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Introductory Reflective Essay

My mind has always tempted me to break through the boundaries involved in the composition of traditional essays. In my high school English classes, I was bored with the standard commentary and "essay" assignments because I felt as if my voice could not be conveyed. My senior year, I discovered journalism. Immediately, I found my niche in the opinions section of our newspaper. Through this outlet, I could write about anything my heart desired, as I was not constrained by format, typical sentence structure and a conventional teacher. When I came to the University of Georgia as an English Major, I was hit with the daunting realization that I would soon be immersed in writing and analysis once again. My fear was that my personal expression would have to be sacrificed in order to receive an acceptable grade in my class. Little did I know, my English classroom experience would challenge me in a way that encouraged my style of writing to flourish.

In our first major writing assignment, we were asked to analyze a song that parallels our life and incorporate both aspects into our paper. If there is one thing I love as much as writing, it is music. I knew exactly what I wanted to say, but I had no earthly idea how to intertwine a song into my thoughts. In the past I would have given the paper my best attempt and turned it in, hoping I accomplished what the prompt asked for. However, our class requires students to turn in several drafts of our essay as steppingstones to our final draft. This concept was not entirely new to me, since I had been an editor for the newspaper, but it had never been a part of my English courses. For the first time, I had not only one pair of eyes looking over my paper, but my professor's and my classmates' as well. This brought to light issues in my writing that I had simply skipped over. The writing process for this paper allowed me to come closer to my full potential, but also, the topic provoked a sense of intrigue in me. In my portfolio, I have included this first essay as my Revised Essay #4. I did so to display my successful integration of song analysis into my personal account. This first essay is also a transition into my Revised Essay #4 because it shows my development from one prompt to another while still maintaining my individuality as a writer.

As the semester progressed, I began to understand that my voice could be heard in my writing, even if the subject was not myself. In our last paper, we were told to analyze the soundtrack of a film. If there is anything I love as much as writing and music, it is film. First, I chose a familiar soundtrack that interprets the actions and dialogue on screen. The key to this paper was to balance the plot and the analysis of the underlying soundtrack as they walk hand and hand throughout the film. I picked this paper as my Revised Essay #4 to demonstrate my progression as a writer. At first, I found it very difficult to formulate appropriate descriptions of the background musical accompaniments to *Stranger Than Fiction*, but as I thought of the feelings the music provoked within me, it all fell into place. Since I was able to write about material that resonated with my passions and impacted me personally, I found that analyzing the film was more effortless than I expected. That same voice illustrated in my Revised Essay #4 is still present, but the difference is that my style emerges when analyzing someone else's material.

I have come to the conclusion that my writing will never be perfect. It will never reach its full potential because growth is a continual process. Before this semester, I thought I could only write creatively when my writing did not concern my school assignments. I have come to the understanding that I can utilize that foundation to unpack meanings and analyze other writers' work while allowing my original thoughts to intrigue my audience. I may still find the occasional misspelling or grammatical mishap, but I am much more confident in my ability as a versatile writer. My portfolio is a depiction of the evolution I have undergone in order to reach the current state of mind I am in. Now, I optimistically forge ahead, without expectation, so that I may embrace and apply whatever else the

writing world has in store for me.