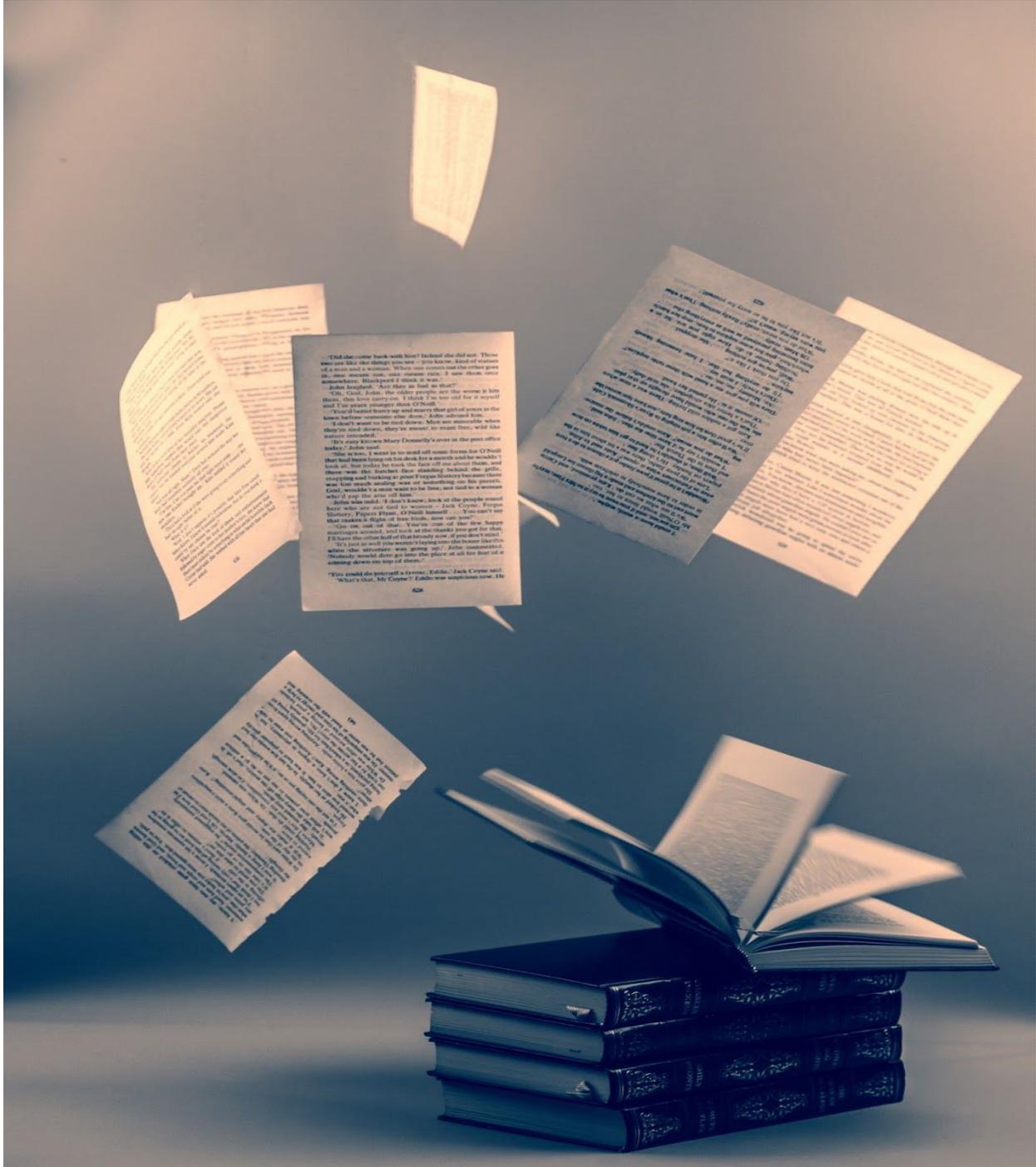


Let The Pen Speak



By: Nickay Green

Final reflection

Writing has always been something I struggled with in school, especially essay writing. I never know where to start or how to organize my ideas so my readers can fully understand what I am trying to say.

When I started college, that struggle became more problematic because I now have to write a lot more than I did in high school. After expressing that struggle to one of my classmates who was pretty good at writing, she suggested reading more, which, is something I don't normally do outside of the classroom. I took her advice which improved my writing tremendously, but I also wanted some guidance and professional critique on my writings so when I saw what this class was about, I registered hoping it would help me to become a better writer.

My journey in the class has been bittersweet. The fact that it was done asynchronously in some way made it easy for me to focus fully on my writing instead of me getting nervous in class and slacking up. The only challenge I had with this class being online was it being done on Openlab and not blackboard that I am familiar with. At first, I was confused about navigating Openlab because it was my first time using it for class, but after watching the instruction videos it became easier for me.

Some areas like poetry I found challenging because it was something I never before paid attention to or had any interest in understanding. When I read the first few poems I was so confused and overwhelmed, because it was something new to me and I just could not understand the message of the author. I then realized that unlike a story that is straightforward and to the point, poems are more complex and follow a more rhythmic and metrical pattern which

expresses the author's emotions in a vivid and imaginative style. Once I stop trying to view poems as I would a story, it became easier for me to break them down and fully understand the message the author is trying to convey.

Other areas such as short stories and memoirs I enjoyed and had a lot of fun writing. I enjoy reading stories, but this was my first time actually writing stories of my own which were not as bad as I had imagined when I first started this class. Once I understood the elements of what makes a good story (settings, characters, POV, etc.), it was easy for me to tap into my creative side and developed fun characters, and bring my stories to life. One interesting thing I discover during my story writing process was that I enjoy writing fiction stories best. When writing frictions, I can be as creative with my characters as much as possible, and I can add as many characters along the way if I choose. When telling a story of a real event, the details have to be factual, and that to me limits my creativity.

This writing journey has really helped me to understand what type of writer I am which is one that focuses on details to create the perfect settings and the development of characters. With each piece I wrote, I notice how important it is to me to give all the details necessary to ensure that my readers can visualize what was taking place. Creating the right settings, I believe helps my characters to be more relatable to my readers and give the story a real-life experience even if it is a friction piece.

Unlike writing, reading is something I am passionate about and try to do as much as possible in my downtime. I try to read daily news articles, books, social media posts; pretty much anything

that I can get my hands on. And before this class, I would read to get the message of the author but details such as settings, tone, and even point-of-view the story was being told from were not something I was conscious of when I read. Now when I start reading, the first thing I look for is who's point-of-view the story is being told from. And unconsciously I would try to create a setting in my head of the event being described or use the description of the characters to create a vivid image while I read to fully grasp the message of the author. This technique I developed after reviewing and critiquing my chore members work, and readings from our weekly assignments. At first, I felt uncomfortable critiquing other people's works because I was afraid of offending anyone by being too honest. After I receive my first formal critique on my assignment Meet my _____X, and saw how much it helped me to write a better story, it was clear to me then that the only way I could help my chore members to become better writers was, to be honest with them.

I must admit reading and writing after this class will not be the same for me. Now that I am aware of what details make a good story, some articles and books I read recently bored me because they were not descriptive enough or had any organization. Before this class, these things would not be something I paid attention to, but now that I am aware, it is easy for me to critique other people's work. Also, I will take what I learn from this writing class and use it to become a better writer in my other college courses.

In this chapbook, I will be sharing a few of my works that I feel represent my writing style best. They not only showcase my creative side but some of the pieces are real-life events that

happened to me personally that were only shared with a selected few and are now being shared with a wider audience.

The memoir I will be sharing in this chapbook titled “who baked that?” was selected because I believe this piece shares a part of my life that I do not talk much about. It tells the story of where my passion for baking came from as well as why I hide that part of my identity from the world. Memoir writing was fun for me because it was a real-life event being transferred to paper.

“An unforgettable weekend” is a short story that talks about a weekend I relived in my head oftentimes because of how perfect that day was for me. I choose this piece because I think this piece was full of all the details to bring my character to life so my readers could relive the moment with me. This was my first time writing a story about myself from a third-person POV, which I discover is my preferred story writing style.

Although poems confused me at first, the poem that I will be sharing “For my eyes only” was something I found easy to put together because it relates to something I have dealt with personally, and it is something that I witness taking over our society. The piece talks about how the media and businesses create insecurities in women by advertising and promoting an unrealistic image of what beauty should look like. Writing this poem evoked so many emotions in me I did not know I was holding on to. Once I started writing I just had so much to say and this poem has all my anger, hurt, and words of encouragement to my beautiful sisters (every woman) in one place.

My other pieces such as dialogue and journals are just as important to me as my other pieces because they showcase my writing style, and just like other areas they were something new to me.

This writing journey has been fun and insightful and helps me to discover things about myself that I did not know about myself. At first, I thought that writing was not something I could not do because I did not have a creative imagination, but now I realized I in fact have a creative side, and all I need is the right inspiration. Looking back at my first few assignments and comparing them to my writing now, I could see that my work was not very detailed and creative as they are now. My writing has improved a lot as the weeks go by and with each genre, I get to discover my writing potentials.

As you read each of my works, I hope they all take you on a journey into my life and help you to understand me more as a person and as a writer.

Memoir

Who baked that?

I would consider myself a very good baker. I have been baking for as long as I can remember with my grandmother. My grandmother was a baker and own a small bakeshop in the Islands (Jamaica), so growing up I would stay up late at nights with her while she tests out new recipes, and she would teach me the different technique of how to mix and combine ingredients for the best results. I remember helping her make cookies on Sundays for us and making banana bread for Sunday morning breakfast. I could still remember her say “taking a bite from a fresh-baked bread is like taking in a breath of fresh air”. I was too small to understand what she meant but now that I am grown and bake my own bread, I can honestly say biting into a fresh-baked bread is indeed like taking in a fresh breath of air.

After my grandmother passed away, I keep baking because it lets me feel closer to her in some strange ways, and over the years I was able to be almost as good as she was (my grandmother is the best baker I know to this day).

My grandmother had a cookbook that she would normally write down her recipes in. Since I was the only one of the grandchildren who had any interest in baking, the book was passed down to me after she died.

Now whenever my sister or I was having family functions and dinners, I would make it a point of duty to make something that was from my grandmother’s book. The first time my sister hosted a function, (a birthday party for her son) someone asked about the cake and cupcakes I made, and where they could purchase it. My sister ended up saying I baked them and that

thanksgiving, I ended up baking eight cakes because everyone who found out about the baker behind my sister's cake wanted me to bake for their thanksgiving dinner, which was a hassle. From that day I told my sister to never tell anyone that I was the one who bakes for her events and I would do the same.

I always enjoy hearing people talking about my cakes and cookies and often time gets the question "where did you order that delicious cake?" or "how can I get in touch with the baker who made those cookies/cake?". But my answer is always vague, or sometimes I would lie and say a friend drop it off I don't know where they bought it.

It's not that I am not proud of my work, but with school and work, I only make time to bake for special occasions and don't want to feel obligated to bake for other people just yet.

Over the years people would inquire about my cakes at events and the few who suspect that I made them would ask me to bake for them for a price which most of the time I decline. Maybe one day I can open a bakery like my grandmother and then I can share my baking with the world, but for now, I will only share it at my events or my sister's event without anyone knowing where it is from.

Just a few of my work .

Short story

An unforgettable Weekend.

Weekends. Weekends are the worst in the Green household. For Nickay, it means cleaning, cooking, washing, and grocery shopping. The sweet aroma of pancake and freshly roasted coffee whift through the half-open bedroom door and fill Nickay's nose as she tries desperately to fall back asleep so she can get a little more rest before the crazy weekend begins.

She twists and turns for what seems like forever, then eventually gave up the fight after she saw that it was useless. "I hate weekends" she growls to herself as she sleepily dragged herself to the bathroom to get herself ready for the day ahead.

"I made coffee" she heard a voice saying as she made her way to the kitchen. Sitting at the table with a plate stocked with blueberry pancakes drenched in maple syrup and his favorite 'I love New York' mug was Orion, Nickay's husband. Nickay smile when she saw the plate of pancakes in front of him knowing how much he loves blueberry pancakes. "Thank you for that" she shouted back at him as she stood on tiptoe to take a mug from the top shelf of the cupboard.

Nickay was all but five feet tall. Orion, on the other hand, was much taller at a little over 6ft 4inc. The kitchen was modern and updated with a lot of cupboards from one end of the wall to the next end and has a pantry on the left corner next to the refrigerator. One of the main reasons Nickay agreed to purchase that condo was because of the amount of storage the kitchen has. But with all that storage space available, Orion always packs the cups on the top shelf whenever he

unloads the dishwasher. After talking about it for the first few months of moving in, Nickay gave up when she realized he was a creature of habit.

“These smell amazing” Nickay whispered to herself as she placed two blueberry pancakes on her plate with some scrambled eggs. She made her way to the dining table with her mug of steaming black coffee in one hand and her pancakes and eggs in the next and took a seat next to Orion who was now on his last pancake.

It was a beautiful Saturday morning. The sun was beaming in through the kitchen windows and the wind gently swing the window curtain back and forth. The birds were out chirping, and Mr. Miller the next-door neighbor with his dog could be seen in the distance walking up the street coming back from their early morning walk.

“What time are you going to work today?” Nickay asked Orion who is now reading something on his phone screen. He slowly turned away from his phone and gave her a puzzled look before responding that he took the day off. Nickay was too caught up in her head thinking about all the things she had to get done that she did not question him. Orion works for himself, so he can choose whichever day to not go to work. Nickay did find it strange however that he would take a weekend off, especially a Saturday which is normally the busiest day at the garage, but she did not bother to question it.

After breakfast was over, Nickay got up and clear the table. Orion had already put his plate and cup in the sink and left the kitchen to take a call. Normally he would clean up after breakfast but he was on the call for more than fifteen minutes now, and Nickay did not want to leave the

kitchen dirty, so she just went ahead and wash everything in the sink and the empty pots that were left on the stove.

Thirty minutes have now pass and Orion was still on the phone. Nickay does not normally get suspicious of his phone calls knowing he does business on his phone, but at that moment, she was starting to wonder why he had to leave the room which he does not normally do to take that particular call.

Orion was standing on the back porch with his back turned to the entrance door. Nickay walks closer to see if she could hear what he was saying but the moment she got close to the entrance door Orion turn around with a guilty look on his face and abruptly end the call. “Who was that?” Nickay asked. Orion still looking at her with wide eyes fumbled to put the phone in his pocket just stared at her for what seemed like an hour. At that point, Nickay is getting upset. He was acting suspiciously and was not answering her question. “Who was that?” she asked again in a much louder voice. When Orion saw that she was getting upset he mustered up a nervous grim and told her it was a business call.

Nickay could tell he was lying. They have been together for eight years and she could tell whenever he was lying. Orion hardly ever lies to Nickay. After going through a rough patch at the beginning of their relationship, they both promise each other total honesty no matter what. So why was he lying? Nickay thought to herself. Was he cheating on me? Did I walk in on him talking to another woman? All these questions were floating around in her head. Not wanting to start an argument and afraid of the answer she would get if she asked the questions, Nickay brushed it off and went upstairs to start cleaning up.

Being caught up in her thoughts and still thinking about Orion's strange phone call, Nickay did not hear when Orion enter the room or hear him talking to her until he was touching her on the back snapping her out of her thoughts. "I said come with me I have something to show you" Orion repeated. "What is it?" she asked as she follows him out of the bedroom and down the stairs. Orion did not answer her but kept on walking as if he did not hear her talking. Nickay was still mad at him about that phone call earlier and was trying her best to not show it.

As she walked down the stairs and got closer to the bottom, she heard chattering coming from the living room. Before she could make out the voices all she heard was chorus of voices shouting Surprise!

Standing in front of her was her best friend Ava, Sisters Shawna and Nicole, and her cousin Nick holding up big gold inflated balloons that spell 'Happy Birthday'. Nickay was so surprised that all she could do was stand there with her mouth hanging open. She looked over to Orion who was standing next to her with a big grin on his face. "Happy Birthday baby" he whispered loud enough for her to hear still grinning.

"Oh my god, it is my birthday!" Nickay shouted now realizing what was going on. "It is my birthday" she repeated more to herself still in disbelief.

Everyone walked over to her and hugged her and told her happy birthday. "How could this happen?" she whispered to herself still in disbelief that she forgot her own birthday.

Everyone made their way to the living room and that's when she saw it. By the fireplace was a beautiful floral arraignment made out of rose that spell 'Happy Birthday'. On the table, there were at least six pizza boxes and an ice bucket with four bottles of what looks like wine and

champagne. On the coffee table was a box with cupcakes, and next to it was a beautiful birthday cake with her name written on it. On the dining room table were containers with food and plastic plates.

Nickay just stood there observing the room still cannot believe what was happening in front of her. After the reality of what was happening settled in, Nickay walked over to Orion and asked when he got time to do all of this. Orion feeling very proud of himself turns to her smiling and whispered, “this was what I was planning this morning with Ava when you caught me on the phone”. At that moment all the questions Nickay was stressing about instantly vanished.

It has been many years since she celebrated her birthday. Ever since her accident on her 23rd birthday which resulted in the death of her cousin Rob, Nickay swore off celebrating her birthday ever since. Since it was her 30th birthday, and Orion wanted it to be special and know she would not want to go out to celebrate, it was very thoughtful of him to bring the celebration to her in the comfort of her home with the people she loves the most.

Forget all the stress of the weekend and all the undone chores, because at that very moment Nickay was happy, happiest Orion has seen her in a while. And Nickay knows there and then that she was lucky to have a husband like Orion who went above and beyond to make her birthday special, for having a best friend like Ava to help with the plans and to have sisters and cousin who would take the weekend off to celebrate with her. Everything was perfect. Nickay had the best weekend of her adult life with the people she loves, and that for her was indeed a weekend she would always remember.

Poem

For my eyes only

I don't need you to tell me I am beautiful

I am the child of a queen!

My mother is my hero,

A brave woman, and everything in between.

Hollywood tells us we need to be tall to be beautiful

Victoria Secret says we need to be skinny

But the most hurtful of them all,

Are the sisters who tell me I need a perm because my afro is too tall!

My mama always told me beauty comes from within,

It's not about what society says, but how you feel about yourself.

The type of beauty that the media portray,

Is not of your average everyday women who has a busy workday,

Or those who woke up and walk around with their natural skin all day.

To all my beautiful queens who were told that you are not beautiful,

Because you are too short

Too fat

Too tall

Or too thin

Just remember, we are all queens with something extra in between.

Dialogue

Dialogue 3

Shawnalee

Happy birthday sis! I hope you have a wonderful day today fill with love and laughter, love you.

Nickay

Thank you,

Shawnalee

What's the plans for today?

Nickay

I have no clue. I wanted to go to the Sugar factory for dinner, but I can't get a reservation for today for 9 people.

Shawnalee

Why not?

Nickay

Because of the inside dining 25% capacity rule in New York, most restaurants not taking big parties.

I try to cut it down to 5 people and the only day they have available is Sunday and it at 9 Pm which is too late because i have work early Monday.

Shawnalee

Damm. That sucks.

Maybe i could try and fine something in Jersey. I leave work at 5 we could meet up then.

Nickay

I AM SO ANNOYED!! Do that and let me know I'll call a few more restaurants and see if i fine anything.

Shawnalee

Ok. How much people should I book for?

Nickay

Try for 9 and if they won't allow it ask what's the max amount of people, they are willing to accommodate in one party and we can figure out who to uninvite from there. People just have to understand the situation and don't feel bad about not coming.

Shawnalee

Ok I'll do that. Don't worry about them, it's your birthday not there's.

Journals

Journal#3

My experience with memoir writing was better than I anticipated. Writing is my least favorite thing to do. I normally get overwhelmed with the idea of writing a story because I normally don't know where to start, or how to tell the story without being too vague or going off topic by oversharing. However, I enjoyed writing memoirs because it was just me sharing my memories/ personal experience which did not require me to do any research or facts check.

While writing memoirs, I realized I was able to express myself freely and share my thoughts and feelings on a deeper level than what I would do if I was telling the story to a friend or family member. I also realized that unlike writing a story where you have to come up with new ideas to discuss, or try to create a character, writing memoirs are so much different because you already have the details in your memory to tell the story.

When I wrote my first memoir piece on "Meet my Apple watch", I realize then that I told the story to my friends about how I discovered the workout app but never shared how I felt in the moment and why I felt the way I did. It was after writing my memoir I realize that when you tell a story in a casual conversation, a lot of information gets left out such as your feelings and thoughts. Also, I was able to organize my thoughts easily without going off-topic or getting stuck along the way because it was just me writing about prior experience.

I would not say I like writing now (it is still my least favorite thing to do), but I can say that after writing memoirs for the past few weeks and reading other people's memoirs, the experience was a good one which is still surprising to me.

Journal #6

I really enjoy writing short stories. It was a good way to bring my imagination to life through my fictional stories. I like how I was able to tap into my creative imagination and create stories from my point of view.

Also, I enjoy the story I wrote on my personal experience from a third-person POV. That was my first time writing about myself in the third person and it was interesting because the way I told the story in the third person is different from the way I would if I was telling it from my POV even though it is the same story.

I did notice that it was easier for me to write stories using first-person POV than it was when it was in third-person. However, when I write using third-person POV, I was more descriptive and pay more attention to details. Also, It was easier for me to create settings when writing from a third-person POV than it was using the first person.