

THE
POWER
OF
WORDS

The title is centered on a light beige background. The word 'THE' is in a small, black, sans-serif font. 'POWER' is in a larger, multi-colored font: 'P' is blue, 'O' is a dark blue speech bubble, 'W' is green, 'E' is pink, and 'R' is green. Below it, 'OF' is in a small, black, sans-serif font. 'WORDS' is in a larger, multi-colored font: 'W' is orange, 'O' is a red speech bubble, 'R' is blue, 'D' is purple, and 'S' is yellow.

By: Clifton McDowell Jr

Final Reflection

First I just want to say I cannot believe I finally made it to the end of my college education, it's been a long time coming. I have always had a love for writing and my mind has always been very dramatic and imaginative and that was my main reason behind signing up for this class. I wanted to see if I could pull more out of myself and possibly stretch my limits on writing and I was very excited to start class. I really love just playing with words and evoking emotion in different ways, and honestly as a reader if I'm captivated within the first few lines or paragraphs I stop, so that is something I also strive to do in my writing, to captivate quickly or have a constant increase.

As the semester started I was ready to get to writing and after the first two assignments life for me changed. The biggest change was after being off of work for over a year, which helped out so much with me being able to finish school; I was brought back full time and I couldn't adjust. I was getting home 2 hours before class after working all night and trying to juggle work along with a full 7 class schedule made it difficult to keep up. My professor reached out to me when I explained my situation and she was very understanding and encouraged me to really try to bunker down because she wanted me to pass and graduate, and I believe that's what I did. I was able to change my schedule and I began turning in all my assignments on time and my love for writing continued.

My favorite thing this semester was honestly the short stories and the poems. I love writing musicals and plays so when it came time to write a short story I had so many thoughts going through my mind, but what through me off was that it had to be in 3rd person. At first I was struggling with what should I write, and what idea to go with, and I finally decided to just talk about what is going in my life currently, and that was I was newly engaged. So I was able to take

a story but make it third person which I feel brought up and emphasized the emotion so much more than if it was just the normal first person.

I also loved writing poetry because I feel its focuses more on the emotion and imagery and it brings a sense of completion when you can invoke it with little to no words. You can give life to things that in reality has no breath while at the same time telling a story through rhyme that just hits different then just telling a short story.

I am still so happy that I decided to take this class, and that Professor Jessica cared enough to reach out to me once she saw me falling off during the semester. I appreciate all that she put into this class and all that she tried to pull out of us. Even though this semester was tough for me because of life just being life, I know it has not been easy for you to make this class great virtually. So thank you for making my last semester worth it!

Memoir – “Seen while being hidden”

Being unseen while still being able to hear everyone’s enjoyment is a sense of anonymous that I crave. Confused? Well I’m a light board operator, the guy that controls the lighting at concerts, or shows on Broadway that you rarely pay attention to or may not ever see. January 11th, 2020 was the last time I was able to control lighting for a show. It was a dance concert in East New York Brooklyn and I was very excited for this show to be seen. We’ve been hard at work for a few months leading up to this show and I loved how they used dance to show a story which would progress in each piece. I’m a lover of musicals so to see a story told in this way was very different to me but it peaked my interest.

I spent the months before preparing all my lighting; over 45 lights were used with different effects and haze to help enhance the story. Haze is basically the smoke that allows you to see the beams of light but it’s not really smoke because it denser. To prepare for this productions I was given all the songs ahead of time from the director, and just from listening I began to imagine the colors I saw in my head and I would write them down. I was then told the overarching theme of the show, it would basically be going through the bible showing main stories but all through dance.

As the dancers would rehearse I would sit in on some of them to get a sense of the emotion in their movements and the mood of the song and see if the colors I thought of still would work, and once their wardrobe were set, would my lighting choices take away from them. I would then work at home when I couldn’t go into the theater and use the offline software editor for the lighting console to input all the lights I would use, so when I was finally in the booth I didn’t have to waste time setting that all up. The last month before the show I would spend

recording all the cues for each dance during their rehearsal times, adjusting timed effects and moving any lights that needed to be adjusted.

There was one scene I was very nervous about, because it was a dance that had a lot of effects programmed for and I was hoping it didn't take away from the dance. My job is to not only light the performers but I have to also help tell the story without really drawing attention to the lighting itself. 7:30pm came so fast on that night as people began to fill the seats. We were sold out and I'm sitting in the empty lighting booth, alone, and I give the signal to start the show with the dimming of the lights. It's all in my hands at this point, I control when things are seen and help the message get across but nobody who attends will ever see nor know where I am. The best satisfaction is when you hear the "ooo's" in the audience or the loud applauds after scenes. It lets you know it was all worth it, being seen or not, what you put out there, your hard work, it was worth it.



Short Story #1 - "She Said ___"

CJ had prepared himself for this, all the movies, and love stories will all come together in this very moment. Nervousness was an understatement as he rolled out of bed, his feet resting on the floor a little heavier today. He reached over to pull his blinds apart and let the sun rays warm his cold room. It was a very sunny September morning, cars were barely driving past his home as he stretched his arms out and let out a morning yawn.

Today was a big day but he was trying to convince his mind that it was just a normal day so he wouldn't freak himself out. He walked slowly into the bathroom and turned the water on in the shower. The steam began to fill up the room as he stood there letting the water sooth any tension he had for what was to come. Brushed his teeth, washed and styled his hair, and began ironing his clothes. It wasn't until his mother came out into the hallway that it began to settle in, "Are you ready for the big day? Do you have everything ready? Make sure you don't forget the box" his mom said.

CJ's heart sank to his toes because the realization of what was going to happen in merely 3 hours began to bring excitement. "Yea, I pretty much planned and prepared as much as I could have, I'm just ready to get to it" CJ responded. Now CJ was not nervous on what response he would receive later that day but he was a perfectionist, he wanted everything to go as planned and in that moment he realized his life was truly about to change but for the better. It's been 5 years leading up until this moment. Those years were full of so many lasting memories and he had decided 3 years in that he would one day make this day come to fruition and it was finally here. His clothes were fully ironed, bag packed, cologne sitting on his dresser ready to be sprayed. He opened up the top drawer and there it was. The single item that held so much weight

that he stood there for at least 5 minutes thinking over every aspect of the day that was to come. He picked it up, and opened the box.

The ring shined as bright as ever as the sun rays bounced off its surface, a calming sigh left his body as he placed it on his dresser. His girlfriend of 5 years, standing at only 5ft under his 6ft 2in frame had no idea what was to come. He had his cousin take her out to lunch and figured they would talk about girl things as he setup 5minutes away at the Brooklyn promenade; the same spot where they started their first date. His cousin would merely just suggest they go for a walk after lunch and lead her straight to him where he would be waiting. He knew his girlfriend would of course say yes to marrying him, but he still was nervous beyond his control. It was a good nervous though, he was happy, and it didn't feel rushed. He got dressed, gathered everything he needed for the day, packed his car and drove to meet his soon to be fiancé. After about a 45 minute drive he was finally at the Brooklyn Promenade, along with his sister and brother-in-law who were there to help capture the moment. As they tended to their camera gear CJ began setting up for the proposal. He had printed out 5 of their favorite photos over the years and put them on canvas boards. People began to gather around as he placed rose petals on the floor in the shape of a heart. His fiancé Alisha was merely 5 minutes away wrapping up her lunch date and she had no idea that she was going to be engaged in a matter of minutes. His cousin sent him a quick and short text; "we're on our way".

At this moment CJ's heart began to pound out of his chest. Some people had walked away while others stayed and said they would watch from a distance. CJ remained out of sight until he saw her walking and he walked out to meet her with flowers in hand. Her mouth dropped. Speechless....They walked over to the rose petal shaped heart where he began to read a letter he had written for her, and before he knew it, he was down on one knee.

"Will you marry me?" he asked

"Yes" she said with a big smile

The crowd applauded, they hugged, they kissed, and the rest is history.



Poem – “ Dear Past Self,”

Streams of rivers connected through emotion
over landscapes of uneven terrain.
Longing for the sun to come over that horizon,
but it seems to never bring a new day....
your hand is nervous holding onto what you felt was real
with thoughts of her going through life without you.
A friendship so strong
but so weak in love
struggling to send texts,
and burying the love you have for her
How could the good guy end up with a heart of sadness?
As every beat pumps out more tears,
--you now feel....
is this just the way a love story's start?
the true beginning behind in a land far away.
...
..
.
Hold onto the thoughts of the what could be's
and the what if's
Pray that she soon realizes the one that wants her,
even though she's captivated by the one who doesn't
I know it's difficult wanting someone before its time
But in time it will all work out
Trust me
Because now, she'll soon be our wife

Dialogue

(So throughout the wedding planning process Alisha has tended to overthink and want to change certain items in which we had already decided upon. I've grown to have patience and do what I can to make our day special, and if that means changing things around then so be it....well only if it's possible)

Alisha: Babeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

CJ: lol yea?

Alisha: I need your help

CJ: okay with what?

Alisha: something..

CJ: bruh, babe why you being so dramatic lmbooooo

Alisha: ahaha idk

Alisha: its about the wedding ceremony

CJ: uh oh....you want to change something?

Alisha: you know me too well. Idk i just feel the start time can be pushed back

CJ: For just the ceremony right?

Alisha: Yea...I mean can we push the reception to 3pm?

CJ: I wouldnt attempt that babe, we already have all the contracts signed and paid for with the vendors. It's easier to just adjust the ceremony.

CJ: You want to try and lessen the gap between the two right?

Alisha: exactly!! its been bothering me

Alisha: Could we change the ceremony to start at noon?

CJ: hmmmm

CJ: I think that's too close. I would say 11:30am would be better. The cocktail is at 230 and we want to give everyone time afterwards for travel

Alisha: okayyyyyyy

CJ: so you're fine with that?

Alisha: yea, now me and my girls can sleep a little lol

CJ: lol okay ill contact the limo and let them know

Alisha: thanks babeeeeeee

Journal Entry #4

I grew up in a very Christian oriented home, and my parents and I do not agree on the topic of dancing or alcohol use. I don't really entertain the conversation of alcohol because I understand why they feel drinking is bad. My dad grew up with a drunk father who was very abusive so out of respect I don't drink near them, and that conversation never really comes up since they probably think I don't drink.

BUT

They really do not like dancing of any kind if it's not out of a place of worship and I just don't totally agree with that. They are against dancing so much I can't even have a mother and son dance at my wedding this year and none of my sisters danced with our father at their wedding, and none of them allowed dancing at the wedding due to my parents not being for it. I'm the only one who will be allowing dancing at my wedding and you can say my parents are not happy. They feel dancing to music which is not gospel related will hurt my witness but in all honesty I feel it depends on what you're dancing too. I feel if you are just enjoying yourself and celebrating with loved ones, and in this case celebrating a marriage that if we want to be honest is very religiously connected in many ways, then why is it such a big deal. This is a top in which honestly we will never agree on and at the end of the day they don't have to like my choice but I hope they will at least honor and respect it. My whole life while living with them I didn't attend parties, and at weddings of friends I wouldn't dance out of respect of them, but I'm going to be starting my own family now, and I get to do what I want to do. I don't feel bad about it or feel convicted but it sucks that they don't even budge on how they feel.

Journal Entry #10

Hey Future Creative Writing Student,

My name is Clifton McDowell Jr and I graduated in 2021 last semester. I saw you were signing up for this class and I wanted to first say you will definitely not regret it. Whether you are a veteran writer of short stories and poems or you never attempted it a day in your life, this class will definitely meet you where you are at and help you progress the skills that you may not even know you have. Two of my favorite assignments were writing a short story from a 3rd persons view whether watching it from a distance on talking about themselves in 3rd person, and also writing a poem myself. These were fun to me because I was able to let my mind wander and play with different thoughts and nobody could really judge me, that's the amazing thing about creative writing, there's no right or wrong way of achieving it. Now don't get me wrong, this semester was difficult for me, being an online full time student, working full time, and also preparing to get married my time management was not the best. I had to really push myself to set time aside to do my assignments and earlier in the semester having a talk with my professor really motivated me to get back on track. From that point on I began making sure as soon as the assignment was given I would try to start it and do what I could right away. I didn't start off strong but I definitely finished strong. This class really helped me realize how far I can go in terms of writing and just by changing a few words around can really impact someone very differently, this class helped me see the power of words and the power of perspective and I believe it will definitely benefit you later in life.

Enjoy!!