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Week 5: Reflection

Looking Backward

Through creating my mind map for my three writing pieces I was able to recall that I use a lot of the same techniques and strategies while I write, no matter the genre and purpose of writing. There were indeed some variations and I could remember that during my more creatively inclined works I felt I had more freedom to play around with the rules of grammar and structure. I didn't feel required to stay to the strict form of academic prose and because of this I was able to feel a lot better about my work. In cases that I was more required to stick to formulated rules it was a lot more painstaking and less enjoyable, yet at the same time I still came away from such pieces of writing feeling like I learned something about myself as a writer, and if it was a research based paper then I definitely learned something about a new topic, like Denver water use in my op-ed piece.

It was fun to recall the topics within these pieces of writing specifically. Each of these was written during a different point in my life but I can remember each so clearly. I remember the Theory of Writing essay so well because I focused on the theory of poetry and how it has evolved throughout time, moving from oral poetry, to written, to published, and now again to oral performance. Since I am studying poetry and one day hope to be known for my own poems, this was useful to see the fluctuating styles and fads that poetry has gone through. In my short story, "White Prayer Pages", I wrote this at a really difficult time in my life and I can recall all my personal experiences that I played off of from high school and it made me remember that I had been reading other shorter form fiction and books made of vignettes or short stories, which gave me the inspiration to write a story made of vignettes. Finally my op-ed was the most recent so it was easy to recall that topic, and it is still so relevant to worry about sustainability in Denver and all over the world. I still think of the information I found during this project nearly every day as I live my regular life.

Looking Forward

I would very much like to continue to challenge my writing to be in the shape to become published one day which is something I realized was an underlying purpose of two of the three pieces in my mind map. This is a great goal to strive for with more of my pieces and as I get further into my writing career I will want to have some pieces in the works of getting published, so in any case this is always a goal to be looking towards. I especially want to continue working on my short story of "White Prayer Pages", and it helps that this is my revision piece for this class.

If I were to continue to revise this piece as it is for the future and hopefully future publication, I would for one thing add more to it. I know that it feels bare and needs some more pieces, more vignettes. This is a long process that I am willing to take on, I would want this to be

able to become a book if I were to revise it fully. I would work on making the main character more relatable, the other characters need to come alive more, readers want to get to know them too. I think for the most part I need to get the main point across of who my narrator is and maybe why she acts and writes the way that she does. This can be improved by many things, first I need to read more, that always helps, and I can find ways that other writers bring across their own stubborn characters without feeling too dramatic or angsty. I need to continue writing; it's hard to stay in the same mood that this story gives off, so the more I work at it the more it might evolve and shift into something new and possibly something a lot better and uplifting.

If I went back to revise the other two pieces, I would focus more on the research path. I know there is more information to find and especially now that it has been some time since I dug into these topics there might be some new information to find. In the essay I can say I now have even more experience with poetry plus I can note how the oral performance mode of poetry today is already seeing a little bit of a decline in interest and I would look into why that might be and where poetry might go next. The op-ed would need new hooks and more fulfilling ways to reach readers now that the seasons have changed and especially now that everyone is under lockdown from COVID. That would add some great new findings of domestic water use and it would be great for people who are home all the time now to think more about how they are living. In all of these pieces I would be able to delve more into the grammar aspects now that I have taken courses about grammar and had more tedious graders look at my papers. I could look for clarity, readability, and overall statistics of my work to see what I might want to improve.

Looking Inward

Like I said before, I was able to feel a lot better about the more creative aspects of my writing, so I feel great about the short story and I feel pretty good about the essay and op-ed as they both use a few creative elements like pictures and poetic outtakes. I learned that my own writing likes to shift into the creative, and that's certainly the poet in me trying to get out. I also learned that writing in general still keeps its own tendencies even as times change. Over the years it seems that while my writing skills have gotten better, I still have my comfort zones and certain things I still cling to. In all of these pieces I have a very conversational voice and while different genres should call for more formal approaches it seems that this wasn't something I could ever completely kick out of my writing. This then shows that I learned a lot about myself as a writer by looking into these pieces. I could see that all of my inspiration and purpose to writing in the first place actually stems from schoolwork with the projects I've done, articles I've read, and novels I've been assigned. This shows me that I do have a deep-seeded need and love for my education for the time being. I also learned that I like to stick to my guns because I remember being told to be more formal at times or not say some details so explicitly like I would if I were speaking. I thought about this a lot but I never wanted to take away that part of my writing voice. This is also possibly the creative writer in me who is used to coping with workshops and revisions in more self-satisfying ways.

The risks I take in writing also stem from the fact I stick to my guns and rely heavily on the creative side of my brain. It's risky to go against the grain and write short, choppy, seemingly bland sentences in a fiction class simply for a character type in "White Prayer Pages," it's risky to compare poetry to fashion for a personal view of writing theory, and it's risky to scold and call out the reader in conversation in an op-ed. I know very well that these are informal and unexpected, but at the same time I have come to expect these moves from my own writing now that I have become familiar with it. It becomes less of a risk if I can maneuver it confidently, and the confidence comes from writing about things I enjoy and writing in styles that I would personally love to read. So while these are risks that I have taken, I find myself very comfortable in the choices I make and as the writer I have become.

Looking Outward

My short story of "White Prayer Pages" felt like it was mostly written for myself, with the audience very little in mind. The audience is usually something I think of much later in the writing process, so it was written knowing that others would read it, but the idea of this story is to feel more like journal entries or a diary. In this case I didn't want it to feel too structured to an audience. Nobody actually thinks their journals will get read by masses of people, so it's supposed to be casual, maybe reflective, maybe self-deprecating at times. I wanted it to be very honest and affect the readers deeply by showing them how a teenage girl might think and talk about herself and others. I didn't necessarily need to cause some grand surprise but I wanted it to make them think about the people in their lives and consider new perspectives. In my theory essay I knew while writing it that the reader would only be my professor, so unfortunately it was mainly written to check all the rubric boxes and get a good grade. I did want the professor to see poetry in a new way and see it from my perspective, so again I wanted her to get a new perspective. I often see writing minor classes as less aware of poetry because most of the assignments are prose heavy, so this time I did want a bit of a surprise. I wanted the professor to see that while I care about writing its poetry that I wanted to explore more rather than the countless other topics that one can find about writing. For my op-ed, the audience was DU students, so I wanted to affect them by showing a big problem we are facing along with the rest of the city and state. I wanted them to be surprised at how poorly we are all doing at saving water. I wanted this piece to really make the audience reflect on how they live and how they could live better. I wanted them to be critical of themselves. It seems that so far my audiences have been affected how I'd hoped.

These pieces altogether make me feel like a writer because of the flexibility I have. I can weave in and out of different genres, write for many purposes, get inspiration from countless contexts, and overall have fun with it. The development of my own style and voice through all of my pieces also makes me a writer because this is something I have developed and began to understand my own voice and how I write over many years, and the fact that I keep at it and know how to reach certain goals and challenge myself shows just how I am a writer and will

continue to be one. I give more effort than just to meet deadlines and get a passing grade, and this makes me very proud to say that I care. This form of caring has always spoken to me as being a writer and I would never deny it.