



Personal

Growth

By Samantha Richard

Final Reflection

I learned about myself as a writer is that I had to take inspirations based on life and go with the flow. When I was about to write my first story, I was worried about structure and what should I write about. My early assumptions about myself and writing is that I couldn't write without discipline. For all my academic life, I learned about how to write, and sure writing has rules, but I worried about not being creative enough to write my own short story and/or poetry. Revision is always a helpful tool to make writing better, but it was the grades that influenced my own writing by making me worried that my writing is not good enough. The thought of doing that made me cringe at myself. By using some of my own life experiences, it allowed me to write the short stories and poems. As the months progressed, I realized that my worries about my creative writing being perfect got in the way of expressing myself. My experience revising assignments were helpful to me. Saba's feedback on my poems stood out to me. Saba's critique on my two of my poems helped make my poems better. For "Life", I inserted another stanza relating for the past year and a half everybody has been facing. For "Dishes" I added a little bit of flair to improve my poem. For "Walking", my poem was not complete, so I put an ending for it.

I learned about myself as a reader that not everything has to be nonfiction and fictional writing can be inspired by real life. When I read about Ursula K. Le Guin's story, *The Wife's Story*, I thought it was supposed to be a regular fictional story, but I never knew that it would get all supernatural and weird. It's been a while since I read a regular fictional story for school, I only listened to fictional audiobooks on Libby for enjoyment and the last time I read fictional stories was back during late 2019, during in-person classes. Ta-Nehisi Coates uses experiences

of slavery from the past that inspired him to intertwine his novel, *The Water Dancer*. The challenges of adapting to an online writing class, was falling asleep. On Monday nights, I get less sleep and must wake up early in the morning to do some homework. I had to take a nap before class. Besides that, I didn't have so much trouble adapting to an online world when it came to writing. It was mostly less or more of the same pre-covid, but this time all my assignments were uploaded on Blackboard and Open lab.

I will be able to use what I have learned this semester and transfer that knowledge in college or outside my community by going with the flow and using real-life inspirations. When I was about to write my poems, I found a guide to writing poems and using literary devices to help me out from high school days. As I was writing the four poems, I decided to not use the handout so much and just chill and go with the flow. Over the past year, I learned how to relax and take breaks from academic work and be less stressful about it. So, I applied that self-care method when I was writing my poems. My favorite assignment was Memoir 2 because it gave me the chance to write about a very memorable moment from this past summer, along with a very valuable lesson, to never take travel for granted again. I decided to use a little bit of Journal 2 and my summer vacation to Hershey Park to write my memoir. A notable lesson that stuck with me is to not hold myself back from creative writing and let go of any worries and self-doubt. Then, use revision to help make my writing better. Also, to use real-life events for inspiration when doing creative writing.

Memoir

Pre-pandemic, I would never imagine having the ability to travel to be taken away from me. It was 2019 and my family traveled to Canada for a week. We visited family members, stayed at a friend's house, and even binged on Netflix all day. After leaving Canada with bliss, I never knew that would be my last normal summer vacation.

My hopes of going away for another vacation in 2020 evaporated in the Spring. I never thought that staying at home and never leaving the big apple would stink. After writing a gratitude journal every night, I made a sudden realization that I took summer vacations for granted and I was lucky to have my last normal one in 2019.

As I hoped to go back to vacationing in 2021 with the vaccine, my hopes skyrocketed when my mom made a booking for a 2 day stay and play Hershey Park package at the Hotel Hershey in Hershey, Pennsylvania. I was pumped up, with energy waiting to burst and I decided to buy some swimming suits for the Boardwalk, a part of the park with water rides, a waterproof pouch to protect my phone, a tiny version of my gratitude journal and get Spotify Premium for a 2-month trial for the road trip because I never felt this excited in a very long time. Before going there, I read a New York Times article on how to enjoy a vacation without my phone, so I made some timer limits for games and Duckduckgo (the app that keeps my searches private, that I fell in love in my college freshman year). During my vacation, I used my phone, but not as much. I only used it for navigating Hershey Park, taking pictures, and playing a little bit of video games. The only time I used my phone a little more was at my relatives' house when I got bored.

On July 21st, my family hits the road, and it feels so good to get out from New York. As we arrived at the five-star hotel, I saw the inside of it look so fancy and traditional. For the first time

since June 2020, I took off my mask (excluding the shuttle bus for Hershey Park). I felt so nude without my mask because I had contemplated whether to wear one at the park before arriving. Also, the hotel room looks so good. The first night, I tried in room service for dinner, and it was so good, that I was immediately full. The next following day, we went to the Circular restaurant for the breakfast buffet.

I had mixed feelings about going to a buffet because I have never been to one since my 2019 graduation. I heard about workers having to serve food to the customers and the customers could not get the food themselves. To me that sounded very annoying. As I went to the Circular, I saw a lot of people serving food by themselves. I feared that reality would never come back. I had eggs and bacon sandwich, along with some French toast, sausage, and pancakes for three days and felt so savory and satisfying. When I arrived at Hershey Park, we quickly changed into our Bathing Suits and went to the Boardwalk.

One water ride I was so excited to try was Breaker's Edge. When I tried it, I was surprised with a huge drop and a lot of turns in the tubes. Then I did Whitecap racer to see who can get to the bottom faster. Tidal Force had an epic drop as well and I was thrilled. After some lunch at Nathan's, I went to the lazy river: Intercoastal Waterway. Getting on a float was harder than I thought, a lady helped me out and then I got to enjoy the calming river. I just sat on the float, allowing me to be in the present moment on a very hot summer day. My family ended the first day at Chocolate World, where I got to try a Birthday flavored milkshake. I was motivated to go to Chocolate World by an article from PopSugar. The taste of my very first milkshake was very sweet and cooling on a hot summer day.

On Friday, we did coasters and other rides and visited Zoo America. Some rides I went on was the Superlooperduper, Great Bear and the newest of all: Candymonium. For the Superlooperduper, I nearly lost my glasses when I rode it. Before we left, my siblings and some of my close friends went on Candymonium and it was fast and very powerful with ups and down and twists. Everyone ended the day by going to the Harvest for Dinner. I had mashed potatoes and cocoa ribs and it tasted so smooth and the taste was very deep and explosive. My family ended it all with a visit to the colorful Hershey Gardens. The place had a beautiful butterfly atrium and a charming outdoor garden.

My family and my mom's friend's family went our separate ways, and we went to a relative's house. The last time we visited the couple was in 2019 for my brother's birthday.

This vacation to Pennsylvania allowed me to relax and unwind. I felt so recharged after the long vacation after the past year. After Pennsylvania, I did not go anywhere else, but just stayed in New York. My family had plans to go to Splish-Splash and Dorney Park in August, but Delta had other plans. My trip to Hershey taught me that vacations are supposed to be for relaxing, not staring at my phone screen all the time.

Short Story

The public city bus that goes from Elmhurst, Queens, NY to Queens Village is filled with different people from different backgrounds. A young teenager named Ted goes to Elmhurst Arts High School every weeknight and then spends his afterschool days drawing and painting very gothic and hard rock art. In his life, Ted never took things slow; he's always in a rush, so energetic and stressed out about everyday life like homework and schoolwork. He always had the pressures of getting good grades and dealing with the use of social media. A middle-aged woman named Nin-Nin spends her days working at a JCPenney store, making sure the products are neat and tidy, especially the toys and clothes. One Thursday evening, around 6 pm on a cool fall night, the two got on the Q88, not knowing that this ride is about to get interesting. Ted got bored on the bus so quickly, so he decided to rock on to his energetic music. Meanwhile Nin-Nin, is not the hard rock musical type and she is the more calm and quiet type. Nin-Nin fell asleep on the bus as usual. During the ride, Ted's wireless headphones and iPhone died, leaving him nothing but boredom. Ted complained that he's bored and there's nothing to do on the bus. Being awoken by Ted's complaints and obnoxiousness, Nin-Nin said, "I'll tell you a story from my Gen X teenage years". Unlike the loud and awesomeness of Gen Xers, Nin-Nin always take things easy. She revels in the moment surrounding her, cherishing it every day. Nin-Nin learned how to do that when she turned 25, when her job started being tiresome to her because of the job's toll on her mental health. She tells Ted that she has been working at JCPenney for thirty years and every night when she leaves from work, she just looks outside the windows and enjoy herself with some calmness from the dark outdoors that eventually makes her fall asleep. Ted starts to look outside at the calm and sleepy neighborhoods at the windows. Eventually, he starts to fall asleep. When the bus said, "Next stop: Horace Harding Parkway", Ted immediately woke

up and got off the bus feeling relaxed and more laid back, thanks to a new friend named Nin-Nin.

After the encounter, the two became friends and talked about what was going on in their everyday life every weeknight.

Poem

Life

At times life can be pretty

And at times, life can be very ugly

Life is not going to go like you plan

When bad things happen,

You start to adapt

As you adapt, you make new discoveries

As you adapt, you start to grow unto oneself

As you adapt, you become more relaxed.

Adapting to life's challenges will let make you lighter.

Dialogue

Dialogue 2

[Morty picks up his phone and opens Telegram]

Morty: Is it a good idea to take my booster shot at 7 am this Wednesday or 11:45 am Sunday morning?

[Morty tries to get an appointment for Sunday on his Surface Pro 7, but his time expired, so he had to go for Wednesday]

Morty: Just scheduled my booster shot for Wednesday morning at 7 am.

[Rick saw Morty's text and becomes sarcastic]

(Sarcastic tone)

Rick: Yay!!! Good for you Morty! (Burps) Or did you forget that you had online class at 7:30 in the morning?

(Anxious)

Morty: Oh s*^t! Oh s*^t! Oh s*^t! How could I be so stupid?!!!!

[Morty comes up with a plan to get his booster shot and attend online school, by bring his Surface Pro with him and use his phone's internet hotspot, just in case anything goes wrong]

[Wednesday morning arrived and Morty went to CVS]

Nurse: Hi, you're Morty Sanchez, are you?

[Morty shows his confirmation email]

(Anxious)

Morty: Yes.

Nurse: Good let's give you your booster shot!!!

[Morty sits for 10 minutes]

Nurse: You're in the clear!!!

[Morty returns 10 minutes before class]

Morty: I'm back! I'm back!!! I made it before class!

(Sarcastic)

Rick: Yay! Good luck with your headache later!!!

Morty: Wait, What?

Dialogue 4

Jodie: Hey my mom just called. She's in a prayer right now.

[Daria picks up her phone and goes to messaging]

Daria: Via WhatsApp?

[Jodie replies]

Jodie: Yes

Daria: I've been trying to call my mom via Telegram, I downloaded the app on both our phones before she left because I don't want to use WhatsApp based on what happened last week, if you know what I mean.

Jodie: Wait, what do you mean?

Daria: I read online that WhatsApp won't allow users to opt out from Facebook's data sharing and I decided to get Telegram instead to call and text my mom, while she's at the religious retreat in Europe with your mom.

Jodie: WOW!!!

Journals

Journal 3

My experience with memoir writing has so-so. I never did memoirs before 2020 (or 2021). I've never been a creative writer, the only time I did creative writing was back in high school, but it wasn't a memoir. Over the past year, I have been writing of what I have been grateful based on what happened on the day or in the past when I write my entries. Now I'm starting to realize that as I have been doing my gratitude journals, I might have been doing memoirs almost every night, recapping what good stuff happened to me. I never realized that until now.

Journal 7

My deal with poetry writing is so-so. I rarely write any poems during my down time. The only time I remember writing poems, was in 4th grade. My class had to write poems for their own book. Before this class, I never wrote poems because of my lack of creativity. This past weekend, using the prompts I had chosen online, I started typing them and just suddenly went with the flow. I free wrote my poems with little to no worries. This made me realize that worrying about structure of the poems held me back from writing them.