

Ben Boekeloo

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Reflection Essay

Throughout my journey through English 101 this semester, I have evolved as an English student in many ways. Not only have I evolved as an English student, but I have grown as a person. Most specifically, I have grown into a writer that I am proud to be. My grades on papers have gone from a 2.0 to a 3.5.

Throughout this semester, my thinking of writing has changed in many ways. One example is how I now define writing as opposed to how I used to define writing at the beginning of this semester. At the beginning of this semester, I felt that writing was just a way to complete my homework. This was evident on my first two papers because of the grades that I received and because of the quality of my work. Because I thought writing was just a way to complete my homework, I never really dug deep into the first two papers. Now that I have completed all of my portfolio pieces, I have discovered that writing is something much, much greater than just a way to complete an assignment. Writing is a way to express yourself uniquely like no one else can express you. With writing you are able to pick your audience that you are trying to address and you are able to determine what your audience will think of you by what you write down about a certain topic. It was evident in my last two papers that I now have a much better understanding of what writing is.

I have also developed quite a good understanding for what a good writing composing stage is. Throughout all the papers that I have written for English 101, I have

learned that you cannot just sit down and write a paper. There are many preparations that you must go through if you want to accomplish the feat of writing a good paper. First, you must decide on a topic, and secondly you must do research on the topic in order to gain an understanding of what you will be writing about. Third, you must decide on what sources are scholarly enough that they can be used as sources in your paper. Then, you must decide on your thesis for your paper and decide who your audience is going to be. And after all this, then you can start writing your paper. However, this does not mean that you will simply begin with the introduction. You should begin writing a paper by writing about a page or so and then come back to the introduction. After you have written this much, you should be able to accomplish the task of writing a good lead for your paper. Your introduction must be able to grab your audiences' attention and hold on to it for the rest of the paper. Finally, when you are writing a paper, you must conclude it with an appropriate ending that ties your paper together, sort of like a summary of everything that you just said in your paper. My understanding of the writing process definitely matured over the course of this semester. On the first two papers, I did not spend near enough time researching the topic that I was writing on. This was evident in the products that I put out at the beginning of the semester. My first two papers seemed to just lack an understanding of what Ebonics really is. I would just search for Ebonics on JSTOR, and then just select the first three sources to be my scholarly sources for my paper. At the end of the semester, specifically on paper three, I looked through the first three pages of a more specific search on JSTOR until I found the sources that related to my specific topic.

Your audience is one of the most important factors that will affect what you will be able to write in your paper. The audience that you are writing to will have certain ethical prejudices that they believe in, and as a writer, it is your job to respect these ethical prejudices. However, this does not mean that we, as writers, should compromise our own ethical beliefs in order to uphold the ethics of our audience. If this is the case, then as a writer, we should pick a new topic or audience, because if you are not able to communicate your own ethical beliefs about your topic, then what are you writing for?

Throughout this semester, I have written four different papers, and I have received four different grades ranging from a 2.0 to a 3.5. Obviously, these papers all have their own strengths and weaknesses, some having more strengths and some having more weaknesses. For example, one of my weaknesses throughout this semester that I struggled with was the use of quotes. At the end of my second paper, Mrs. Zuidema wrote, “Use quotes sparingly; in most instances, condense the ideas in your own words and then still remember to credit the author.” This really helped me with paper’s three and four. I seemed to improve in this area and by the end of the semester, on my last paper; you said that it would be better for me to include more quotes. So, I obviously made an improvement throughout this semester.

One specific idea that I have for improving my products as a writer is to understand how to better use quotes. For example, at the beginning of this semester, I was terrible at using quotes. I did not pick the right ones to use and overused them in both of my first two papers. However, near the end of the semester, on my last two papers, I cleaned up this area of my writing quite a bit and this helped me to receive better grades on my writing products. I think that if I solved this problem of dealing with

quotations, I would be able to publish much better products. Another example of a way that I can improve my writing process is to read the entire source that I am going to use for my paper. For example, on the first two papers, I just kind of skimmed the sources that I was going to until I found information that pertained to the paper I was writing. This did not work out very well for me and was evident in the grades that I received. As a result of skimming, I never really accomplished the main goal of either of the first two papers. However, at the end of the semester, on papers three and four, I read the entire sources and I felt like I had to shorten my writings instead of trying to stretch them into four pages like I had done on the first two papers. I also felt like I had a much better concept of what I was talking about and what the main themes were of the sources that I was using.

In conclusion, I have had many things happen to me as a writer throughout this semester. Some things have been good while others have been bad. But, in the end, I think that the changes that have taken place in my writing throughout this semester will greatly improve my writing in other classes in the near future.