

A photograph of a tree trunk with autumn foliage in the background. The tree trunk is the central focus, showing a rough, textured bark. To the right, there are trees with vibrant autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and yellow. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the tree trunk.

**Fantastic
Stories
and
Where
to
Write
Them**

ENG 1141 – Creative

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Writing OL10

Final Reflection

So, this is it, huh?

Writing has always been a positive form of expression in my life, and this class solidified that claim. As a Game Master for a group of friends, I have a somewhat constant stream of content to use when reading and writing due to the characters that they have created. It also that I have to do a LOT of reading in my spare time – mostly reference materials for the system that we're working with; But sometimes, something weird will happen in a session, and the next thing I know I'm looking up the average dimensions and weight of a spleen (yes, this has happened – The Artificer strapped robotic boots onto it and the Ranger slapped googly eyes onto it, and now it follows the party around and takes naps in the Artificer's beard next to his pet chameleon, flopping back and forth as a spleen does. The kicker – they named him Spleeny). Overall, writing has been, and always will be, a skill that I hold near and dear to my heart, no matter how weird it may get.

Have I grown as a Writer?

As a writer, I've learned to diversify the type of writing that I do. It has helped me with creating and writing up the current D&D campaign that I'm running for a group of friends, but it has also helped me with general worldbuilding and utilizing pre-written prompts/themes to help progress the story I'm trying to tell. I've also learned how to be more specific in what I research (refer to last heading about the spleen). Being a writer has led to my search history looking like I'd be on the FBI's watch list – which now I'm not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing since I've started watching Criminal Minds. The fact that I've recently been trying to expand on what kind of media I consume shows the mental growth that I've gone through this semester. While it may seem like a small feat, watching something new instead of rewatching something I've seen too many times to count has helped spark creative bouts throughout my day, which makes me want to sit in front of my computer for hours trying to convey the exact idea I had.

Have I grown as a Reader?

As a reader, while my focus when it comes to reading may not be as sharp as what it used to be, I have tried to learn to condense readings that I do into smaller sections to keep my focus on the task at hand. It's a slow process, but luckily I'm able to concentrate a little longer now.

Most of my reading nowadays comes in the form of instruction/maintenance manuals and lab instructions (with the occasional reference book here and there). But there was a particular book that I recently picked up that strayed from the usual readings I currently do. It's called "Rumple Buttercup: A Story of Bananas, Belonging, and Being Yourself" by Matthew Gray Gubler. It's an adorable account of a character named Rumple Buttercup, who has exactly five crooked teeth, three strands of hair, green skin, and his left foot is 11%

bigger than his right foot. He lives in a sewer under a small town and only comes out during a special festival (while wearing his masterful disguise – a single banana peel upon his head), filled with fun festivities, pancakes, and a parade. While it may be a children's book, it has also reminded me to stay true to myself and not worry about what others think of me because for all I know they might be my newest best friend. I think as readers, we shouldn't care about WHAT we read, rather we should care about if what we're reading will benefit us – physically, emotionally, mentally, etc. and sometimes, sitting down with a children's book can benefit you in more ways than one.

The Challenges of Online Learning

Taking an online writing class (and just taking online classes in general) felt more challenging, especially during the last year and a half. As everyone starts to get vaccinated and with the hopeful return of in-person instruction on the horizon, I hope that future classes don't take for granted what it means to be able to GO to school and not just show up for a session, especially since City Tech is in downtown Brooklyn, which I know for many of us is a long ride on the MTA. It has honestly made me appreciate it more, since personally I'm more of a hands-on learner and actually enjoy commuting just to go to class because I'm surrounded by other students and faculty in an environment that is deemed appropriate for all of us to be in at the same time.

Final Thoughts

Before I finish writing, I would like to highlight the choice of formatting for this reflection. I decided to go the route of writing it as if it were an interview. It made writing this piece much easier if I thought of it as a different form of media. For some, it may seem counterintuitive, but for me I have always had to look at or hear things differently in order to truly understand the concept of what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. I also wanted to highlight my choices for the cover of this anthology. Professor, you said to think of what would catch your eyes in a bookstore, like what would draw you into buying it. For me, it was always the bargain section. Not only because of the cheaper prices but because amongst those cheap prices, there were always some hidden gems. It could have the most obscure looking cover and yet still be the most informative book in the entire store. I've always loved reference books like nature guides, manuals, etc. and finding them in the bargain section made it all the more worthwhile.

So without further ado, allow me to welcome y'all to Fantastic Stories and Where to Write Them...

Meet My Books

Since I was a child, I loved reading books of all kinds — picture books, recipe books, you name it! My love for them only grew as time went on. They were a form of escapism for me. In elementary school, it was graphic novels and picture books. Middle school, mostly test prep and chapter books. By high school, I became fascinated with all kinds of reference books, from plants to anatomy and even to witchcraft and deities/spirits! When I first started college, it was my first time being away from home for an extended period of time (i.e. more than a month). Despite the many student events that were offered all over campus, it never truly felt like home. Then again, what part of upstate NY really feels like home? But something that kept me going was going down to what we called “The Stage” and checking out the mini library on the second floor. One book in particular caught my eye; It wasn’t the fashion books or the architecture studies — it was your average school textbook. The title read “Theatrical Design and Production.” I thought to myself, “Well, what the hell’s a book like this doing here amongst these books?” It stood out so much that I really couldn’t resist. Taking it down from the shelf, I opened it to the table of contents and from there, I learned that there was more to the entertainment field than just design. Sure, design is a big part of it, and I knew there were other paths out there, but I didn’t think it was possible for me until I found the program I’m currently in here at City Tech. To be honest, had I not found that book and chose to transfer back to the city, I may not be where I am today. While books have created a realm of escapism for me, they’ve also grounded me back in reality multiple times. They’ve shown me that there’s more to life than the mundane routines we’re usually forced to follow every day.

The Attack on Colos-Seum

After spending some time in the sky before blowing it all to bits, the Muessolocs gang was ready to return to their beloved home in Downtown Colos-Seum. However, the warp pad didn't seem to be working. After numerous attempts to open the portal, they enlisted the help of an old friend - Ridley - in order to return home. As hard as he tried—looking up tutorials, tinkering with every node and knob, even rebooting the system—nothing seemed to work. On the verge of calling it quits, surprisingly, the portal opened as smooth as butter on his final reboot attempt. Ecstatically, everyone hopped in, only to be greeted by what could only be described as amorphous blobs with missing textures. Thinking on his feet, Ridley told everyone to grab some essential equipment and head for the boxcars. They obliged, hastily suiting up and making a mad dash for the boxcars whilst Bagel (the leader), Oliver, and Ridley fended off the blobs. In an ambush, Bagel is grabbed by one of them, but is quickly rescued by his companions. One by one, they each piled on and fled the city—their once bustling and beloved home. During their journey, they each looked back on fond memories of Colos-Seum to lighten the mood of the situation they were currently in. As much as Bagel tried to look at this in a positive light, he couldn't help but feel as if he could never speak of his former home ever again. He blamed Ridley and numerous botched repair jobs for whatever seemed to happen to Colos-Seum. Late one night, whilst the other Muessolocs were asleep, Ridley found himself awake, pondering the events that transpired. Unable to render himself unconscious, he pulled out a blank book and quill that he had saved prior to their escape, and began to write. Bagel stirred from his slumber and asked Ridley what he was doing. As Ridley explained his findings about potential antidotes for the corruption that plagued Colos-Seum, Bagel

stopped him mid-sentence and became infuriated that he'd even try to discuss the downfall of the city and "potential fixes". His anger seemed to have woken the others, all wondering what could've possibly made Bagel that angry so late at night. Bagel ordered Ridley to toss the book into a nearby lava pit and not to return until he had done so. Ridley obliged, or so he made Bagel believe, and wandered off to find a lava pit while the others attempted to calm Bagel's nerves. Ridley never destroyed the book, but instead stowed it under his robe in a way that remained hidden and secured while travelling. He returned to their small camp, where everyone was wide awake and ready to begin travelling again. They made their way to a new town known as Warwick, a small town of about 300 people. During their time travelling to and living in this new town, Ridley worked on finding cures for the corruption late in the night so as not to disturb anyone, even going so far as to return to the edge of the desolate city's limits to secure samples of the land for further experimentation. Though not much is known about what happened to Ridley since then, one thing is for sure - Bagel never forgave him, despite doing all he could to help.

Tragic Love

His clammy hands
His pale, leathery skin
Yep, stone dead

What happened
No one knows
It was all so sudden

He looked blue
Yet the markings on him
Tell another tale

He was a blood bag
His lover, a leech
Only taking, never giving

What a shame
If only he knew
The outcome of it all

He would never love again

The Party Attempts to Go to the Feywild

Tavern Owner: "The Land of the Fey is a dangerous place for novice adventurers such as yourselves! It takes YEARS of training and research to even understand a fraction of what happens there."

Swashbuckler Rogue: "But what if we don't have that kind of time?"

Tavern Owner (clearly annoyed): "Then MAKE IT!!"

[Tavern owner slams rag down on counter and huffs away to the back of the tavern]

Whispers Bard: "Well I'd say he wasn't as friendly as we expected."

Spores Druid: "What'd you expect from a Goliath who drinks all day at his job?"

Swashbuckler Rogue: "That's rich coming from you - You literally seek out mushrooms in the hopes that they'll give you some sort of impairment."

Whispers Bard (under their breath): "And if they're not careful, the next impairment will put 'em six feet under."

Spores Druid (angrily): "WHAT'D YOU SAY??"

Swashbuckler Rogue: "There's no time for a fight! We'll find another way to the Feywild."

Journal #5: Light and Darkness

The weary look on his face... He was tired, and so was I. He walked towards me slowly in a silent and solemn manner, only to come to an abrupt halt. "What's wrong?" I asked, only to be blatantly ignored as he stared off into the void beyond. "Tom!" I beckoned, "You alright?" A faint and indecipherable whisper came out. Did he say "It nears" or "It fears?" His last word echoed throughout the bunker. "DARKNESS!" I knew it was too late for him. I never believed in monsters (well, at least the ones that I saw) until now. A sight to be seen no doubt. It had overtaken Tom, and I knew I was next. I ran as fast as I could, searching for cover. I hid in a locker and held my breath as the creature lurched through the armory. When all was clear (or at least I thought), I bolted for the switch. But before I could reach it, it was too late. It snuck out of hiding and grabbed me from behind. There was no escape. There was no more hiding. I was carried to a room, where Tom had laid. Was he sleeping? I couldn't tell from my angle. Soon, I too was laid down on a surprisingly soft material. It was too late for both of us now. I couldn't help but give into the soft, comfortable warmth of the blanket beneath me. It was nap time, and I couldn't be happier.

Journal 6

My experience with short story writing has been okay. I've been working on it more because of the fact that I run a campaign for Dungeons & Dragons for a group of friends, which involves (at least from my end) a lot of world building and narrating to progress the story. My process usually involves the following questions: What has the party done?; Where is the party currently?; Where do they need to go?; and Why is the party doing that? (The last one usually in reference to something weird they've done in-game) Then, I get an idea for what kind of town or city they'll be going to by looking through a fantasy name generator, and basing the type of location based on the name that I choose. Honestly, I think the best thing about short story writing is that it helps with limiting the amount of information that you write down. Sure, you can expand the lore outside of that, but the short story helps me with summarizing things for the party so I don't go off on a tangent about the world.