

## Why I Write

I'm not a crier. I cry like, maybe, three times a year, and it has kind of always been that way. It's not that I have a problem expressing myself I mean, after all, I am a writer, but I try not to let things get to me. If something annoying or upsetting happens and I notice that it bothers me, I will literally talk to myself out loud and convince my brain that it isn't a big deal. That way, I'm not bottling up any emotions, but rather I'm psychologically convincing myself that the emotions aren't there at all. I'm not saying I'm this closed-off person who's scared of emotion in general. Like Olaf in Frozen says, "I like warm hugs," and like all cliché quotes remind us, I truly do believe that "laughter is the best medicine." But, I'm fully aware that while I love to embrace the powerful positive emotions that we experience as humans, the power of sadness, a force that inevitably comes with the positive affect we are so lucky to enjoy, isn't something I find the same pleasure in embracing. This fact isn't surprising, especially if you take a look at my writing. My theme in this class is humor, most of my work for outside digital publications on campus is pretty funny, and through my writing, I strive to make people laugh or at the very least smile.

Thanks to the interview activity we did in class, I had a mini self-revelation about the state of my writing, and I realized a potential pivotal moment where my writing may have been affected to become what it is today. I'm not sure if this exercise was intended to be some sort of psychoanalytic Freudian slip technique to get us to realize something about our past and how it has ultimately affected us today, but if that was the goal- it succeeded with me. Yes, I am a model student! (I'm also a pretty big sucker for this type of self-reflection. So, if this was the intended objective, maybe refrain from doing a victory dance just yet). All self-promotion aside, my partner and I were both honestly pretty shocked when I managed to draw a connection

between a writing experience from my 6<sup>th</sup> grade English class and how it may have ultimately come to affect the main goal of my writing today, which is to evoke happiness.

I've always loved English class, especially during elementary and middle school where people were much less impressed with the academic journal citation you used and much more impressed if you managed to string together words to form some sort of coherent sentence, or if you went above and beyond and somehow threw in a killer metaphor. In my 6<sup>th</sup> grade English class, we were given the opportunity to write short stories about anything we wanted. I can't recall the exact guidelines, but what I do remember is that there were limited rules, a seemingly limitless freedom to create, and the subject was completely up to us. Of all the possible storylines, I chose to write a story about two best friends. Sounds pretty usual for a 6<sup>th</sup> grader, right? Well, not necessarily, as the story evolved far past just the subject of friendship. The plotline went like this: a new girl comes to school and is befriended by another girl. The two become fast friends, and as they get closer, the new girl is diagnosed with cancer. Ultimately, the girl with cancer dies, leaving a gift for the girl who took a chance on the new girl and became her best friend, and the girl who loses her friend is forced to cope with the death of a friend and face the reality of accepting loss. It was titled, "The Gift." Does this sound like my present writing, the kind that strives to evoke happiness and promote joy amongst those who read it? Not in the slightest. I have no idea why I chose to compose such a depressing tale, I have no idea why I made the decision to have the girl die instead of live, and I have no idea why I thought it would make sense to grapple with a topic that's so hard to deal with, even for people twice my age. Looking back at my 6<sup>th</sup> grade self and attempting to get inside my eleven-year-old mind, I think I thought it would be the most powerful. Well, kudos to me, as it turned out to be pretty powerful, but it evoked emotions I wasn't ready to face, or watch my mother face-for that matter. I had my

mom read over the paper to look for grammar mistakes and to give me her opinions for improvement, but instead of her normal red marks on my paper and some discussion about where I could switch certain things, I was met with her tears. She read the story, and she cried. I'm not talking like a, "Oh no it's just my allergies acting up" excuse for a cry. This was a full-blown sob, a mascara streaming, tissues needed-type-of-cry. Somehow, my eleven-year-old mind, with my eleven-year-old ideas, and my eleven-year-old writing, managed to make her weep. It's an image that has stuck with me for the past nine years, but until this moment I never realized how this snapshot of a memory might have affected the way I write today.

Words are powerful, and arguably, the people who believe this most are the writers, the ones who understand firsthand the extent of their control. Witnessing the jarring, yet impactful emotional outpouring of my mother allowed me to realize that my words could have an effect on people, but in realizing this, I have chosen to use their control to spread joy, rather than sadness. I've witnessed the giant smiles spread across my friends' faces after finding something relatable in my articles, I've seen my sister laugh out loud at several of my ridiculous contributions to various campus publications, and I've actually seen my mom cry (this time of laughter) over many of the outrageous anecdotes and obscure comparisons that clutter the paragraphs of my writing. The theme of my ePortfolio is, "Writing for you, but really writing for me." With this theme, in one sentence I've summed up why I love writing so much. I write to move others, to emotionally lift them up, to inspire them, and to hopefully and ultimately, bring them joy. I'm writing for them, but their happiness and their reactions are what make me the happiest, so I'm also writing for me. It's like the literary form of a symbiotic relationship, and it's the best kind of symbiosis because the only science involved is human emotion.

While I'm well aware that the goal of a composition shouldn't be to present some idealistic world filled with smiles, rainbows, and videos of puppies eating watermelon (if you have not seen this I urge you to check it out), this couldn't be further from the way I go about my writing. Rather than avoiding the sadness or the tragedies of life altogether, I now write about them to confront such topics with a sense of humor. I've come to realize that in an attempt to use my power of words for good (didn't you know all writers are superheroes?) it's not about avoiding tough topics, it's about striving to look at them in a way that is real, but innately positive.

Whether that positivity means calling out some ridiculous cultural norm and making fun of it, or whether it's defined as presenting the beauty in achieving and overcoming a major life struggle, I write with the hope of helping those who are reading whatever it is I'm chronicling, to help them feel like someone else gets it. There's someone else who understands that you won't stop eating on Thanksgiving when you're full, but rather you'll stop when you hate yourself, and there's someone else who understands that "I'll be ready in 5 minutes" may or may not be the most told lie in America. There's a reason people love pajamas, plush blankets, and fuzzy socks. Humans naturally crave comfort because nuzzled inside the comfort of your pajamas, and radiating beneath the comfort of a relatable written word, there is a sense of happiness. By writing to show readers that someone else understands, I've attempted to provide that sense of comfort, and ultimately a sense of happiness. Like I said, it's an emotion I've always found a pleasure in embracing, and with my writing, I hope to help others to embrace it as well.