

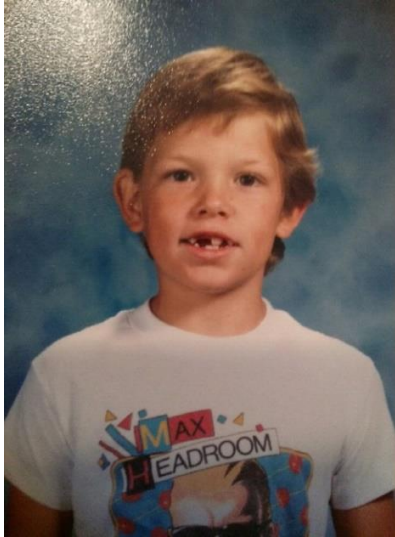
Allow Myself to Introduce. . . Myself

Life's journey will sometimes take you back along a path you've taken before. Which is not to say that the starting point is always the finish line, but you might find yourself returning to familiar territory every once in a while. And that's fine; what we do between the start and finish are the important bits. I like to believe the journey is more important than the finish.

This is my portfolio biography, the introduction to the finale. A fitting venue, then, for talk of starts and finishes. It is also the final first assignment to the first college-level writing course of my entire life. Not such monumental news, really. I'm sure, to professors of First-year Composition, since that it is the standard you see every semester. How should I set my biography apart from all the other students' submissions, then? I strongly considered going with an analogy about elephants returning to the place of their birth to die, but that seemed too dreary for an introduction. Instead, you get something we all love and enjoy, retro 80s pictures!



That's me on the right, circa 8-bit Nintendo and Reaganomics. I am what you might consider "thirty-five years old." If you are among the peers with whom I spend the majority of my day, you'd probably shorten that to just plain "old." I never stop marveling at this notion, of my being a colleague and cohort with a crowd I could consider "just a bunch of kids." Which is actually really awesome since I love feeling like a kid. I get to do it as much as I want these days! Previous to this semester, I was a normal, middle-class office employee with exactly the type of responsibilities you would imagine. Before that, I was in the Army, living a life where every minute of every day was planned weeks in advance (usually without my consent). Before that, I was the same type of post-high school kid that I call my peer today. The same kid sitting next to me in English 1101, just fifteen or twenty years removed and with a little less hair on top. In my high-school years and before, even as far back as kindergarten, writing was what I wanted to do with my life. That is likely a sentiment you see way too often in First-year Composition portfolios, but bear with me for one minute. English professors love a book worm, I know, and I'm not here to butter you up with my love for literature. I do remember reading my first word, though, or at least I remember the first time I saw letters on a page and recognized them for what they were: "the." I guess, in terms of English Composition autobiographies, this is as good a place to start as any.



There I am, in kindergarten or first grade or sometime around then, and I can read. Pretty cool, right? I even liked reading! I did a lot of it, any time I could, really. In school, at home, with friends, basically any time I had to myself, I was turning a page or returning a stack of books to the library dropbox. By the sixth grade I was a locust, devouring Madeleine L'Engle and Stephen King with reckless abandon. I started to write for myself, too, penning short stories and songs but nothing serious. I felt, at that time, like my real talent and passion were in editing the work of others. You know that feeling when you see a typo in some random trade paperback, probably in its tenth or twelfth printing, and you wonder at all the people who glanced over it in all the years of that book being written and revised and republished? I loved that feeling, knowing that you found the error that everyone else read past. This was my plight in the world at age twelve: to eradicate the paperback typo.

As is the case with childhood passions, I soon found time for other things in life, and my love for literature waned on my way into middle school. I was still reading, but not so often for myself. In fact, I was reading quite a bit as a result of my schoolwork, which rubbed me the wrong way: who were my teachers to decide what I was going to do with my time? Writing assignments left me feeling the same sort of sourness, leading to my doing the bare minimum

and achieving even less. I took to creative writing easily through high school, but I lacked the passion to look at my assignments as anything more than chores. Ultimately, I graduated with decent grades and enlisted in the Army shortly afterward. I find it interesting in retrospect, because I had literally the entire scope of military careers to choose from, everything from infantry rifleman to nuclear engineer, and after not liking schoolwork so much, I still chose to be a reporter. I decided that I would write structured, serialized, standardized assignments all day long, the very thing that soured the taste of writing for me in high school. But I knew I had a knack for it, and it seemed to suit me well. I didn't so much mind the work as much as I imagined.

After leaving the Army, I was again faced with that always-daunting life decision: how was I going to earn a living? To keep a long story short, I got a job writing. Yes, of all things, writing. I accepted an entry-level Quality Assurance position at a small software company, writing step-by-step processes, test cases, and help pages for our customers and employees. All very much in-line with what I had been doing in the Army, and almost exactly what I claimed to loathe about writing for the previous decade of my life. But, I saw an opportunity to progress in my career, and I had found that I didn't so much mind the mundane side of writing: it was easy work, and I didn't have to put forth much effort to get decent content released and to keep the boss happy. Within five years, I had transitioned into the company's newly-established training department as a technical trainer and course developer (even more step-by-step exercises and user manuals), eventually moving into a position where I could dictate the content of the coursework I was writing. Now things would be different; I was the person in charge of the mundane assignments! I was even living my childhood dream, editing other writer's typos all day

long. Such a glorious life, am I right? Well, after a few years of my dream job, I decided it was time for something new. I thought to give college a try (albeit a few years late), and here I am.



Just a fresh-faced freshman in English 1101, surrounded by a classroom of peers in the same unfamiliar, uneasy position. To be honest about it, the majority of them are miles ahead of me in the things that really matter, things like MLA formatting and identifying appositives. I am hoping my portfolio will tell a story, but it may be the same one being told by everyone else in my class, the same one you will read a hundred-some-odd times before getting to start your holiday break. Because while I learned a hell of a lot in this class, this semester of study has taught me that I have a long way to go before I am the best writer I can be. Having said that, here is my best work from this semester; I'm hoping that you won't have to deal with too many typos.