Essay 2
 Review Process	Exhibit of Revision Process
 Peer Edit	Exhibit of Peer Review Process
 The Wildcard of the Wild Life	Wild Card



Self portrait – Meredith Elder

### Pursuing My Portrait of Words

The famous artist Georgia O’Keeffe once said, “I found that I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn’t say any other way—things I had no words for.” Long before I knew of O’Keeffe, I entertained a similar mindset toward art since childhood. Words never flowed naturally for me, on paper or in speech. I was never a socially savvy child; I often floundered rather than thrived when it came to expressing my thoughts. Although I am not this way today, as a child I liked to be by myself because I understood my own thoughts, and I did not have to fail at explaining my ideas to others. By

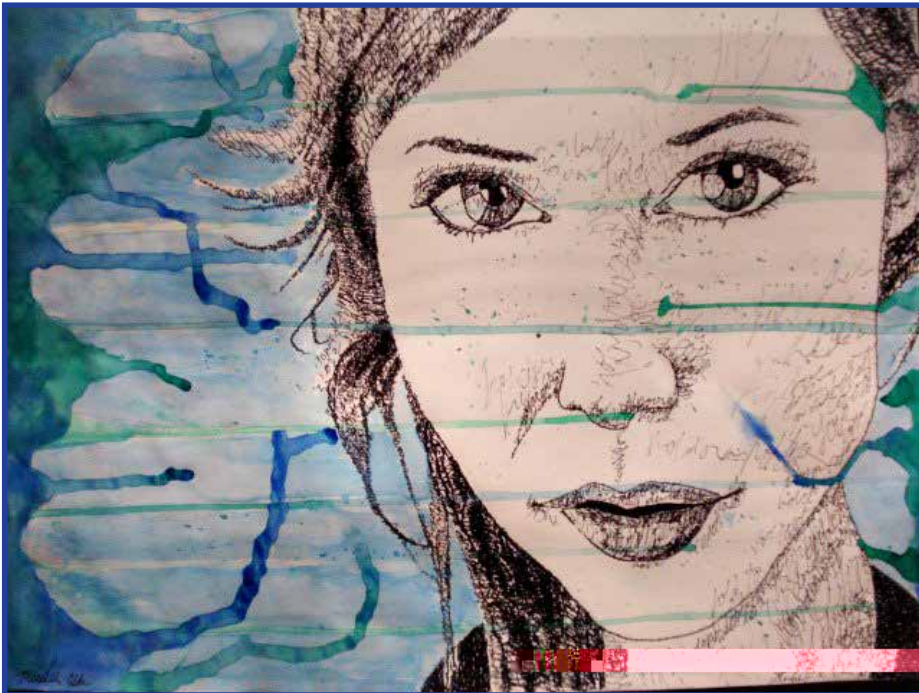
myself, I liked to draw. It was a way to escape boredom and the few stresses that existed in childhood. It was a hobby I truly enjoyed. However, it was my mother who noticed my talent in one of my sketches. It was the cover of the children's movie, *The Prince of Egypt*, and she informed me that it was exceptional for a four-year-old to draw a copy of the cover with such precision. This was the starting point of my development of self-expression.

As I grew up and learned more about myself, I embraced change and growth within my life. Through the trials and tests of the awkward middle school stage, my social skills caught up with my adolescent growth spurt. I conversed well with my peers. However, on the written page I still observed myself fumbling with my thoughts. On page, I would get stuck in circular, elaborate rants that failed to depict the insightful points I wanted to say. To solve this problem, much in the same way I first found expression in the basic shapes and colors, I attempted to break English into its more elementary components. I would write in my journal. I would write single nouns that defined me. I would hold on to verbs that characterized my mood. In attempting to learn the language of prose and poetry, I would borrow short quotes from those whose eloquent speech I admired. Expression in general became easier as I recognized clarity in the words of others, but I now needed to give back the borrowed speech and find a voice that was truly my own.

Now that I have come to the final paragraph, one might expect resolution, or for me to say that I have come to master the English language. This, however, is far from true. What is true is that I am growing. I am

chasing after words and hoping to call them my own. I am aware that my life needs not only color, but also vocabulary. I need more than lines and shapes; I need meter and punctuation. I chase after expression, and therefore I chase after the English language.

In this piece, the girl is composed of and shaded by words. In lieu of her, I now need to create my own portrait of words. However, I do not mean a literal picture; I have too many self-portraits. I need to find a way to define myself through words, sentences, and purposeful prose. Hopefully that goal will not only be evident in this portfolio, but maybe even somewhat accomplished.





The self-portrait depicts me behind a fence. It is a symbolic barrier representing the disconnection between my thoughts and my words. As explained in the IRE, visual imagery in the revision process helped me break through and find my words.

### Breaking Barriers and Beholding Balance

Less than a year ago, I had collected together all of my work to present to a panel. Unlike this writing portfolio, my previous one was full of my art. Although the two separate collections of work are not similar, I had already gained appreciation for the process and found significance

in a compilation of one's own efforts. Any portfolio is a chance to express oneself directly. Although I am only able to share my thoughts with a small percentage of this big world, I am given the chance to express myself wholly due to the freedom of topic. This is a daunting task, having one sole opportunity to say something impactful and defining. Therefore, I must choose wisely. Unanticipated reactions are sure to result from others, but new learning experiences also originate from the self in the portfolio process. In my attempts to relay myself through my work, I always manage to discover something new about who I am as a person. With my collection of art, I discovered that a good work of art must achieve a delicate balance between realism and creativity. In consideration of what I learned through my artwork, an interesting lesson came through my writing – words on paper require the same balance between innovative and logical thought, but they are to be handled far differently from any paintbrush or drawing utensil.

I quickly realized that my essays have a tendency to be more abstract in thought. I love theme and symbolism because both of these concepts are easily depicted in visual imagery. However, when written upon, both are very broad subjects that need much explanation. Artwork does not need elaboration. An artist's piece does not have a second page that the viewer can flip to and find more information. So here I was, discovering that at eighteen years of age I did not know how to sufficiently explicate. I had found familiarity in two daunting elements of literature that required elaborative skill I simply did not have. Like many other situations in life, this

was a problem that I was going to figure out in the process. This is exactly what happened. My first essay was an explication on “A Noiseless Patient Spider,” a poem by Walt Whitman, and I dissected the poem by interpreting all the visual images described—the spider, the man, and the void setting. Unfortunately, I would describe an image of the poem, and then I would move to the theme without linking the two. I unwisely hoped that the reader would notice I included certain key details and then understand the significance of everything the images were and were not. For example, I discussed a metaphor of the spider’s web, and then automatically deduced that the speaker and the spider were pursuing order:

Comparisons are made as the spider’s atmosphere is observed, then its actions, and the soul’s atmosphere is observed, and then its actions, but no conclusions are reached. The speaker yearns for organization as his detections lead to no deductions, but instead only wishes for his “gossamer . . . [to] catch somewhere.”

I failed to explain the instinctual and rhythmic method of making a web, and I failed to point out the speaker’s admiration for the spider. The confusion of my first draft was so immense that I attempted four other versions, and eventually I rewrote the essay in its entirety. In the final draft, I wrote more objectively, and I made sure to focus on the connection between the evidence and my conclusion. In this case, I felt like I literally had to chase after words to call them my own.

As previously acknowledged, I knew I could say things through art that I could not through words. However, I never imagined that visual

imagery would eventually help me find freedom of expression through written composition. This happened while revising, and this was truly my breakthrough. I began by editing my peers' papers. There was much apprehension, because I realized I had the power to positively or negatively alter the effectiveness of someone's message. I did not want to misinterpret a thesis and lead a writer astray from his goals. These concerns were rightfully considered, but they did not seem to be an issue in the end. Instead, I was able to see, objectively, what a focused thesis looked like. It needed to be established, or the whole work would lack unity, much like a focal point on a piece of artwork. More importantly, I was able literally to see the importance of the link between evidence and claim. On both my peer reviews and my own reviews I highlighted the topic, the proof, and the connection needed. I saw how this was similar to art: connecting lines are needed to make a cohesive picture. Without them, realism is not achieved, and all that exists are abstract strokes. Revision helped me to "see" the errors that prevented unity and clarity and "see" what offset the balance between abstract thought and realistic writing.

The scale is not yet set. The balance between clear realistic writing and creative prose has not been steadied. Although my writing still has room for improvement, I have figured out a key difference between art and prose that will assist me in the future. Art requires creators to express themselves and then evaluate their finished products in the end. If artists continually critique their work throughout the process of drawing, their picture becomes distorted because they follow a changed



image in their mind. Their brain shifts the original idea. Writing is different. When composing essays, writers must constantly check to make sure they are following their thesis. If they fail to check their path of writing, new thoughts invade and divert the purpose of their essays. Noticing this seems to be a definite step forward for me. In my wild card, I was able to achieve the balance of realism and innovation in both text and image. Now I can only hope that I applied it successfully to the rest of my portfolio and fully expressed myself in both writing and art. By breaking barriers and beholding balance, these portfolios will forever be markers of success, serving as physical proof of my progression as an artist and a writer.

Meredith Elder

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English 1102

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Walt Whitman, born in West Hills, New York in the year 1819, found comfort in optimism as his family struggled with alcoholism and poverty. His optimism brought about a desire for independence, learning, and self-betterment. His education and experience as a teacher brought about radical thinking on social issues, such as women's property rights and abolition. When he practiced journalism, his opinions often led to his dismissal from newspaper companies, so he created his own "free soil" newspaper and later, his famous poetry publication, *Leaves of Grass*. He introduced a groundbreaking style, free verse, which helped him gain renown for his transcendentalist thought. As his family crumbled around him, he found company in the friendship of Henry David Thoreau and other fellow writers. Whitman also found a partner, Peter Doyle, and amplified his reputation as a progressive thinker by openly embracing homosexuality. Whitman continued to write, but lost some of his trademark optimism after enduring financial struggle, family decay, wartime emotions, and sickness. Even to his last day in 1882, he continued to create and edit his poetry ("Walt Whitman Biography").

The picture shows the silhouette of a spider. The background is blurred,

and no real images are clear, but colors are vivid. This gives the illusion of possibility. The web is visible and secures the spider, but it is not bold in the picture. Our goals in life are not always visible to others, but they do suspend us where we are in life.



### A Human and a Spider: Things We Don't Learn in Science Class

Eight legs compared to two legs, endoskeletons versus exoskeletons. The poem "A Noiseless Patient Spider" by Walt Whitman reveals that there is more to compare between a man and a spider than the basics of biology class. "A Noiseless Patient Spider" is an extended metaphor comparing a spider and the speaker's soul. The spider becomes a symbol for society, and based on cultural standards the spider's successes are glorified for their efficiency. The arachnid stands on a ledge in a void area and devotes all effort to build a web. The speaker is also encompassed by the same setting. In this void space he attempts to build his own web

with philosophy, in the hope of adding order to his life, but with less success than the spider (Whitman 519-20). Whitman's poetic meaning is found in the spider's successes and the speaker's complications. In light of the void setting, the poem is about the expectations of life and reveals that ambition and success are self-defined.

The spider and the speaker, despite their different perspectives, are immersed in the same setting. The environment that they are a part of helps relay the social meaning behind the symbols of the spider and soul. The spider is on a precipice, in a "vacant, vast surrounding" (Whitman 519). The speaker's use of alliteration brings about a desolate connotation. The spider is in an expansive, yet empty and meaningless space. The speaker describes himself as being in "measureless oceans of space" (Whitman 520). The hyperbole used by the speaker creates an idea of innumerable possibilities. The image of the oceanic water brings life-giving symbolism to the speaker's environment. The simple change in perspective can be applied to society. The spider, symbolic of the norms of social life, has goals, but they are often shallow and leave one feeling empty. The speaker's soul, symbolic of free thought, may not have achieved his goals yet, but strives toward purpose and fulfillment.

In the first half of the poem, the speaker analyzes the spider, and the goals of the speaker and the spider are put in juxtaposition. The spider is driven and knows exactly what it wants to catch. The speaker "mark'd where on a little promontory [the spider] stood isolated / [the speaker]

Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding." The enjambment in the line between the spider "stood isolated" and where the speaker "mark'd" it differentiates the two (Whitman 519). The spider stands confidently and independently, knowing its instinctually instilled mission to catch food. Conversely, the speaker does not have an instinctually driven purpose, so instead he observes the creatures around him in the hope of achieving enlightenment. The spider's task may seem personified, but the speaker later describes the arachnid as "ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding [the web]" (Whitman 519-20). The anaphora implemented in the text and the parallelism of the phrases create a mundane tone. The spider works "tirelessly," which implies the spider's lack of emotion (Whitman 520). The spider's purpose of building his web entraps him in a routine. There is a reversal of roles as the very object that is designed to trap other insects entangles the spider itself, while the speaker is completely free, since he has no web at all.

Unlike the spider, the speaker does not have an instinctual sense or direction in life. He is willing to learn, and catching anything becomes significant to him. The speaker is "surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space, / Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them." The enjambment between the "oceans of space" and the phrase "ceaselessly musing" connect the speaker, more so than the spider, to his wider environment (Whitman 520). The exploratory diction of the speaker's actions seems fitting in his spacious surroundings. In a search for meaning, the speaker is more willing to embrace possibility and

learn from life than the spider is. In addition, the spider and speaker do not have the same hopes for the profits reaped in by the webs. Elaborating the speaker's own attempts to build a web, he states, "till the bridge you need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold, / Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul" (Whitman 520). The speaker does not state what he hopes to catch, but just wants something, just wants meaning. His wishes are not instinctual, but are a result of independent thinking. The speaker is truly free from the social expectations of progress and success that metaphorically burden the spider.

When a biographical lens is employed, the speaker's parallelism to Whitman unveils symbolic meaning and further accentuates the themes of the poem. The poem's setting is in a "vacant, vast surrounding" and "measureless oceans of space." Walt Whitman's works entered into a similar void as the "Father of Free Verse" experimented with the conventions of rhyme and meter by disregarding them entirely. Like the spider, Whitman used words as his "filament" and built the web of modern poetry. His disruption of the seventeenth-century poetic style is parallel to the organic web of the speaker because he introduced a more realistic method of organizing life – free verse. Not only did his writing style challenge the norm, but his philosophy did, also. Whitman was a forerunner of the transcendentalist movement, which embraced a self-reliant search for clarity ("Walt Whitman Biography"). The speaker practices transcendentalism as his "soul . . . stands" and "seek[s] . . . the bridge" in pursuit of knowledge (Whitman 520). Whitman's progressive thought corresponds to the goals of

the speaker—to form new bridges that provide new paths for society, and thus the self.

In light of Whitman’s life and transcendentalist thought, the speaker’s reference to himself takes on a new interpretation. The speaker possessively exclaims, “O my soul,” alluding to the biblical Psalms. In its original context, the phrase “O my soul” was a cry to God and an elucidation of the speaker’s humility (Whitman 520). The Psalmist would comprise verses so that the soul was the object and God was the main subject. However, in the poem Whitman cleverly uses the speaker’s syntax to make the “soul” the speaker and subject of the poem. The poem ends with a final address to the soul, and the poem becomes a hymn of praise to the speaker’s introspective quest. Whitman satirizes the conventional form of both religion and metered poetry by ending the poem in a coupled slant rhyme, “Til the bridge you will need be form’d, till the ductile anchor hold, / Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul” (520). The incongruity between this structure and the rest of the free verse poem highlights the speaker’s self-found meaning of life and criticizes current poetic norms.

The spider and the speaker (arguably Whitman’s soul) both “stand” on a precipice of some kind, overlooking the expanse of life (519–20). The expanse allows for the horizons to stretch toward a myriad of possibilities, and the elevated atmosphere allows for observation. However, observation does not mean a lack of conclusion. The delayed conclusions of life and the

undiscovered belief systems do not signify unconcern. Instead, they show a desire for quality, a desire for self. And Whitman, like the spider, holds on to present continuity in the midst of disorganization in hopes for future logic and connection. Whitman, like the spider, embraces his “noiseless, patient” self and finds peace in all measures of time. While the spider is patient for the instinctual and typical expectations of an arachnid, catching food in a successful web, Whitman is patient for the life-changing and unique unknown that awaits him.

#### Works Cited

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Whitman, Walt. “A Noiseless Patient Spider.” *Prentice Hall Literature Portfolio*. Ed. Christy Desmet, D. Alexis Hart, and Deborah Church Miller. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007. 519-20. Print.



Meredith Elder

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English 1102

12 October 2012

Escape Artistry and Other Magic: Attempts at Achieving Equality

Part-time gardener and part-time magician? The main character of John Steinbeck's "The Chrysanthemums" would probably only associate herself with the former, but some think she fits both labels. When planting her flowers and waiting on her husband to journey into town for dinner, Elisa encounters a tinker who observes her work. In reference to her chrysanthemums, he comments that they "look like a quick puff of colored smoke" (Steinbeck 221). Although she finds passion in planting her flowers and feels accomplished because of her physical labor, her work has no significance other than wasting time while she waits for dinnertime. Like a magician's illusion, her toil over the flowers in the garden is a simple illusion of a female accomplishing masculine work. The stranger does a service in both the mending of pots and bringing a realistic mindset to Elisa, and then leaves. Elisa attempts to find a position in a male-dominated society and a sense of self-support in a world in which everything is provided for her. In Steinbeck's short story, motifs recur in the story to reveal Elisa's search for individualism and her entrapment by money and gender.

Before Elisa's role is evaluated, the relationship between work and value must be established. In today's society, and even more in the Depression-era setting, work is deemed significant when money is exchanged. Power is achieved when a person can complete valued work and receive a sense of earning from his or her efforts, not simply when money is in his or her possession. Power requires a sense of self when earning currency. With this thought in mind, the attempts at meaningful work by both the male and female gender are seen through various motifs, such as the gloves. The stranger has "cracked" and "calloused hands," which are symbolic of experience and use (Steinbeck 221). Elisa's physical characterization notes that unlike the men who surround her, she protects her hands. It is not until the tinker seems to show respect for her chrysanthemum bed that the "gloves are forgotten" (Steinbeck 222). It takes a form of connection with the masculine world for her to truly understand how men act, without gloves. There is a disconnection existing between Elisa and true self-fulfilling work. The gloves show that Elisa is powerless without a male; by herself, Elisa's effort brings no source of income or self-support. There is not even physical evidence of work on her hands.

Elisa is not described as the typical woman, delicate and helpless; however, she does not achieve the same look as the men she encounters.

Instead, she is described as wearing a disguising outfit, and her attempts at masculinity are seen through the motif of the hat. When working, she “touched the under edge of her man’s hat, searching for fugitive hairs.” An inability to suppress her womanhood is noted as she fails to hide her hair. Under the hat, Elisa attempts to veil her trait of femininity, her lengthy locks. The headpiece is considered a “costume” making her appear “handsome” (Steinbeck 219). Elisa only removes the hat after the tinker shows interest in the flowers, and Elisa removes her guard. Elisa is only described in her attempt to appear masculine; she is never described objectively according to social rank and power, as the men in the story are described. Both men wear a suit, although they are contrasted with one another in appearance. The tinker’s suit is “wrinkled and spotted,” while that of Elisa’s husband’s is “laid . . . on the bed” with “polished shoes” (Steinbeck 220, 224). The two men provide a depiction of the range of social classes in the male world of the Depression era, while Elisa wears a dress that is protected by an apron. Elisa’s apron separates her from the dirt and grime of the world and keeps her feminine attire hidden. Her clothing continues to symbolize her separation from physical labor and her attempt at achieving masculinity. Work and money seem to be completely unconnected to the woman’s actions because she is always spotless, reflecting the status of her husband’s earnings, not her own.

The motifs of pots and flowers in the short story reveal the differences in the male and female roles in the realms of power and

wealth. The tinker deals with mending various pots and kettles, and Elisa connects with him as she brings him a delivery of chrysanthemums in a pot. The tinker also connects to Elisa's hobby of gardening as he rides up to approach her, his donkeys "droop[ing] like unwatered flowers" (Steinbeck 220). However, this connection between the two characters seems to only further emphasize gender role stereotypes. Both genders rely on one another—males to fix and repair and females to bring life and revitalization. Unsatisfied with the typically submissive duties of women, Elisa feels that "the chrysanthemum stems seemed too small and easy for her energy" (Steinbeck 219). Because she relates to the tinker on the topics of pots and flowers, her mindset explains why she has enough confidence to challenge the tinker. After seeing a correlation between mending pots and gardening, she over-assumes the similarities in gender and confidently claims that the tinker "might . . . have a rival sometime" (Steinbeck 223). Elisa believes in her social equality in both work and money, but her desire for feminine empowerment through a self-supportive career soon becomes crushed under a male's aggressive pursuit of authority.

The connection between power and earned money can be viewed in the act of sex; it is sometimes an aggressive act of taking what one wants for personal benefit. The exploitation involved between both genders is revealed through the motif of the fence. Elisa is unaware of her simple, yet profound behavior in regard to the gate. Inside the protection of the fence, she "came through the gate to watch him while he pounded out the dents in the kettles" (Steinbeck 223). By leaning on the fence and tempting her

out of her illusion-based world of work (planting her meaningless flowers), the tinker overpowered Elisa. After a mere conversation, he metaphorically rapes her, leaving her “crouched low like a fawning dog” (Steinbeck 223). The tinker gains power by taking away Elisa’s independent spirit. Elisa watches him ride away, and only after he leaves can she “shake herself free” (Steinbeck 224). Trauma occurs when an event causes sudden shock and manipulates the psyche. Elisa has just experienced trauma, completely changing her behavior and outlook on life, similar to rape victims’ behavior. Scarred, Elisa retreats inside. Left to deal with the emotional struggle, she sorts through differential gender roles by priming her appearance and inquiring about a fight. Seeing the discarded female motif of chrysanthemums finally brings Elisa to reality, leaving her crying because of violation and disrespect by the tinker. Elisa is deeply offended, and she is suddenly aware of the entrapment and insignificant reputation of a 1930s female when the tinker disregards the chrysanthemums and only exploits her for her pots.

The gender confusion Elisa faces throughout the story can be blamed partially on all the male influence around her. Not only are all the characters masculine, but all the objects surrounding her have the same connotations. The motifs of the motor represent male industry. The husband “starts” the motor, and Elisa’s voice is drowned out by the sound (Steinbeck 224). In order to thrive in a male dominated world, Elisa uses scissors in her work: “She was cutting down the old year’s chrysanthemum stalks with a pair of

short and powerful scissors” (Steinbeck 219). The idea of sharpness seems to remind Elisa of masculine power, so she attempts to relate to the tinker around the idea of the sky being “sharp-pointed” (Steinbeck 223). However, despite all of her efforts of assimilation to her male surroundings, the tinker utilizes the idea of sharpness more effectively by metaphorically “nipping her at the bud.” As Elisa cuts down the flowers, he cuts down her dreams. He violently uses the masculine idea of “sharpness” to cut short Elisa’s attempts at self-sufficiency and take away her power.

The recurring motifs show how in society, the female role is devalued and the male role is elevated. The debasing of the female gender is seen through the interaction of motifs leading up to the literal transfer of money. Value is literally passed from female to male as Elisa gives the tinker money for mending pots. In addition, the male role is simply emphasized through the typical treatment of women. By winning Elisa’s favor and then discarding her treasured flowers, the tinker not only reveals woman’s placement in a man’s world, but also trashes the ideal luxury of women, i.e., gardening. The Depression era view of women was literally subpar. What does this say about the human race? Does society have a gender preference? No, society is an asexual term, but the idea of gender explains some aspects of society. Elisa’s exploitation clearly explains that money does not simply mean power. Elisa had unusual access to money in the depression; however, her status and comfortable way of living actually heightened her sense of weakness in light of the tinker. Because she was not required to support herself, having money only produced in Elisa a

state of continually looking for a place to feel needed. The relatively poor tinker gained authority in his ability to earn for himself and take from others, both by obtained currency and the sense of self-worth he stole from Elisa. Steinbeck thought that an individual's purpose was found in sole dependence on the self; however, as an objective writer he neither fought for or against the woman underdog of the Depression era in her attempts to simply find her place of belonging.

#### Works Cited

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## Meredith Elder – Reviewing Process

Key:

**Pink** – needs link; **Green** – additional information; **Yellow** – fixed link

*In this draft, I add ideas that are deep and interesting. However, I do not have any “links” whatsoever. Typical of my writing style, I give evidence and then jump to the conclusions. I explain the motif of the gloves, and then state how gloves are not masculine. I explain the motif of the hat, and then state how it is masculine. I explain the motif of Elisa’s apron, and then state how it separates her from true labor. I fail to explain HOW the motifs work to relay symbolism. I also try to fit too much information into one paragraph.*

*The places needing links are highlighted in pink.*

Draft 3

The evidence of work in both the male and female gender is seen through various motifs, such as the gloves. The stranger has “cracked” and “calloused hands,” symbolic of experience and use. Elisa’s physical characterization notes that she protects her hands unlike the men who surround her. It is not until the tinker seems to show respect for her chrysanthemum bed that the “gloves are forgotten.” **It takes a form of connection with the masculine world for her to truly understand how men act, without gloves.** Her attempts at masculinity, however, are seen through the motif of the hat. When working, she “touched the under edge of her man’s hat, searching for fugitive hairs.” The inability to suppress her womanhood is foreshadowed as she fails to hide her hair. Under the hat, Elisa attempts to veil her trait of femininity, her lengthy locks. **The headpiece is considered a “costume” making her appear “handsome,” and the tinker**



is aware, more so than Elisa, of the façade. Elisa only removes the hat after the tinker shows interest in the flowers and Elisa removes her guard. The inability for a female's work to be significantly noted is evident in the physical characterizations of the two men apparent in Elisa's life. Both wear the motif of a suit, except they contrast in appearance. The tinker's is "wrinkled and spotted" while her husband's is "laid . . . on the bed" with "polished shoes." The two men show the spectrum of work and money in the male world of the depression era, while Elisa wears a dress that is protected by an apron. Evidence of work and money seem to be completely unconnected to the woman's actions, as she is always spotless and reflects the status of her husband.

*As I edit and revise, I realize that I did not take time to explain the connections between money, power, and gender, so I fix this in the beginning of the paragraph (green). I did not previously consider that the reader brought his or her own connotations to my essay; therefore, I explain my perspective on these social issues. I also separate some of the material from the paragraph and move it to another spot in the essay. I try to discuss too many motifs too quickly, compromising my explanations and links. My final is much better than the draft, but it still needs improvement. Some links have been explained further (pink), but more are needed.*

Final Draft

Before Elisa's role is evaluated, the relationship between work and value must be established. In today's society, and even more in the Depression era setting, work is deemed significant when money is exchanged. Power is achieved when a person can complete valued work and receives a sense of earning from his or her efforts, not simply when money

is in his or her possession. Power requires a sense of self when earning currency. The attempts at meaningful work by both the male and female gender are seen through various motifs, such as the gloves. The stranger has “cracked” and “calloused hands,” symbolic of experience and use (Steinbeck 221). Elisa’s physical characterization notes that she protects her hands unlike the men who surround her. It is not until the tinker seems to show respect for her chrysanthemum bed that the “gloves are forgotten” (Steinbeck 222). It takes a form of connection with the masculine world for her to truly understand how men act, without gloves. There is a disconnection existing between Elisa and true physical labor.

*In the final version for the portfolio, I decide to add a transition in between the explanation of work, money, and gender and the evaluation of these themes in Elisa’s role (yellow). Without the transition, it could easily seem like I was skipping to an unrelated topic. However, the transition alerts the reader that I was connecting Elisa to these themes later in the paragraph. When I discussed the gloves in relation to her self-sufficiency, I add more explanation. Previously, I did not give a link between the gloves and her self-sufficiency. However, in the portfolio final I attempt to explain, how with gloves, no evidence of masculine work is seen—in a paycheck or on her hands (yellow). I feel that with these changes, my portfolio final is very strong. By focusing on my links, I think my strong ideas are explained clearly.*

#### Portfolio Final

Before Elisa’s role is evaluated, the relationship between work and value must be established. In today’s society, and even more in the Depression era setting, work is deemed significant when money is exchanged. Power is achieved when a person can complete valued work and receives a sense of earning from his or her efforts, not simply when money

is in his or her possession. Power requires a sense of self when earning currency. **With this thought in mind**, the attempts at meaningful work by both the male and female gender are seen through various motifs, such as the gloves. The stranger has “cracked” and “calloused hands,” symbolic of experience and use (Steinbeck 221). Elisa’s physical characterization notes that she protects her hands unlike the men who surround her. It is not until the tinker seems to show respect for her chrysanthemum bed that the “gloves are forgotten” (Steinbeck 222). It takes a form of connection with the masculine world for her to truly understand how men act, without gloves. **There is a disconnection existing between Elisa and true self-fulfilling work. The gloves show Elisa is powerless without a male; by herself, Elisa’s effort brings no source of income or self-support. There is not even physical evidence of work on her hands.**

## Peer Edit

*A classmate wrote an explication on Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "The Mother," and his thesis claimed that the purpose of the poem was to present opposing sides on the issue of abortion in order to show the true complexity of the issue. In addition to looking for grammatical errors, my job in this particular peer review was to evaluate the claim, the supporting evidence, and link between the claim and evidence of each paragraph. The claim was highlighted in yellow, the evidence in green, and the link in red. This process was done so that Thomas could have a better understanding of how well he delivered his point to his intended audience. Not only could he see whether he was clear, but also whether he was unified in his points. Basically, he got to see the thought processes and interpretations of his work through the audience's perspective.*

*Since, as previously noted, I am a visual person, being able to see the link in the paragraph helped me tremendously. Although I can only hope I helped Thomas, I know peer reviewing did wonders for me. I was struggling with the clarity of my paper, and due to this process of revision, I ended up rewriting my own paper entirely because I had gained such an understanding for the importance of a verbal "link." I realized that I had been skipping from claim to evidence and hoping my audience would make the same leap with me and follow*

*my thoughts. This makes sense, because in art no link is needed. An artist has an idea, and the artist makes it evident through the finished product. The closest equivalent of a link is the very act of making your piece and physically drawing in the meaningful details; therefore, clarifying a "link" is not needed. Maybe the greatest lesson I've learned is that visual art is a completely different method of communication, and I am silly for trying to apply the same skills to a different form of expression. Unlike art, I cannot rush to the point in the hope that it will speak for itself. I must speak on behalf of my point. Writing is so thorough and meaningful that literally every ounce of a thought needs to be expressed to truly relay my idea.*

In the poem, the rhyme scheme is, for the most part, aa-bb, which could allude to the consistent heartbeat of the human heart. That allusion enhances the poem's idea around the aborted child, so by creating a steady rhyming style, it can reference a human heart, which only further backs up the mother's regret of aborting her child. Also, in tandem with the concept of the rhyme scheme equating the human heart, the consistent rhyme scheme pushes forward the mother's regrets of aborting her child, and it allows for the intended audience to continually feel the mother regret. For example, "Abortions will not let you forget. / You remember the children you got that you did not get, / The damp small pulps with

Comment: of

Comment: Needs to be possessive

a little or with no hair, / The singers and workers that never handled the air." (Brooks, *The Mother*) Lines one through four show the aa-bb rhyme scheme and the way it pushes the idea through the poem at a consistent rate. In this case, it begins to solidify the mother's remorse, and possible regret, in having the abortion. By showing the mother's remorse at a consistent pace through the rhyme scheme, the mother's remorse is confirmed because of its continuity.

"You" and "I" are used consistently throughout the poem to allow the poem to be some sort of elaboration on the mother's behalf of why she aborted her child. The familiar informal pronoun usage creates a sense of closeness that is usually held within a family, which is accurate because the poem is intended to be in between a mother and her deceased child. For example, "If I stole your births and your names" (Brooks, line 7). This quote from the poem shows that the mother is remorseful for her action, as evident by her use of the "I" because it gives the poem more sincerity. When describing the aborted child she never uses a common noun because that would be impersonal. (*Paragraph continues.*)

**Comment:** This sentence combines the ideas of the last two sentences. Slightly repetitive, but I like the way you say it here the most.

**Comment:** It would be less wordy if you simply said "as an."

**Comment:** Maybe your point would be clearer if you changed "elaboration" to "explanation."

**Comment:** It might be easier to talk about point of view (because it leads to the use of certain pronouns), and how that perspective leads to a closeness.

**Comment:** Delete.

**Comment:** Needs "is."

**Comment:** How does line 7 and the use of informal pronouns show sincerity of the mother? Elaborate. Maybe if you continued the quote. If the speaker "stole births," then what? Allow the reader to know what is in result of the speaker's "if."

This poem uses the mother's experience to show a more personal experience with abortion, and the poem does not follow the pro-life agenda. The mother never explicitly states that she wishes she could have not aborted the baby. She was just sad for stealing away the life of the individual. During the poem, the mother states missed experiences of the aborted child and how she never forgets about the child, but there are some instances where she does not think that abortion was necessarily an immoral action. The instances are characterized by anaphora throughout the poem. The word "if" begins these phrases as shown here in the text: "If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths," (Brooks). This phrase show uncertainty on whether or not the mother believes she killed her child, which reflects society's complicated view of abortion because of whether or not abortion is considered murder. By using anaphora, the narrator hints to the opposition's view of abortion because that allows the poem to address the complexities within the topic of abortion. Ultimately, these doubting phrases are not the main focus of the poem because afterwards, the narrator shifts back to the remorse regarding her abortion (Brooks).

**Comment:** Replace with "and."

**Comment:** Who?

**Comment:** I feel like you could elaborate even further on how the anaphora creates a sense of doubt. At the end of the paragraph I think it would be helpful to explain why the uncertainty of the poem is important.

*Original Comments to Thomas: I think you do a great job explaining how it is a complicated connection between the mother and her aborted baby. I think the links between your claims and evidence are strong, but I think that you could work on making your claims more cohesive as a whole. Your topic sentences could be tied closer together to back up your original thesis and to bring more unity to the entire essay.*





### “The Wild Life” Series

This series was a positive outlet for my battle between realism and innovation. I was able to depict wildlife animals accurately, but I put them in absurd situations that are only fitting in human culture. This series shows the reason why I struggle with writing clearly. The stroke of a squirrel’s tail and the shading of an alligator’s scales are simple for the audience to view. (Continued below.)



... However, writing an essay requires reinforcement. Reasoning is required, and a writer must be ready to address counter-arguments and defend his or her case. Unlike an artist (whose viewer interprets a single image), a writer must lead the reader to his or her conclusion through various points, which all must be sufficiently supported. Although I struggle with my writing, because of this series I know the balance between abstract and logical thought is possible.

