

Y a s m i n e B l a i r
P R E S E N T S

ENG 1141
BEYOND THE
PAGES

BETWEEN THE LINES



Reflection:

I have always loved writing, I write all the time in my “Everything Book”. Writing has always been a good way for me to decipher through my thoughts. Many times I would feel overwhelmed with all the things that are going through my mind plus all the things that I had to remember. When I write things out it makes everything seem much more manageable for me. Once I am able to get everything out on a page I feel much more relieved. Writing has always made things easier for me. When I was younger I always used to write poems to express how I was feeling and fictional stories. I would sit there and think of all the ideas I could come up with to make them come alive on the page. Usually when I’d write I wouldn’t share it with anyone it was more so for my personal pass time. As I grew older I strayed away from creatively writing. Eventually I would only write when necessary for english classes. Throughout highschool and the beginning of college I felt as though the english courses I had caused me to stray away from writing and reading. I think that some courses focus on critiquing the structure of writing as opposed to the substance of it. Many teachers would only focus on grammar and sentence structure. I know that those things are a very important part of writing, however when that is the only focus it takes away the fun and creativity. I really liked that this course had a genuine variety of writing and taught me how to write creatively in more than one format.

When I first started this course I was someone who was very shy with my writing. I was always someone who would only want the teacher to see and grade my work. Whenever I had to partner up with someone or be in a group where students had to grade each other's work it made me very nervous because I didn’t want to face judgement from my peers on my work. I was afraid that my writing wasn’t good enough. Being that I was uncomfortable with other students seeing my work if I knew in advance that there would be peer review it would limit my writing. It was hard for me to express everything I wanted to because that wasn’t something I wanted everyone to be able to judge. I think that when I first started doing assignment posts I held back some of what I wanted to express since the posts were public and everyone in the class could see it. At first I was uncomfortable with some of the assignments being things that were from a personal aspect because I can be a very reserved person at times. I was aware that the assignments were a way for the professor to get a better understanding of who we were in order to better understand where our thought process was coming from.

In the beginning my writing wasn’t the strongest because I wasn’t as open as I could have been but as time went on I do think that I was able to adjust and it was evident in my writing. When it came to assignments like some of the journals where it had a personal spin I was very hesitant, for example Journal 4 we had to write about a disagreement or argument we constantly have with someone either small or big. At first I didn’t see the point in some of the things we had to talk about but I didn’t completely hate it. Even though I wasn’t used to that sort of writing I was still open to trying. When I wouldn’t understand an assignment given soon after I would see how it correlated to what we were going to be working on. What I enjoyed most was critiquing different types of literature and fictional short stories. The assignments where we had to critique

a passage taught me a positive meaning to the word critique. In my mind I always have a negative connotation with the idea of “critiquing” something. Usually in my mind I believe that when you are told to critique or grade something you just go looking for everything that is wrong with the piece. I’m glad that this course was able to get me out of that mindset.

When we were told to critique writing it wasn’t about us picking apart the writing looking for what was wrong with it, but instead we discuss what we like about the piece and ask questions as well as add any suggestions. I felt as though that form of critiquing was something I wasn’t really introduced to until now which was very refreshing. Not only was that the way we critiqued the literature but that is also how we critiqued the work of our peers as well. The first time we were told that we had to critique each other's work and I knew that more than one person had to read and judge my work, once again I had that nervous feeling that I would normally get. When I saw the lay out of the critique it didn’t seem as scary anymore. Reading the work of others and seeing the reaction of my work from my peers reassured me that I wasn’t alone. I would often get positive feedback from them. They would say things like “I can relate to what you’re saying” or “I really like your story because it was creative”. When I would get positive feedback on work I wasn’t confident in, it made me so much more confident. It allowed me to see that my peers were also much like me still figuring out their writing style. They also had things to work on too yet we were all trying our best. Seeing that there are others just like me in the same position gave a sense of relief. We were able to give each other positive feedback to build our confidence and learn what can be added to our writing in order for it to be even better.

Before coming into this course my idea of creative writing was something completely different. I just thought that creative writing meant fictional stories. Now I realize that is because when I was younger my writing was based on me primarily writing fictional stories that was my pastime. Since I had grown up believing that creative writing was just stories that's all I was used to. I was completely unaware that creative writing can be done in any genre. We were able to cover critiquing, journals, short stories, poetry, dialogue etc... All those things are different categories yet in each you can creatively write by putting your own personal spin on things. When you write creatively you’re taking a genre of writing and combining it with your personal experiences and emotions that’s what makes it your own and allows it to be something unique. I do believe that this course was able to push me out of my comfort zone. Being used to one version of things can often leave you feeling stagnant. I appreciate that in this course I was able to learn a lot about myself as well as my writing. After this experience I don't think I will shy away from expressing my ideas and thoughts on the page out of fear of judgement.

Memoir:

I've always had a difficult time working through my thoughts from simple things such as my daily schedule to my emotions about certain events. Most of the time I'm better organized when I put things on paper it makes it easier to sort through everything. Since 2017 I always kept a book that I could write in, I wouldn't really label it as a diary or journal. Just my everything book. My mom knows that I like to write and sometimes sketch things, so one day after she came home from work she had bought me a book with lined pages. I was so excited.

I was determined to fill up the book with a whole bunch of stuff. It was better than me writing all over loose leaf or copy paper. Most people just put all their notes in their phone but for some reason it's just always felt more authentic for me to just write things down. I also have a lot of notes in my phone just in case I need something since I don't carry my book around. I always feared that if I lost my phone everything would be gone. That's why I try to write things down as well. I would write anything in my book from due dates, to do lists, or even affirmations.

When I feel like I have too much on my brain I head to my book and start writing things down. As I see everything laid out on paper things seem more manageable. I'm a person who doesn't like clutter physically or mentally. When there's clutter I often feel overwhelmed. My everything book is a good way to keep my life in order. It helped me out most a few years ago when I was transitioning from my senior year in highschool to college. I felt like I had so much to do and so many deadlines. I just took a breath and wrote everything out in my book. I was able to keep things in check without going insane. There were many deadlines one after another. Everything was happening so fast. During that time in my life I was very stressed and as I wrote everything out on those pages I feel as though that's mainly what got me through things.

The most important thing my everything book helped me accomplish was getting all my stuff in order to make the transition from high school to college. I feel as though that was my most overwhelming time period. I currently still have an everything book, but of course not the same one I started out with. Over time I have had about four books all of which I still have. I know that life will throw many more obstacles my way but hopefully my everything book can help me tackle it head on.

Short Story:

On the Isle of Serenity the people were fairly happy and somewhat free. Most people were carefree, living their lives as normal not thinking of tomorrow. One girl in particular named Skylar was going about things as normal. On a bright and sunny afternoon Skylar decided to take her usual morning run around the island to make sure things were in order just as they've always been. After all, order is what kept Skylar at peace. She does this because it allows her to do two things she loves: get her exercise and be nosey since she honestly can't help it. As she started off down her usual path, saying hello to everyone she passed on her way, she suddenly heard screeching in the distance. She sped up to find a bunch of people down by the shore staring out at the distance. When she reached down to where everyone was standing and shoved through the crowd she saw a dark thick green haze headed their way.

Before long the haze became close within reach and had covered the sun. People started to panic and began to run to their homes. Skylar ran home as well, when she got into the door she found her family gathered around watching the television with intensity. "Something is wrong with the sky, there's some sort of haze and it even blocked out the sun" she said with a tremble in her voice. "Skylar where have you been, something terrible is happening. We've been sitting here waiting for the mayor to speak on the matter." Skylar and her family sat and waited. Before long, breaking news appeared and the Mayor was about to speak. "Ladies and Gentlemen of the Isle of Serenity, do not panic. There's nothing to be worried about, the haze you see is just some sort of tropical storm we have never heard of. It should pass momentarily. Just go on as usual and by tomorrow it should be gone." Skylar listened to the Mayor with uncertainty, she never trusted much of what he said with his strange wheezy voice. After all last summer the mayor was caught in a political scandal which he weaseled his way out of but everyone knows the truth of his involvement. Nothing about his words were ever settling to Skylar.

That night Skylar tossed and turned with hopes that in the morning this would be back to normal, but that haze they saw was only the beginning. The next morning the haze had still remained in the sky, however the mayor instructed people to go on as normal. Skylar went out for a run just to see what was happening on the island. Before she could get a mile out all of a sudden people started to collapse one after the other, their bodies hit the floor with force. Panic broke out once again among the people of the Isle. Not only were people collapsing but they were dying.

Most of the people that collapsed ended up in the hospital and did not return home. The fears of the island people went rampant; they did not know what this strange plague was. People started to gather supplies causing shortages. Soon the mayor was forced to announce that people should stay in their homes, no one could go to school or work except for the few volunteers for essential work. As time passed the island seemed to shrink; they could no longer find places to put the bodies. They started to put bodies in crates and sent them afloat. It was that very moment Skylar was afraid there was no coming back that the Isle would never be the same again.

Poetry:

(Self Love)

When you look in the mirror, love what you see.

Love that person who stares back at you let things be.

This is who you're with for the rest of your days.

Know that the person you look at is perfect in so many ways.

Despite the flaws you may find.

Just know that you have to love yourself first and try to unwind.

It is that self love that will allow you to accept yourself and for you to let others in.

All it takes is words of positivity for you to begin.

Dialogue:

Dialogue 2:

(Eve wants Ashley to do her a favor)

Eve: Are you on your way home Ashley

(Eve stares at the screen waiting for a response)

(Rest)

(Time has passed and Eve is wondering why Ashley hasn't responded yet)

Ashley: Sorry I was busy. I'm now seeing your text, what did you want?

Eve: Five years later

(Shaking the phone)

Ashley: I said I was busy

(Ashley rolls eyes)

Eve: Are you on your way home now?

Ashley: Why?

Eve: Just answer the question, must you make everything this difficult

(Eve stares at the screen in frustration)

Ashley: Yes yes now what do you want, you always want something

Eve: Actually this benefits everyone in the house

Eve: Can you buy milk I want to eat some cereal and we ran out

Ashley: Are you serious why did you just say that from the beginning, I already passed the store and I'm not turning back

(Eve leaves the message on seen and calls Ashley)

Journal:

Journal #3:

My experience with memoir writing was so-so I wasn't really too fond of it. When I think of creative writing the first thing that comes to mind isn't writing things from a personal aspect. When I hear creative writing I think of creating stories and characters not talking about my own experiences. I think I had this so-so feeling because I'm not someone who is outward with being personal let alone for it to be read by others and critiqued. I didn't really understand how you can critique someone's personal story. I tend to keep most things to myself and write them down only for my eyes to see. However I didn't completely dislike memoir writing. I do think that it is probably allowing me to express myself better. It's a new experience which has taught me other skills like expanding when I write.

Journal #5:

I've tried over and over again to think of a moment from my past that changed me but the first thing that comes to mind is when the pandemic had hit. The biggest change that has ever occurred in my life was due to the pandemic. Life as we know it was altered greatly especially for me. The time we had to stay home and social distance for the beginning months when the outside world was in a panic made me reevaluate life as a whole. So many things I had taken for granted ripped away in an instant. The whole experience gave me a new outlook on life. It made me reevaluate who I am as a person and to appreciate the people I have around me. During that time I made many changes in my life physically and mentally. I did things like changing my room and exercising. I also tried to have a more positive mindset and turn to prayer more often. I tried to work on myself and get rid of old habits that hinder my growth that didn't benefit my well being. Many things I was not able to clearly see until I was forced into a self isolation that I noticed all the flaws.