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Honors English

6 October 2022

The Perspective of a Freshmen Halfway Through W140

Coming into W140 I thought I would hate it. English was my least favorite subject in high school because I never really enjoyed the articles/books that we read. Therefore, I expected to dread this class. Consequently, I have really enjoyed it and have become a better writer from it. Reading my drafts/essays out loud has always scared me, but this class forced me to branch out of my shell. I am very thankful I opened up because I received amazing feedback from my peers that helped me realize what I needed to work on in my writing. Overall, we have written three drafts in this class so far, plus a lot of free writing, which I enjoy. Free writing has forced me to build off of my ideas without going back and changing things. I am a perfectionist and would never turn an assignment in without re-evaluating it, but I quickly learned that most of the things that we turn in will never be fully finished. All of our drafts still need to be polished up and fixed.

First, for draft one we had to watch a video called “What is America?” and then read a chapter named “Peacock.” After watching the video in class for the first time I was thinking in the back of my head: What did I just watch? I did not comprehend the video at all, while all the other students seemed to know the main idea right away. I realized then that I have always struggled with finding the main idea of articles and that is a huge reason why English has been one of the harder subjects for me. As a result of my writing weakness, I struggled to write draft one and knew that I had to put more time and effort into this class than I originally was.

Next for draft two, we had to read Hannah-Jones’s article about black American history. This reading drew my attention, tugged my heartstrings, and showed me a unique way to set up an informative essay. For this article, I broke each paragraph down to fully understand the main idea, because I knew I struggled with it. In this draft, I struggled to flow my paragraphs together, so I asked my peer group about it, and they gave me very helpful tips. Lastly, before writing draft three about a personal story we did a spiral assignment in class. I never knew how much my car meant to me and what it symbolized until after this assignment. This technique then helped me write draft three because I was able to gather more information to write in the narrative portion.

Despite not really liking any of my drafts, I am most proud of my second draft. I absolutely love my second paragraph when I set the scene of Isaac Woodward’s tragic incident. My paragraph states the following:

Picture this: you have fought in the military for four years and were just released with an honorable discharge due to a battle scar. You are on your way home to see your loved one, and since the bus is stopped at a store, you ask the bus driver if you can use the bathroom, but they refuse to let you off. Nearly an hour and a half later, the bus driver stops and asks you to get off. To your surprise, when you step off the bus, there are a group of police officers, and they brutally beat you until you fall unconscious. The next day you wake up in a jail cell and cannot see; you were just beaten blind the day before. Isaac Woodward, a black American, was the victim of this assault. Woodward just fought in World War ll four and a half hours before the beating. (Draft 2)

My intention in writing this paragraph was to put my readers in Woodward’s shoes, so they could feel/think about the situation on a deeper, more personal level. I wanted to showcase an example of how badly black Americans were treated differently than most articles that students read. Similarly, to Hannah-Jones, I mentioned present-day problems that my readers could relate to and provided evidence of how black Americans have positively affected them. I stated in my draft two the following:

If it were not for the black Americans that risked their lives by protesting for a change, then America would still be an unequal, prejudiced country. For example, Rosa Parks, the mother of the civil rights movement, refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white American. Consequently, later in court, they banned segregation on all public transportation. (Draft 2)

Although I am most proud of draft two, I am excited to furtherly work on draft three. I want to work on using all the helpful techniques I have been given to improve my writing. My plan is to start formatting my papers before writing them. I will create a template that has all the main points that I want to talk about and then work on how each point works together. This will help me with my biggest weakness in writing, flowing my paper well. I also will pull out specific quotes from articles that I want to use and integrate them into my template. I want to have the base of my essay done and then elaborate on the details themselves when I write the essay.

Putting the plan, I stated above into action will make working on my draft three easier and more efficient. Since I have somewhat of a base already for this draft, I will only have to add details to the spots that need improvement. I plan to rework entirely based on Cassidy Shanks’s advice. My thoughts and ideas going into reworking this draft were the same as her suggestions. I wanted to make my story more of my own because I was stepping back from it. In my original draft, I was retelling my story the way my mom or friend could. Some suggestions Cassidy gave me to improve my narrative were to add dialogue, use more descriptive words, and elaborate on important things like how my mom reacted. The most notable and helpful thing was that she gave me examples of how to better my writing. For example, she said to say something along the lines of “I remember how rough the cement was when my leg was dragging across it” to enhance my writing with dialogue. She helped me piece together my own suggestions in order to create a great plan on how to rework my draft.

Overall W140 has been a great experience. Although, I would like to write about my hometown in this class. It has shaped me into whom I am today based on my experiences and the people around me. I also think that it would be very interesting to hear about where/how other people grew up. Other than that, the setup of this class is wonderful, the assignments are fun and not too strenuous, and I learned a lot of things about myself not just as a writer but as a person.