



**A Life in The Presence of 2020**  
- Mohammed Hashim

## Final reflection

We have come a long way after the covid lockdown, I had a feeling we were going to stay indoors and take online classes for a semester or two at least. The beginning of this semester was when I found out that 2 of my classes were asynchronous. I was a little afraid of the asynchronous classes because I have never taken them before and I wasn't sure how well I would do in this state. Then I started receiving emails to login to CityTech OpenLab and there we started the journey for this asynchronous creative writing english class. At first we started off with this "meet my\_\_\_" assignment that the professor wrote of her own and we followed with our own version. I think the "Meet My\_\_\_" assignment was a great ice breaker for a class discussion and for a chance to meet the other classmates that I was going to spend the rest of the semester with.

At the beginning of the class, everyone was introduced to different cohorts. Likewise I had 3 cohorts that helped me with feedback in order to fix my assignments for better revision. By viewing my classmates' work, and with the help of my cohorts, I was able to write better. I've always thought writing was much more difficult at the beginning of the semester. But once you get started with writing different types of journals, stories, poems and such it becomes easier. Writing doesn't scare me as much as it did before. The more you write the better you get at it especially if you have classmates/cohorts to compare it to. Sometimes you may not be good at certain specific assignments but you can get better at it by the help of your cohorts/classmates and

there are many different types of assignments that we were given and certainly there's something for everyone's liking.

My favorite assignment has to be the poems I wrote because I remember writing them in the morning with a clear head and the poems just sort of came to me while I was in bed and reading my cohorts poems gave me ideas of how my poems should look. To me the titles were what mattered first then the words backs up the titles of the poems. It was different writing poems, I haven't done poetry writings like that before. There's a first time for everything and I am glad we got to write poetry in this class and share it with the others. As a writer I've learned that even I can get better at writing with a little bit of increased effort and practice. It's even easier if you have someone to give you feedback on your writings. And as a reader, I've got to read more because I get bored of reading too much and distracted. I have realised that reading helps you with your own writing style and how you can improve them by reading and learning from the other writers' work.

Just like that every week we had different assignments to write/discuss about. The memoirs, short stories, journals, dialogues etc. Every week was something different to expect and there was something for everyone to write about and express their perspectives and the way they see things or experience. We were all in this together and worked our way till now to see how much we have completed and turn in a whole portfolio with the best of our works. If I was told that we were supposed to turn in a portfolio full of our own writings/assignments at the beginning of the semester, I'd have

been more afraid of the classworks because I wasn't sure what to expect in this new asynchronous environment. I never liked writing a lot, like a long essay and such because I'd run out of things to say at some point so the paper wouldn't turn out well. However throughout the semester I've figured that we were all just telling our own little stories on openlab or sharing to our cohorts. It was more interesting this way by writing little by little over the semester to make it into a portfolio. I've viewed this class like a weekly routine of just visiting openlab and viewing the weekly assignment details to complete what is asked for over the night.

Revising assignments has been difficult for me at first because I didn't like the idea of going back and fixing my completed assignment. Regardless whether I liked it or not, it made more sense to revise because my cohorts/classmates always gave me pointers on my assignments that needed a little more to them. Little feedback, questions are always helpful when you are working on an assignment for an asynchronous class. Some feedback that stood out to me were working on introducing characters through dialogues or little conversations, and to expand the stories in paragraphs more. I've learned that revision can take time but if you put in the work your paper will turn out to be much better for the audience to grasp and enjoy. I will be able to use what I learned from this writing class in my other college classes in the future, I'll be better at describing and expressing myself through writings to others.

No matter how you look at it, this semester has been rough on everyone. It was really challenging to complete classworks, assignments or homeworks on time without

any distractions because we are all at home with nothing to do but be on our phones and other techs. So many distractions that I ended up turning in some work assignments late. It was also really annoying to receive this many emails about different classes and school stuff. A lot of the times my outlook email app gets really unorganized and filled with tons of emails that most of the time I don't even get to view them. Overall it was a weird and tough year. I still can't believe that the year 2020 is about to end and we are still battling a deadly virus throughout the world. We've overcome a lot this year together. I am just glad even with the hardships in this semester we were able to complete it and come this far to finally end the year and see what the future holds for us.

## **Memoir #2:**

Looking back I have always had my own little circle, no matter which schools or environment I lived in. I can still remember the first time I started attending middle school in the US. I started as a 7th grader to comply with my age and my studies back home. I was excited and terrified at the same time because I didn't know English to begin with. Another obstacle I had was that it was really difficult for me to get around, in school and out because I wasn't familiar with this environment. The school board had put me in a class with other English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. It's for students to start learning English with the help of a professional ESL teacher. I had to find people who spoke the same language (Bangla) as me so we can speak and help each other get through with our days in school. I spent quite a lot of after school hours over the years in middle school to master English language. I was close to my ESL teacher because we've spent a lot of time together learning and teaching. It took me about 2 years to finally break my language barrier and be more comfortable speaking it. By the end of 8th grade I could speak pretty easily and talk to anybody I wanted to but that doesn't mean I wasn't nervous to do so. However I've met two of the best people in middle school, they ended up becoming my best friends and we still hang out and go strong for about 6 years. I am really glad that I met Tanim and Siyam, my two best friends to this day and in the coming future.

I was still in my own little shell until I went to High School. I had to leave all my old friends in my middle school because they chose a different high school to go to. It was easy to meet new people and talk to during lunch hours and gym, so I had my own little circle in my first high school I went to as a freshman. I loved my freshman year,

with new faces, new environment and new opportunities. The school was 7 minutes walking distance which is why I chose to go there first. Sadly after my first year in that high school I had to change to a better school for better education.

As I started attending a new school with a new shell full of nervousness and shyness because freshman year is the year you meet new people and have your own circle you hang out with. Since I started as a sophomore in my new high school it was really hard for me to know new people and converse with. I left all of my old friends in Transit Tech to a school full of strangers that I have never seen or imagined of meeting. As the year proceeded I did meet people, like last time, in my lunch period. Then I started getting along with people from my different classes as the school years went by and I graduated with my own circle that I have met throughout the school years and some of us still chats and we hang out from time to time. I enjoyed my gym, lunch periods and after school the most throughout my school life. I'm really grateful for my senior year, the year with a lot of fun memories with the people that I've befriended. I've lost touch with my freshmen year's friends over the years but I'll always appreciate them. By going through so many friends and schools it was easier for me to talk to people and make friends. Before it was hard for me to approach people but now it's much easier.

## **Short Story #2: The Last Snow Day**

I believe it was at the beginning of the year 2020 that me and some of my friends got to enjoy the last of the snowdays in NYC. It was 4 in the evening when we decided to go somewhere, like a park and enjoy the one time we had lots of snow this year. So we decided to go to Fort Tryon, it's a huge old historic park located in Upper Manhattan by Hudson River. There's also a beautiful historic museum there called met cloisters that we have never got the chance to visit because it closes too early for us. It was snowing a lot during that day we got up to Fort Tryon park. We took the train for like an hour to go there so it was dark by the time we got to the park. My friend Von, and Tohid was with me in the park as we walked outside of the subway station. There was snow piled up everywhere about a foot. We were really excited to see so much snow after a long time we started snow fighting. We were throwing snowballs at each other from 3 different sides while our hands were freezing. While we were playing around in snow my friend Von lost his airpod in the snow somewhere. We kept asking him where he last had it and Tohid tells Von "Use find my app to look for your pod bro". We kept on looking in the snow back and forth and couldn't find the airpod after like an hour of looking around. Von said "Let's go more in the park and enjoy, we looked for the airpod for a good amount of time anyway". We ended up leaving the place where we lost the airpod to explore more into the park.

There was snow everywhere in the park, it was beautiful even though we were cold. It was great walking in the snow and playing with snow. At one point we almost made a snowman but half way through it our hands were frozen so we gave up. We also rolled up a ball of snow and threw it down a hill in the park. There were snow slides

in the park we couldn't use because we didn't have any snow sliders. We were really close to using an umbrella as a slider as a bet we wagered amongst ourselves. But it didn't work out because one of us had the nerves to say "it was a stupid idea and it's not worth it". We walked all over the park climbing up the hills, running in snow and watching the view of the Hudson river, bridge and the other side of the river. We were in the park until our fingers and toes were freezing that night but it was still an amazing experience to have. I knew that day we had to make it count because we might never see that much snow again. Even during last winter there hasn't been much snow in the NYC area. I was glad to have found that one day we could enjoy the snow while it lasted. The snowfall has been decreasing a lot over the years and this year we probably won't have a lot of snow in the city. I will always cherish that snow day just in case we never get a snow day like that ever again.

## **Poem: Normalcy**

It feels so long that I've been to my campus.

I can still remember my first fall in college.

It was normal going to campus for classes

Campus classes were fun while they lasted.

It wasn't until the midst of second semester

The inevitable came to pass.

Quarantine? Citywide Lockdown? Covid-19?

No matter what you labeled this work from home situation it all meant the same thing.

We spent about 3 months in quarantine in our first citywide lockdown.

Quarantining, face masks, sanitizing every moment became the new normal.

The world itself is adapting to this new normal everyday.

Most of this year went by in the midst of us being cautious to survive through  
COVID-19.

Now we are near the final stage,

So stay strong until the finish line

A stage of finalizing the COVID vaccine.

Hopeful for the year 2021

New years' new normal.

**Dialogue #1: Would you rather?**

**Von:** What would you rather lose one of your arms or one leg?

**Me:** I think I'm happy with my arms bro I don't wanna lose any of them. I can work with a prosthetic leg tho.

**Von:** Lol I have been thinking about it, I think I'd prefer arms over legs.

**Tohid:** Damn no love for the legs? I think I'd prefer my legs because I've always wanted a robotic arm like a cyborg.

**Me:** Lmfao some anime shit! I like that.

**Von:** That would be fire

## **Journal #5:**

It's been a long journey, looking back to when I first came to the US with my family. I've overcome many stages of my life that made me who I am today. From the day I came here I'd have never guessed that I'll be staying here for the next 7 years of my life and so on. I only knew my mother's tongue, Bangla and the people I knew here were some relatives and my family. I had no friends to begin with. It was a new city, new environment, new lingo and new faces for me to get used to, explore and learn about. After a week of being here I started school as a 7th grader to pick up the slack of my english learning because I didn't know english back then. I had to put in hours in school and after school hours in order to learn one of the most popular languages there was. I'm glad that my English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher took her job seriously and taught us how to speak english as much as she could. It was still hard for me to get around Brooklyn and my school because I didn't know to speak to the people around me. Only friends I had were the people that were in ESL with me and spoke the same language as me but that all changed after I left middle school.

After spending hours for over 2 years in middle school I was getting more and more comfortable with english because I was learning a lot throughout the experiences and the time I put in school. I've made friends in 8th grade but it was nothing compared to High School. I was more comfortable in high school so it was much easier for me to talk to people and express myself. I've made friends and lost a lot of friends during my years in high school. If you can learn how to express yourself freely everything else becomes easier for you because confidence doesn't matter if you can't express it the right way. Knowing the way around of speaking to people can boost your confidence as

well and you can present yourself the way you want to present by knowing how to speak. I've been living in Brooklyn for the last 7 years of my life and I am glad my parents chose this city when we decided to move to the US. I've made some great friends and memories here because there is always something to do in NYC. There are hardships here in NYC only the people in NYC experience but there are also blessings and perks to being an NYC resident and I love being here and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else but here in my city.

### **Journal #6:**

Writing short stories was a fun little experience but it wasn't as easy to pick a topic or specific story you think to write about. Personally I needed time to pick out topics but once the topic is all figured out, it gets much easier to present a nice short story to your audience. You also have to keep in mind if the story will catch your audience's eye, making it more interesting for the readers. Sometimes writing short stories can be time consuming because there's a lot that goes into a nice short story. If you write from a personal experience it's much easier because you've lived through it and you can tell the story to your audience in a genuine way. I was also struggling to put everything in the stories, sometimes it's hard to remember specific details and sometimes you can't present it in your own words very well. Planning out the story on how you are going to write it can also get difficult but once all that done it's nice writing your own little story.

