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Writing With Archives-Eng101-015

Dr. Cooke

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### **Introduction**

Coming into the first Semester of my freshman year, I had always been terrified of writing papers. Math always came more naturally to me than English, especially coming from a Ukranian family. However, throughout the course of the semester, I believe I have grown tremendously as a writer, to the point where I no longer dread essays. Specifically, I worked on analysis as well as fluidity, and my efforts resulted in immense improvement, which can be seen in my portfolio:

<https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/thepersonalispublic/daniel-genzelev/>. Although I still prefer math to writing, I now view myself as a competent writer.

### **Outcome 1: Known-New Chain:**

This learning outcome helps students with structure, idea-development, and fluidity. During the semester, I utilized the known-new chain to help with my choppy writing. An excerpt from my first Reflection Diary Entry epitomizes how my writing became smooth and fluid by the end of the semester: ““His selection to play Othello in Shakespeare’s *Othello* marked a ground-breaking achievement for African Americans in the theater world. Robeson infiltrated a predominantly white industry: the images show Robeson next to only white actors, rather than African Americans. Robeson’s casting proved not only that he was capable of reaching the expected level of actors, but that he could surpass most and become a superstar.”

I used a transition word in nearly every sentence to ensure my writing would be easy and pleasant to read, rather than difficult and choppy.

My portfolio exemplifies my development with regards to transitions and smoothness throughout the course of the semester. The first artifact, a piece of in-class writing from early September, demonstrates the low-level I was at in the beginning of the course. In two entire paragraphs of writing, I can count on one hand how many sentences transition seamlessly into each other. Once Professor Cooke pointed out this issue, I immediately began to focus on it. The beginnings of my improvement are evident in my next artifact: my Proposal Final Draft. The Proposal had to include multiple components, ranging from an introduction to and a statement of purpose and an objective. After meeting with Professor Cooke, he explained to me that although I certainly have more transitions than I did before, my writing was not yet fluid. As a result of this feedback, I diverted a majority of the time I spent editing my third artifact: my First Reflection Diary Entry, to fluidity. My effort paid off, and my third artifact exemplifies this achievement through this excerpt:

““Actual content begins in the “Stories” section, which is first from the left-hand side and is essentially ski-world news, displaying articles on both the racing and freestyle disciplines. Next, “Gear Locker” displays the latest gear, along with reviews and special sales. Following the “Gear Locker”, “Videos” showcases new epic ski-lines by famous skiers. Unlike the previous three tabs, the next tab, “Monumental” does not clearly convey the content it contains.”

The writing is smooth, fluid, and stream-lined, highlighting my improvement as a writer. Furthermore, my conclusion about my featured artifact: my Narrative Essay, shows that now, my former weakness has become one of my main strengths. In the Narrative Essay, I used reflective pauses, which were extremely complicated to incorporate fluidly into my essay, and Professor Cooke hailed my efforts by telling me that these pauses were one of the main highlights of my Narrative Essay.

## Outcome 2: Analysis

Coming into the semester, I was not able to analyze my own work effectively: I struggled to find my own flaws. Likewise, I often reverted to paraphrasing instead of analyzing deeply when discussing an idea or concept. My portfolio demonstrates how my analytical ability has improved throughout the course of the semester.

My first artifact, an in-class writing on a speech delivered by the famous August Wilson, I had to analyze his ideas. Rather than analyze, I paraphrased:

“I believe that your original perspective has been broadened by your real-life plight and other experiences. The African American community, like you said, has so much to offer America culturally, but unfortunately the ignorance of others bars the rest of us from learning about that intricate culture.”

I essentially restate Wilson’s ideas instead of delving deeper into them. My second artifact, my Curated Exhibit, as well as my third artifact, my Reflection Diary Entry 3 highlight how my analytical skills improved as the semester went on. The exhibit required me to analyze images and relate aspects of the images to larger themes of my exhibit. A picture of slaves on a plantation led to this analysis:

“This image corresponds to the second Act of *Tom-Tom*, which focuses on slavery and plantation life. The slaves can be seen wearing identical uniforms, which symbolize how masters attempted to strip slaves of their humanity by taking away their individuality. The plantation songs in the second Act reflect this forced conformism: some focus on the hatred of captivity, while others are more traditional African songs to boost morale. Furthermore, a new genre, call-and-response, stemmed from the plantation era. *Tom-Tom*’s musical accompaniment gradually shifts to call-and-response as the second Act progresses, signifying the African American generational transition.”

I related a minute detail, the slave uniforms, to the central themes of the significance of music and the stripping of individuality. Moreover, the reflective pauses in my featured artifact, my Narrative Essay, demonstrate how I am now able to assess my own work. In the pauses, I describe exactly what a random visitor to my curated exhibit was able to ascertain at a certain point in the exhibit, even if some aspects I had intended to convey were not clear. I was able to criticize my own work through these reflective pauses: a skill I struggled with immensely in the beginning of the Semester.

**Conclusion:**

This semester has taught me to appreciate writing as a process. The quality of work I can now produce shocks me. I showed my Narrative Essay to my parents, and they too were baffled. Analyzing ideas and multimedia, as well as writing smoothly and fluidly, have now become my strengths instead of my weaknesses. I am extremely grateful for the effort Professor Cooke put in to helping me improve as a writer this semester.