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Who I Am as a Writer

Coming from music, I know improvement when I see it. It's not as obvious during the process, but rather when you look at how far you have come. Walking into English 1101 on the first day, I did not consider the fact that this would be the year I truly realize my potential as a writer. With every assignment and reflection, I became more aware of the differences between an exceptional piece of writing and a mere paper with words on it. Although I am still striving to write my own exceptional piece, I appreciate the improvements I have already made. In fact, my goals are not to just get a good grade but to really write with passion and feel a sense of pride for every assignment I turn in. And with every new skill I learn, my pride goes up and my love for this art form flourishes. Throughout my time in English 1101, I have improved the way I write to a specific audience while still using my own voice and learned how to properly revise my work, but I am still working to develop my cohesiveness.

Throughout high school, I wrote my essays solely for my teachers, believing they were my only audience. I did not consider who else may be interested in what I had to write, only those who were handing me the grade. This made writing more of a chore for me rather than a pleasure. However, that shallow mindset was adjusted when I entered Ms. Taylor's English 1101. I was told to look further and really figure out who would benefit from my paper. By thinking about a greater purpose, I began to enjoy writing and even took pride in a lot of my work, since it was more meaningful. You can see in my First Revised Essay that I had a very clear idea of who I was writing towards. The essay itself is about the Malaysian airline that went

missing in 2014, and it is presented in the “stoner” format. In one excerpt of the assignment I state: "So I made a tweet about it just being like 'Lol, guess what I found' and posted the voicemail and the coordinates and a lot of people started agreeing with me! But this is when it gets messed up, dude. I started receiving texts from an unknown number in a different language." If my audience were to be my teacher, I most likely would have made a lot of adjustments and formalized it. However, since we were encouraged to look past our educators, I was able to be more creative than that. Instead, my targeted audience was anyone that cared for conspiracy theories or just looking for a laugh. Not only has this made writing more enjoyable in the long run, it also has given me the opportunity to explore different varieties of writing. Although I could write in the “stoner” format all day, I am now aware that not all essays will be that casual. For example, in my Revision Exhibit, I had to start almost completely over because of the lack of formality. My paper originally started with, “fact about me: before attending the University of Georgia, I attended the New England Conservatory of Music as a French horn performance major.” Although I ended up using that same sentence in my brief reflective essay, it was not a standard opening sentence for a research proposal. After a lot of trial and error, I successfully ended with: “Students in the arts have a unique education. It’s less about studying textbooks and slideshows than it is about practicing their craft for hours and hours a day in hopes of a perfect product.” Through this process of having to adapt my writing, I learned that I cannot get used to one “correct way” of writing, because I will always need to adjust depending on the audience. My first essay was directed towards people looking for a laugh, but my second was for people that want to learn what I have to say. So, now having more knowledge on audience awareness, I know I can’t use the same approach of writing when addressing two completely different audiences.

Prior to English 1101, the way I wrote my essays was the same way I did my laundry. As soon as I started, I would lose myself in the task and not stop until the whole chore was complete. Although this worked for convenience sake (i.e. Getting it out of the way early), I found myself not being able to revise a whole lot because of this. I would write everything I wanted to write and left no room for other considerations. This made it hard when I received feedback because I didn't know how to incorporate new suggestions. English 1101, however, took me out of that mindset. This course challenged me to not only break down my assignments step-by-step, which forced me to put in more thought, but also compare my work to others in a constructive way. In my Second Revised Essay (also titled: *A Major Change in Life*), I had to make a lot more adjustments than I've ever been pressed to do before. For example, my thesis was one of the pieces that took the most shaping. It originally stated, "So the question becomes: do students majoring in an area of fine arts (theatre, music, dance, etc.) have a higher rate of dropping out than students in any other major?". The problem with this thesis was that it didn't fit the tone of my essay. I spent quite a bit of time figuring out how to adjust the wording and making it flow fluently from beginning to end. My final product ended up being: "By analyzing the psychology of people in the arts and comparing it to the main causes of dropout, it will be clear if students majoring in fine arts have a higher dropout rate than students in more traditional majors." Although the changes aren't extreme, it took a lot of persistence and trial and error to get to this new thesis. There are obvious adjustments that can still be made, however, I am very pleased with how far I was able to take my revisions on it.

Another factor that assisted my improvement at making revisions was through peer review. In my Peer Review Exhibit I state how "most of my comments are about the flow of her paper. I paid attention to the length of her sentences and whether or not they fit where she originally placed them." This is in reference to the revisions I made to my peer's paper (*The New*

Age of Activism by Shloka Danave). Cohesiveness is another technique I'm still working to improve, so reading someone else's paper and being able to identify where it gets disjointed benefited me just as much. I was able to go back to my own paper and look for areas that might sound perfect to me, but only because that's how I would hear it. It was almost like reading my paper through a different lens. I fell into a hole where I would read my paper with a filter. I avoided the errors and just agreed with myself, but unfortunately, that's not how you revise an essay. You have to read it like it's the first time you're reading it and like it's not your own baby, but rather something that can be improved in many ways.

I've made lots of improvements within a short amount of time and I could not be prouder of myself. From being able to confidently identify an audience to being able to make complete revisions on my assignments, I have a whole new confidence towards my writing abilities. However, with all I have improved, I still have lots to learn. One skill I wish to better in the future is my cohesiveness. My flow from sentence to sentence, making sure not to lose the reader. I was taught in English 1101 to write like I'm having a conversation, which made it feel more natural, but I am aware that I'm only at the beginning of this practice. For my Wildcard, I ended up writing a script from a movie, which is an actual conversation between characters. This helped me practice how I should write my essays because each sentence needs to connect the same way lines do from a script. **MR. NOPHUN:** Then how did you learn? Did you even learn about ethos, pathos, or how to write an I.R.E.? **BRADLEY:** We did! But not the traditional way. **MR. NOPHUN:** Fine. Well, since there is only one way, I guess we'll have to begin again. Who can tell me the difference between an Oxford comma and a Harvard comma? *Suddenly, a knock on the door interrupts class.*" In this excerpt from my Wildcard, each line feeds off of the other and keeps the plot moving. Although this is a different style of writing, the idea of a constant movement from the first sentence to the last in a connecting manner is exactly how an

essay should be written. I know this skill will manifest itself over time with more practice, so I am confident that I will improve.

Compared to a few years ago, I was stressed out any time I needed to turn in a revision due to my lack of technique, but now I am prepared to revise all my future essays. Throughout my time in English 1101, I have learned skills I never knew I had and created goals that I plan to strive towards. Although I still have a long way to go before I publish my first best seller, I am excited to see what the future holds. Especially when I walk into English 1102 and make completely new discoveries about my writing and myself.