



The HIGH RISE

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## *Final Reflection*

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My experiences in all of my English classes from elementary school to college has all been positive. As far back as I can remember, in middle school all 6<sup>th</sup> grade students had to create a memoir book explaining their lives up until that point. I went the extra mile by turning the report into a booklet with picture of me visually explaining all the activities I had done growing up. When presentations were ready, all the English teachers were amazed by the creativity and nominated me as number one of the showcase. Furthermore, in middle school when I was taking my state exam, I remember my English teacher drilling specific writing formats into our heads which included R.A.C.E.R. She would always stress C in racer and tell us to always remember to “CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE.” When the exams were ready, I always made sure I followed the format she taught us and included my textual evidence. Moving on to high school, my love for writing grew in the sense that instead of following a certain format, I was free to make my own. My teachers would give us assignments where we had to get in touch with our creative sides, follow a prompt that was given to us, and make it as unique as possible. Every time those assignments were given, I always made sure each one was different from the last. And so, that is how my experience in writing has led to where I am now.

Writing came natural for me, but I always found difficulty writing poems or creating stories with no foundation. Normally when given an assignment, there are specific guidelines that must be followed in order to get the maximum points possible. However, when given the task to create a poem or story with no background, I found that extremely difficult because there was no structure to go behind it. So, when joining this class, I hoped to be able to build upon my skills to write with and without a prompt given. When I first joined the course, my immediate reaction was that we would mostly be focusing on vocabulary words and writing essays about stories given to me. Most of my English classes start with learning new vocabulary words and applying those words to our writings. Starting off this class, we started by introducing each other and writing journal about stories we read as a class. I found the stories interesting, especially the story “The Wife’s Story” where I got to see disadvantages of women based on their point of view. Reading this story gave many different emotions which included sadness, anger, confusion and so much more. When responding to the discussions, I went into detail about the story based on how it made me feel.

Further along in the semester, we were later assigned cohorts which I found useful but later became tedious along the road. Having members of our cohort read and review our work proved to be very helpful because it provided insight on where I could improve my writing assignment. However, reading and using a template for each group member overtime became a very lengthy process but overtime I learned to adjust to this way of critiquing.

When switching over to the online platform, writing in the way that I used to write remain the same. However, the only difference was that I had more time to plan out what I wanted to write. For example, when writing the short stories, I was able to first think of what I wanted to write about and then the ideas just kept on going from there. For the writing assignments that we were given, my most favorite was writing the 4 poems.

At first, I found it very complicated because I never continuously try to write poems on my own. But I surprised myself with the poems that I made because each of them in their own way had meaning behind them. For the first poem, I wanted to make it be about something everybody could relate to. Time is something that has proven itself over and over to be a mystery that no one can predict. The second poem relates to me because I work in an elementary school and I've developed a bond with one of my kids. His name is Nicolas and he really is like a little brother to me. We go to the park, I tutor him, I look out for him, we go to the movies together, and so much more. While he is not a blood relative to me, he is most definitely like a brother to me. The third poem I wanted to have mystery and suspense so I created a scene that would allow the reader to question what is going on. Finally, for the last poem, I want to end it off by using a metaphor. I wanted the reader to make a connection to a hibiscus because the flower is a metaphor for what you most desire / want to achieve in life. Towards the end, I was surprised by the effort and emotion I had put into writing these poems.

In the end, I feel that my writing style has grown exponentially in the sense that I am comfortable in writing certain topics without the need for a guide. While there were assignments such as cohort reviews that I disliked, I feel that it forced me to find out how I can let other writers improve their work and also mine in the same process. Given the criticism that I received from my cohort members. I was now confident to make revisions knowing that I received views from multiple sources to help boost how rich the writings came out. As a result, my writing was more detailed oriented and incorporating everything that we learned from stories we read and class discussions. In the end, the number one lesson I got from taking this course is to not only expand on what you write but try out different angles of creativity in the work itself.

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## *Memoir*

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Growing up, I always subconsciously wanted a younger or older brother to either build up or help me along my journey through life. Days would go by and I would see my fellow classmates get picked up at the end of the day by their older sibling while I had to walk home for 20 long minutes by myself. When I would arrive home, I would usually get started on my homework and then proceed to watch TV when everyone else would be getting ready to go to bed. As I gotten older and proceeded to middle school, that feeling that I had slowly faded away. I had the joy of being around my friends to help me forget those feelings. During our senior trip, we went to Disney World, Hershey Park, and even traveled to different states such as Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, And Virginia. Fast forwarding to high school, since I managed to skip 9<sup>th</sup> grade, everyone in all my classes were older than me. So, they looked at me as the younger kid who was also like the baby of the class. Throughout high school, I always had my friends looking out for me. But everything took a drastic change when I got my first official job working with kids in an After-school.

On a bright September afternoon in 2019, I had a new participant who joined my 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class. His name was Nicolas and we had an instant connection. There were days he would come to me and express concern that he needed help understanding his homework. Other days, he would just want to talk about how his day was going. Later on, during the year, our bond grew exponentially to the point where we started calling each other “brothers”. Ever since then, the suppressed feelings from back when I was in elementary school came back. There were times I felt a feeling of emptiness/void, and knowing that Nicolas was not really my little brother, that was even more painful. Days went by when I would get emotional just by Nicolas being there. It was so severe to the point my coworkers were getting deeply concerned for me and wanted to know how they could help. However, even though these feelings were persistent, I did not want to express those feelings when I was around him because he looked up to me and I had to make sure I was as solid as possible. As the year went by, Nicolas’ mother wanted me to be with him more to tutor him, play football with him on the weekends, and just overall spend more time with him.

To this day, we still do all those activities and I still call him my little brother because I want to be there for him and spend as much time with him as possible. My goal is to be in his life for as long as possible to give him life lessons such as “Not everyone is your friend” and “Nothing last forever”. In a way, looking back, no one has ever been like a little/older brother to me so now I finally have the chance to be that figure towards Nicolas. In life, I learned that the strongest bonds aren’t necessarily based on how long you know a person but by how much the person means to you.

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## Short Story

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Once upon a time in the cold dark forest in Maine was a boy lost from his group. His name was Timmy and he was only 14 years old. Timmy was on a class trip to experience what it was like hiking for the first time. The administration at his school had planned everything out for weeks and finally they got the opportunity to have the trip. Timmy was looking forward to this trip given the fact he was mournful of his grandfather's passing. Just thinking about his death gave him heart palpitations which made him concerned for his health. It was due to his grandfather's passing that Timmy had begun showing signs of acting out. During the gathering, Timmy was elated to see all his friends in the auditorium talking about their plans once they got there. Ahead of time, they made provisions on where they would go and how long they would spend at a certain location. An hour had passed, and the busses had arrived and was awaiting departure.

During the bus ride, it was conspicuous that Timmy was callow due to him not being able to contain his excitement. The teachers on the bus had to tell him multiple times to calm down or they would inform his parents of his misbehavior. For the remainder of the ride, he was perplexed as the why everyone was laughing at him for being called out by his teacher. Two hours have passed, and the long-awaited anticipation had finally settled. The teachers and students left the bus and headed towards the admissions area where they got their tickets to enter the area. Once arriving, the tour guide informed the teachers and student to not go into the restricted portions of the forest because there is a trail that can allow people to get lost. Without taking caution of this warning, Timmy tried to convince his friend Tyrone to join him on an "adventure" but Tyrone refused. Timmy took it upon himself to go on the adventure by himself and inevitably separating from the group. At first Timmy was excited to explore the forest on his own but he then realized he couldn't find the tour track after a while. Realizing he was lost, he started running erratically shouting for help.

The tour guide stopped to take a head count only to realize that one person had been missing. She called for an emergency search for Timmy where every available staff member went looking for him. The more he ran the more he saw debris of what appeared to be dead animals along a path. After several hours of searching, they found Timmy sleeping on a rock close to a cave where a bear had been hibernating. They quickly removed Timmy from the area and brought him back to camp where they treated his bruises. After that day, that was one lesson that Timmy won't soon forget.

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*Poetry*

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Title: You are my Brother

Brothers not by blood but by heart

But sometimes I question if that's fair

Because I know one day, one of us has to depart

All the times we spent together; I know you care

We go out, we play, we have fun

To others they don't see the bond

At the end of the day, you still my number one

So, I pray you'll be my actual brother by the wave of a wand

We don't have much time together

Which is why I leave you with this

I'll love you no matter the type of weather

Because when that day comes, you will be missed

No matter what they say, you'll always be my brother

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## *Dialogue*

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Timestamp: Monday April 12, 11:40 Am

Group members: Stacy, Deborah, Greg, Diane, Timothy

Stacy: Did everyone get everything for the surprise party for Amoure?

Deborah: What was I supposed to get again?

Stacy: This is why I don't trust you to do anything important

Greg: Damn girl what's wrong with you?

Deborah: It's just been a busy week

Stacy: WE HAD 4 MONTHS TO PLAN THIS

Greg: ....

Stacy: Anyway, where's the checklist

Deborah: I kinda lost the list a while back

Greg: You are hilarious

Stacy: You just really want me to lose my shit, don't you?

Stacy: All you had to do was hold on to the damn list

Diane: Someone send me \$10 I'm hungry

Stacy: Diane if you don't stfu

Greg: LOLLLL

Stacy: Okay so the plan is we go into the house with the spare key and set up with the balloons. Deborah will get the cake she ordered about a week ago and put it in the bedroom until Amoure comes. After that the gifts will be given after the party sounds good?

Timothy: What's going on?

Stacy: Sometimes I wonder why I'm friends with any of you

Stacy: Deborah how much was the cake?

Deborah: What cake? I didn't order any cake

\*Stacy left the chat\*

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## *Journal*

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### Journal 1:

Back when I was in high school, I skipped 9<sup>th</sup> grade and was automatically put into a program called STEAM. The program is composed of about 8 other high schools that come together at one agreed upon school. You would start the day at your original school then at around lunch time a bus would come and pick up the “STEAM kids”, then transport us to that location where we would for our teachers to show up. When I first got there, classes were then broken up into pathways based on what you chose. For me, my pathway was Computer Science where I was put in a class of 30 students from 8 different high schools. As an ice breaker, we had to introduce ourselves to our new classmates who were not from our original school. That is, we’re I met my friend Keandre. From there, we had an instant connection mainly because our names sounded similar. Over time our bond grew, and we later became best friends where we would call each other “twin”. We would listen to each other if one of us were going through something and would always just generally look out for each other. Anytime one of us would be hungry, for example, we would always buy each other food without asking for anything in return. We later graduated together and now go to the same college. However, with all the memories we shared together, I do not remember how or why I chose Keandre as my ice breaker partner. We instantly connected after the activity, but I have no recollection of how we began the process of the ice breaker. In the end, to this day we are still very close friends and wouldn’t want it any other way.

### Journal 5:

One moment in my most recent past that will serve as a long-life lesson to me is when I almost declined my opportunity to work during the summer in 2019. During the summer, young adults from the ages of 14-24 were able to register in a lottery system to work during the summer for 6 weeks. If you were chosen from the lottery system, you were then contacted from the office you submitted your application to and then called in for an orientation. I submitted my application in hopes of working with MTA which was a company I worked for as an intern in the past. When I realized that the seats were filled up for this slot, I instantly got discouraged and wanted to withdraw my application in a whole. However, my best friend persuaded me to stay in and take what they had to offer me. They later offered me a position working in a summer camp where I would work with young kids. Throughout the whole summer I cherished every single second I could. While I keep using this as an example, I truly believe accepting this job offer in 2019 shaped all my lessons I have learned thus far. The lesson I learned is that even if the opportunity doesn’t seem to be what you want at the moment, still take it because you never know where it will lead you.