

16 December 2018

Dear Reader,

It is my hope that when reading this letter, you will have an understanding of my writing journey throughout my first semester of college and the struggles and accomplishments I encountered during that time. I enclose four works that I submitted for an Introductory to English Composition course at City College of New York, ENGL 1100. The four pieces of writing is a narrative essay, a profile paper, an analysis paper, and a research paper. The topics that are covered in the academic papers were selected based on my interests in those subjects and to me, those topics hold great importance in shaping who I have become as I finally enter adulthood. Each paper address some success and failure that I experienced in the writing process and I plan on taking those experiences as lessons as I grow as a writer and go further into my major. Below I go into an evaluation of my writing, an assessment of my writing performance, my noticeable habits, the different writing processes I took, an analysis as to how I performed in the course, and how ENGL 1100 affected my development as a writer.

The first paper “Linux and Me”, was a narrative essay on my experiences with Windows and Linux that affected my development as a person who loved technology. The paper was my highest graded work for presenting my past self and my feelings fluently and effectively. As I was writing the paper, what I never noticed before was how much of my feelings could be expressed in only a few pages of paper. I noticed that when I was writing about my growing anger towards Microsoft, I made sure to talk about my backstory . As I was addressing the time I spent on Windows 7, 8, and 10, I could sense the growing tension between my past self and the Windows platform. I continued to brave the storm after each new operating system and then when I discovered tech companies spied on my me, my feelings were let out which led my favorite quote in all my papers; “Privacy be damned because this is the tech scene of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and privacy is what you must sacrifice to be a part of it” (Linux and Me).

Linux and Me is also the first paper I made that used a formal outline. To an extent, especially with planning out my paragraphs, the outline was very useful to me. I would say however, that the paper had so many details contained in it, that I felt that the paper was too long winded. Despite the fact it felt long winded, even now, I still cannot think of a way to shorten the piece that wouldn't take away the quality of it. The passion that I put on paper is what I continued to try and utilize in later works because I felt that I struck out in making a powerful piece of writing.

The second piece of writing "The First Economist and How he Changed the World", describes the life and ideas of Adam Smith. The paper showed my next attempt of me putting passion on paper, however, I don't believe that it was able to create the same effect as the first paper. There were some conditions that affected my writing. The rest of my college classes were beginning to get harder and required for me to divide time up for each subject. As much as I was interested in my topic, I didn't feel as connected to the topic possibly due to the Adam Smith's life and ideas not being as personal to me as my journey that led me to using Linux. In addition, instead of a formal outline, I used an informal outline, which now I realized that at least for me an informal outline doesn't help me as much as a formal outline. When writing this, I also noticed some habits in my first drafts in that I liked to use a passive voice. For example, in the sentence "Smith began to take an interest in moral philosophy and he would continue his education in Balliol College" (*The First Economist and How he Changed the World*) would be much more direct and straight to the point if instead of using the phrase "he would continue", I just used the word "continued". Another habit would be to refer to something in my papers with "it" and "this" which at times made it unclear as to what I was referring to. Those words also affected how I started sentences, making them less effective sentences if taken out of the paper and read on its own. Some habits would later be fixed in the next paper, others (some not included yet) persisted. Due to having a weaker connection and less interest in the topic, my focus was weaker and lead to many more grammatical and spelling errors which showed my ineffective proofreading. This paper was definitely not one of my best but I did notice that when I talked about the life of Adam

Smith, for the most part, it felt organized in that I was able to talk about his life, his ideas, and the legacy he left behind. There were multiple successes and failures that became obvious to me in this paper, and I realized that they would have to be addressed properly in the next paper.

The third paper “Academic Trolling: Exposing Educational Corruption”, had a rocky start but I feel that the paper turned out better than my previous paper. I was much more passionate on the topic; possible academic corruption in college and university campuses. I heard about the articles I used as my evidence months before I was assigned to do the paper and I felt strongly about the possible implications of the topic. However, my first big obstacle came in the most unexpected way possible: when the assignment was for me to have an unbiased and impartial take on the subject, I was extremely persuasive and biased by accident because I thought I was meant to do such. My misunderstanding of the directions were not pointed out to me until a peer reviewer noticed my mistake. Thankfully, he did give me some tips as to how to go about fixing my tone. I was planning on delivering another rough draft to the professor but was instead given comments on the first draft so, this required me to not only fix grammatical, structural, and spelling errors, but my tone as well. I attempted to fix the abundance of errors in my writing which led to mixed results. I felt that the paper stayed strong in addressing the topic impartially, introducing evidence such as journal entries such as “Feminist Mein Kampf” somehow being accepted by *Affilia*; a feminist journal and introduce how other people disagreed with the academics when executing their plan of writing outlandish journal entries for academic journals. As I read the paper, I felt as if I was a news journalist. However, I noticed that my introduction was way too long. It took me about 2 pages to get to the evidence I mainly wanted to focus on. To improve on this, I would instead only talk about rising college activism in one paragraph and then talk about the main article. Surprising to me, my conclusion faltered in the final draft where I tried to introduce the possibility that the academics experiment may have lead to nothing conclusive. However, I didn’t realize that the sentence was a new idea that was just introduced in the fourth to last line of the paper. This weakened my conclusion and helped to make it one of my more ineffective conclusions so far. My

biggest problem however, were citations. I referenced journal entries, websites, and quotes improperly throughout the paper. I could only imagine that mistake similar to being a giant wrecking ball to my grade. I started to have severe doubts in my ability to make a good paper but I can admit that I can't see myself making citation errors among other errors after this course.

My last and biggest paper "Life After Death", was my last chance in ENGL 1100 to show what I've learned throughout the semester. In the paper, I analyzed the plausibility of an afterlife using articles and a scholarly journal. I took a lot of time to carefully plan out my paper. First, I went back to using a formal outline, I printed each article to write notes on each page about them, wrote a summary of parts of the scholarly journal that I planned to use for the paper and spent about an hour to proofread each sentence. For the most part planning out my paper worked. I did still had some errors here and there when reviewing it a second time and my citations needed work but my draft was a success. After making corrections, I felt more confident in my writing ability. I particularly liked how in the paper I never took a side as to whether there was a life after death or not; but instead tried to present both sides impartially, similar to what I should have done in the first draft of the third paper. I felt more comfortable with the tone in the final paper and the evidence I used helped promote the facts rather than my feelings, which along with creating interest in the topic, were my main goals in the paper.

In the end, with all papers considered, I've started to learn more about myself in my writing. I tend to be very passive in my writing and I love the word "would". I'm getting better with using citations and I'm starting to become a much better proofreader. Each paper showed a different side of me. A part of me that was young, learning to be cool in his own way. A news reporter trying to bring to you the details of Adam Smith. An informed political commentator on possible college and university corruption. In addition, a researcher on the afterlife. Since the beginning of the school year, I've seen my writing skills develop, falter, struggle, persevere, and grow. I hope that in the future, I can become a better writer. I expect to have some mistakes in my future essays and papers but I hope I can start to see that a lot of the problems that plagued my papers this semester become non-existent. There's a lot of

potential in my writing ability and we've only seen just a fraction of it. The future will show much better work, and all it takes is time and effort.

Respectfully,

Joseph C. Nicholas

Enclosures (4)