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English 1102M

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Personal Paper Topics

Coming into this semester, I was scared about taking English, regardless of the level. I
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n f j l j f m l m l g j j i i h k i j n f l j N h i j j n j n
However, I did not know if I could follow her suggestion with the specific topics and stories she
gave us. With the assignment of the first paper, I shockingly accepted the new freedom that came
along with English 1102M: I could pick whatever story I wanted and choose a topic to
accompany it. As the semester went on, I found new freedom in my writing and realized that I
h i h i h j j n j n m h j f n n j N j j j j j i m j j j l
I found that I could relate to the characters, and any connection with the characters within the
story instantly makes any analysis easier and more enjoyable. As a result, I chose topics of
interest that enabled me to explore an aspect of literature that I would not have gotten to
otherwise.

For my first paper, I decided to write about John Okada's *No-No Boy* and address Ichiro's
insanity due to his lack of personal identity. Being a first-generation American of Vietnamese
descent, I could understand his pain. My parents were refugees of the Vietnam War and moved
to America; they married in America and had me in America. Therefore, my loyalty lies with
America, but at the same time, I cannot completely ignore and reject my Vietnamese heritage
because then I would disown my parents and where they came from. While I was not held in an

internment camp like Ichiro, my parents spent time in refugee camps in Thailand and America with citizens thinking they were superior to my parents. The anger caused by the arrogant citizens could potentially drive a person to do unspeakable acts, and I wanted to convey that idea in my paper. Since I could picture myself as Ichiro, I knew how to prove my thesis by looking at the story from his perspective.

For my analysis of a dramatic work, I focused on the various volumes of music in David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*. Many years of playing the piano, violin, and guitar enabled me to recognize patterns in music in general, and as I read *M. Butterfly*, I realized that certain pieces of music would accompany a character on stage with a certain volume, according to his or her emotion at the time. Also, I noticed that the volume would drastically change at a critical point in the play. I became interested in why Hwang chose to base his play off Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly* and why he incorporated so much music when his work was not technically classified as a musical. Using my background in music, I knew that music often expresses emotions without words, and even before a scene begins, the audience can imply what will happen next, judging from the music that introduces the scene. Because I could use my musical knowledge, this particular paper was my favorite one to write and analyze.

I have always loved the song for its catchy instrumental, but I never truly looked at it from a different perspective. I, too, wanted to provide my own thoughts about the ambiguous lyrics. This paper proved to be the most challenging because poetry, regardless of the shape or form, has been my nemesis. Also, I wanted to get the meaning of the song right because I adore it. However, as I wrote my paper, I realized that the song had no exact meaning; the contradicting

images and diction make having an exact meaning impossible. In the end, I could at least show the progression of the song from festive to frightful, knowing there are no real answers.

I feel that my writing has improved throughout the semester. My thoughts are now fluid and clear, and I know how to construct a strong argument. However, I can see my grammar slipping before my eyes, but those grammar mistakes can be easily fixed. I want to take my writing a step further and possibly write on a topic with no prior knowledge. Even though I have not completely matured in my writing, I have a foundation that I can work with and move forward.