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Honors Intermediate Comp

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Reflective Essay

When it comes to skills and ability, many people believe that once they have reached a certain level of expertise in a certain skill, they are the best they can be and that there is no room from improvement. Though this way of thinking could not be more incorrect or ignorant, I was no exception to this rule at the start of my enrollment in Honors Intermediate Composition. Based on my high school grades and standardized test scores, I believed myself to be a fully accomplished and learned writer with a fully developed knack for composition and a fine tuned eye when it came to reading and researching. Over the course of the semester, I realized just how wrong I had been in this thinking. In regards to my reading, writing, critical thinking, and researching abilities, I am a much different student than I was at the beginning of this fall semester.

Throughout the majority of my high school career, my learning abilities in English composition were tested by how well I could study a text and then report on my understanding of the different elements of said text. I was trained to look for rhetorical elements and literary techniques throughout novels and plays while at the same time figuring out how they conveyed meaning to intended audiences. In my naïve and inexperienced thinking, I assumed that this type of reading and reporting on texts was the only type I would be expected to complete, so it was difficult for me to move out of that thinking. In my first essay composed for intermediate composition, I spoke on my difficulty in progressing from one form of reading and writing to the next. Instead of reading from traditional texts and composing an essay from the information I gathered, I analyzed my own literacy skills throughout my life, reading and analyzing how nontraditional texts such as artwork had played into my literacy development. Because I was writing about myself, a subject I like to believe I know very much about, I did not feel challenged or intimidated by this first assignment. Without challenge, however, there is no growth.

My growth as a writer in this Honors intermediate composition course really began through my preparation and composition of a literary analysis. Originally believing that my high school experience with English would make this essay a literary walk in the park, I skimped on preparations and waited until the last minute to even begin finding appropriate sources for the different genres. This was both idiotic and immature of me, and I found myself incredibly stressed out over a paper I assumed I had the skills to write with little to no effort put forth. Because I was ill prepared and my ideas were underdeveloped, leaving the final draft of my essay room for improvement, I came to the realization that I was incorrect in believing I had hit a standstill in my writing abilities and that I would put one hundred and ten percent of myself into my final essay for the course, an ethnography of a discourse community.

Choosing a discourse community I am a member of was one of the best academic decisions I made during this class. I was driven by a genuine interest in the discourse community, the National Student Speech-Language and Hearing Association, and approached the assigned readings and guided class questions with fresh motivation. Though I originally had very little idea of how to compose an ethnography, I viewed the difficulty in the assignment as a positive challenge instead of a setback or a blow to my writing ability, something I would have done had this essay been assigned at the start of the course. Instead of panicking and procrastinating as my earlier self may have done, I read and analyzed the texts needed to compose my essay using the skills I had acquired and developed throughout the class and thoroughly delved into my research. In trusting myself and my improved reading and writing ability, I turned in an essay I was proud of and received a grade I believe accurately reflected my work.

Despite my assumption that there was no room for improvement and that I had already peaked as a writer, this semester has been filled with my own personal literary and academic growth. Through the assigned readings, class discussions, and graded essays, I was challenged as a student, as a writer, and as a person. As I stated in my personal literary analysis I composed at the beginning of the semester, “It has been a long time coming, but I now read books and make meaning of other texts in a much more mature, deliberate and well thought out manner. The praise and approval of others is no longer the driving force behind how I choose to absorb and study text. Instead, I am compelled by a genuine desire of deeper, enlightened understanding.”