

Symphony of Reflection

Composed by Summer Gomez

Movements:

- I..... *Overture: Theme on A Major* (Biography)
- II..... *Allegro* (Introductory Reflective Essay)
- III..... *Adagio* (Essay 1)
- IV..... *Scherzo* (Essay 2)
- V..... *D.C. al Coda* (Revision)
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- VII..... *Final Performance* (Wild Card)

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ENGL 1102

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Score

I. Overture

Theme on A Major

Summer Gomez

Piano

Overture (n): The overture is the first piece of music an audience hears before a performance. It often includes themes from each of the following pieces, giving the audience a preliminary glimpse of what's yet to come.

I've always been the kind of person to plan out my life with excruciating care. When I was sixteen, I put together a spreadsheet of over sixty colleges and universities that I might apply to, including information like cost, location, and acceptance rate. This was back when I still planned to major in musical theatre, the longtime passion of my teenage years. Theatre was my entire life in middle and high school; it was where I found my community and improved myself. Unfortunately, music and theatre are difficult fields to find success in. Someone once told me early on in my music career, "If you can think of anything else you could do and still be happy, do that instead." I couldn't think of anything else. As I grew older, my skills in music matured, though my head stayed stubbornly in the clouds. I ended up applying to sixteen of those sixty schools, and after many cross-country trips for auditions and several orchestral pieces written, I was accepted into Belmont University as a music composition major. I loved composing music almost as much as I loved theatre, but Belmont wasn't the right place for me. It takes a very

specific kind of person to fit in at Belmont; a mostly white, mostly straight, very rich kind of person. As a lesbian Latina from rural Georgia, I didn't quite fit the bill. I was exposed to a much more commercial side of music I hadn't seen before, where in order to release music and make it big you needed ample financial resources at your disposal. I grew very concerned about my future composing music, with no financial support behind me. I also grew extremely lonely in an environment where I was so clearly a social outlier. When the university unexpectedly and inexplicably cut off my need-based scholarship (despite initially promising four years of aid), it was almost a relief. I moved back to Georgia, re-applied for UGA, and worked full-time at Starbucks while I sorted things out.

When I started attending UGA in January of 2024, I had major concerns about my major. Back in high school, I had always been of the mindset that I would be willing to struggle through anything for the sake of pursuing my passion; however, after having experienced what it was like to work full-time at a Starbucks, I realized that this wasn't a life I could tolerate forever. My head was now out of the clouds, and my feet more firmly on the ground. *If you*



can think of anything else you could do and still be happy, do that instead. Could I think of anything else? I suppose I've always liked history, and found myself fascinated by the study of archaeology... After a difficult period of deliberation, I decided that majoring in Anthropology and studying to be an archaeologist would be a more logical and beneficial choice for my future than continuing on with my music degree. I left music behind me for a better future, dragging my feet across the threshold as I went. Today, I enjoy my anthropology classes immensely and I'm slowly finding ways of getting excited about my new future as an archaeologist. It's been hard work breaking into the field this late, but I don't regret

my decision. I still miss composing—leaving music behind was the worst breakup I've ever gone through—but I'm making my way into a better future on much more secure footing.

As an ode to my love of music, I've decided to approach writing this portfolio in the same way I would compose an orchestral symphonic piece. So, without further ado, please enjoy my *Symphony of Reflection!*

Score

II. Allegro

Introductory Reflective Essay

Summer Gomez

Allegro (♩ = ca. 120)

Piano

Allegro (adj): Often used in the opening of a symphony, *Allegro* is a very fast-paced tempo marking that drives the symphonic narrative forward with haste.

Close-Reading, Close-Watching, and Close-Listening:

My Newfound Skills Regarding the Analysis of Literature

Music is all about interpretation. To some, a melody may sound happy; to others, it may sound sad, nostalgic, agitated, or even reflective. Lyrics can also vary person to person, taking on new meaning with every listener who hears them. Whether they know it or not, these variations cause people to analyze music and lyrics every day, to closely examine the auditory structure of a melody and draw conclusions about it. As a composer, I constantly analyze the musical works of others and myself to create the most emotionally evocative product possible. Before taking English 1102, I didn't know that these would be transferrable skills; however, after learning about close-reading and literary analysis I began to realize that literature can be just as structured and interpretive as music. I learned that there are differences between analyzing different forms of literature and media, such as plays, poetry, and films. I also discovered my own process in writing and structuring an essay through outlines, drafts, and polishing. After lectures that taught me the proper ways of analyzing and close-reading, I improved my methods of incorporating evidence to support a complex thesis. After completing English 1102, I can assert with confidence that I have improved my literary analysis skills by developing a thorough

understanding of close reading and gaining experience with several different forms of media like monologues, poetry, and film.

Analyzing Sheila Black's poem "Reconstruction" for my essay "Reconstructing Identity" was the first time I learned the true value of close-reading. I'll be transparent: on my initial read-through, the poem made no sense. Unlike a monologue such as "Hamish," which has a very clear story and message, I looked at the lines and stanzas of "Reconstruction" with no comprehension, unable to glean the poet's meaning. Despite my love of songwriting, poetry has always felt like an elusive form of literature to me. It's similar to abstract art; I see it, I like it, but I don't really understand it at all. That changed during the poetry unit of English 1102. When we first read the poem as a class, my professor explained how to begin the analysis process. She told us which literary devices to look for, like metaphors, similes, imagery, and others. I began the process by underlining and circling words of significance, doing my best to pay close attention to each word and phrase individually, and then as a whole. Suddenly, I saw parallels in the poem that were hidden before. In one stanza, I noticed, "Similar to the earlier verbiage of ghosts and bullets, the bloody imagery leaves the audience with the impression that pressure has been put upon the narrator to view pain relievers as morally incorrect." This epiphany, representative of Black's whole point for writing the poem, had completely escaped me on my first read-through. Bit by bit, I began to understand the poet's intent and to draw conclusions of my own about her writing. I was able to analyze the poem on a deeper level to get at the crux of the poet's emotions and intentions. I pointed out nuances in the poet's verbiage, writing, "She states, 'I was remade, and I fell' (Black 38), a slightly ironic phrase; since even as she descends, her spirit improves." By the end of my analysis, I had a holistic and comprehensive understanding of Black's meaning. I better understood the literary devices she used, such as metaphors, visual imagery, and allegories. When before I had looked at the poem as a heap of disconnected words organized into

stanzas on a page, I was now able to draw thoughtful conclusions— for example, “The narrator of the poem draws similarities between the growing rings of a tree, strengthening a natural organism, and the concentric, expanding circles of a ripple to the osteological processes that heal a bone after breaking.” After completing the poetry unit, I feel confident in my skills of close-reading, analyzing, and understanding poems.

Before this class, film was a form of media I had never considered analyzing before. I have experience with scripts in theatre, having performed a few plays and musicals in the past, but theatre can be very different from film. Analyzing the monologue “Hamish” required a lot of brainpower, but I am more comfortable analyzing characters in a play considering I have first-hand experience with theatrical media. Films, however, are a completely different format to tackle. Typically when I sit down on my couch and throw on a movie, I’m not thinking about the overarching themes and literary devices used in the script to convey the actors’ and directors’ intent— or so I thought. I realized when writing my essay “Independence in the Deaf Community: An Analysis of the Movie *CODA*” that my brain was working overtime during my initial watch-through to catch tiny moments of meaning, something I do quite often when watching films or television shows. I realized that I am *always* analyzing media in my brain, even when I don’t “have to” for class. Once I figured that out, it was much easier to take the jumbled thoughts and opinions from my brain and organize them into a structured academic analysis on the page. After I watched the movie for the first time, I had a wealth of ideas that I wanted to write about. My first task was to narrow the scope of my essay and form a concise, effective thesis statement to guide my research and writing moving forward. I landed on the thesis, “The movie *CODA* examines the barriers to communication that affect deaf families and hearing children, establishing that it is possible for both CODAs and deaf families to develop independent identities while still maintaining a strong family bond.” Now, with a clear direction

for my essay, I began my process of researching and collecting quotes from the movie that I thought were relevant. This was a chance for me to apply my new close-reading knowledge from previous units in a completely different format; instead of close-reading, I was close-watching and close-listening. I focused my analysis on pivotal moments in the movie, like when I write, “After a period of verbal words supplementing her argument, Ruby goes fully silent, emphatically signing the phrase that narratively represents the crux of all conflict so far: ‘No. Don’t put this on me. It’s not my fault’ (1:13:30-1:13:50)”. After considering this line in the context of the film, I provided my personal interpretation of it: “Despite being a hearing child, Ruby’s most authentic method of communication and expression is through ASL.” Considering that film is a visual form of media, through close-watching and close-listening I realized that the directors and scriptwriters use both words and an intentional lack of words to tell their story. I used both sentences from the script and silent scenes to support my thesis, for example, “When Ruby’s music teacher, Mr. V, asks her to explain how music makes her feel, Ruby first responds with ‘I don’t know. It’s hard to explain,’ before expressing her thoughts through a series of signs (0:32:46-0:33:00).” I then analyze the importance placed on the signs in this scene, instead of on Ruby’s actual lines in the script: “In Ruby’s mind, her thoughts and feelings are better expressed through signing (her first and most comfortable language) as opposed to verbal words.” After analyzing the movie *CODA*, I learned a completely different method of close-reading and literary analysis that improved my comprehension of a wider variety of media.

The best part about my new confidence in analyzing literature is that I will undeniably be able to apply these skills to my coursework in other classes—in fact, I already have. This semester, I wrote several essays for my history and anthropology courses that required me to analyze several ancient primary sources. Thankfully, through my practice and experience in English 1102, I was able to effectively analyze and interpret these difficult sources and draw

thoughtful conclusions about the authors and societies from which they originated. Additionally, academia isn't the only place I can apply these skills; I've found myself noticing similes, metaphors, imagery, and other literary devices in my day-to-day life, enabling me to better understand media and even the music that I compose. Overall, the literary analysis and close-reading skills I developed in English 1102 have left me substantially better equipped for my both my future classes and my broader experiences in life.

Score

III. Adagio

Essay 1

Summer Gomez

Adagio ♩ = 56

Piano



Adagio (adj): a tempo marking that tells the musicians to play slowly. The second movement of a symphony is typically more lyrical or dramatic, providing a contrast from the livelier first movement.

Reconstructing Identity

“Reconstruction,” written by talented poet Sheila Black, is a poem included in the collection *Beauty is a Verb*. As an individual with XLH (commonly known as vitamin-D resistant rickets), Black’s poems provide nuanced insight into the issues often faced by disabled individuals, exploring dark themes through striking imagery and layered symbolism. In “Reconstruction,” the narrator reflects in isolation late at night, having just endured a medical procedure that left her body in a great amount of pain. Conflicted on whether or not to take pain medication, she calls upon memories from childhood and ancient Greek myths, weighing her guilt and her chance of relief. Throughout the poem, Sheila Black uses metaphors and natural imagery to contrast nature with medicine, drawing on references to childhood and allusions to Greek mythology in order to present a nuanced description of the inner turmoil disabled individuals experience when taking pain relievers to alleviate the symptoms of their disability.

While Black uses beautiful natural imagery of lush trees to describe the natural healing process, she employs figurative speech comparing the process of unnatural healing (like taking medication) to death. The narrator of the poem draws similarities between the growing rings of a

tree, strengthening a natural organism, and the concentric, expanding circles of a ripple to the osteological processes that heal a bone after breaking:

The rings of trees accreted
slowly, one by one,
spread ripples from a dropped
stone, the healed bones hardening. (Black, lines 12-15)

Here, Black uses imagery that would usually evoke a sense of calm and pensiveness in a reader to provide an ironic contrast to the harsh reality they symbolize; the painful reparation process that occurs as she can “feel [her] bones knitting themselves / into a new shape” (9-11). Changed from their former state, the narrator describes her bones as “...not even a ghost of the form they had been” (17-18), employing more deathly figurative speech to convey that she views the medical procedure in a negative light on some level, given that it changed her “natural” state. If her natural body was once a beautiful tree, she now feels as though her old self has died. The comparison of medical processes to death continues when Black uses a simile to equate codeine (a pain-relieving drug) to an implement of destruction, writing, “The codeine was blue, shaped / like a small bullet” (19-20). Black juxtaposes natural imagery that evokes a sense of beauty with harsh descriptions of medical pain to convey the narrator’s sense of conflict; if she wants to maintain the natural workings of her body, she must continue to bear the pain.

Having established the narrator’s negative perception of medicine, Black uses childhood references and allusion to Greek myths to convey that the narrator feels guilt about having to use medication, a decidedly unnatural method of healing. She describes her mother’s attitude toward medication as disapproving, implying that the narrator was taught from a young age (birth, potentially) to frown upon the use of pain relievers in medical procedures. She writes of her own birth,

My mother did not believe in such simple
relief of pain. She had stayed
awake even when we were born,
seen us slide out bloodied” (21-24).

Similar to the earlier verbiage of ghosts and bullets, the bloody imagery leaves the audience with the impression that pressure has been put upon the narrator to view pain relievers as morally incorrect, and consequently to shun them. Additionally, the detail that her mother “stayed awake” during the births parallels the narrator’s current inability to sleep as she reflects on her current pain long into the night, “past midnight / when the pills stopped / working” (7-9). Her aversion to medicine reveals generational trauma, feeding the flames of her indecision. She alludes to the Greek myth of Persephone, eating pomegranate seeds that will trap her in Hades for eternity. Black uses the pomegranate seeds as a metaphor for the pain-relieving pills, presenting medication as a self-inflicted prison in the narrator’s mind, a one-way road from which she can’t turn back. Black includes the core sentiment of the myth, a phrase she remembers from her childhood: “*If you take a single seed / you will stay down here forever*” (32-33). When the narrator does finally choose to end her pain, she does so with guilt and a sense of internal damnation, saying “I swallowed the pills furtively, / felt myself plunge, a girl / down a well” (34-36). By throwing herself down this well of pain-relief, having chosen the codeine “bullets” instead of the natural method of healing, the narrator feels as though she has actively chosen a metaphorical death of identity.

After taking the pills, the narrator uses metaphors and contrasting imagery to describe her reconstructive healing experience, bringing the narrative full circle. She states, “I was remade, and I fell” (38), a slightly ironic phrase; since even as she descends, her spirit improves. She has condemned herself to death by plunging down the well, but it is not possible to experience

rebirth without dying first. Black reincorporates imagery from the beginning of the poem with a nostalgic tone, contrasting the austere “brick colonials / the loneliness of other people’s windows” with the view as she fell. In the lines, “Searching [her] old self / in the trees above [her] house” (39-40), the trees have returned, symbolizing a vibrant renewal of self as “their age passes through [her]” and their “green hearts” bloom (41-42). As the narrator plunges Icarus-like down the well, having experienced the death of her pride in exchange for relief, it seems that she travels back through time and mentally reverts to her youthful self. The narrator’s references to her childhood take on a hopeful and romanticized tone, in contrast with the harsh memories of her mother and the girl trapped in the well, writing “All I wanted was to remember everything / the way a child asks questions” (43-44). Though the first stanzas of the poem are packed with death and pain, Black takes the narrative full circle and ends the journey where everything begins: “the moment of origin / the expression of a face / before it is born” (45-47). The poem ends with her new beginning, her reconstruction.

Sheila Black’s poem closely examines an issue that many able-bodied individuals may never consider: to what degree does a disability define a person? While someone’s disability does not constitute their entire personality, in many cases it plays a pivotal role in their upbringing and outlook on life. This question persists as an undercurrent throughout the poem, causing conflict in the narrator’s mind: the pain-relievers suppress a feeling that is an intrinsic part of her due to her physical disability. Additionally, the narrator has generational trauma contributing to the feeling that she doesn’t deserve the pain-relievers, creating a nuanced predicament for which there is no right answer. The medication reinvigorated her child-like love of life, rescuing her from the dark thoughts and pain that clouded her brain. By describing the narrator swallowing her pride (and the pills), Black ultimately sends the message that relief is vital for a disabled person to thrive mentally and physically, despite the guilt and uncertainty that

might persist. Through metaphors, vivid imagery, and allusions, “Reconstruction” sheds light on a layered issue relatively unknown to the able-bodied world and makes a clear assertion that seeking pain relief for a disability does not negate a person’s identity.

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Score

IV. Scherzo

Essay 2

Summer Gomez

Scherzo

Piano



Scherzo (n): A lively and upbeat piece of music, occurring at a fast tempo in compound meter (meaning sets of beats in threes). The third movement of a symphony revives the audiences' spirit after the slow, dramatic mood of the second movement.

Independence in the Deaf Community

An Analysis of the Movie *CODA*

The movie *CODA*, released in 2021, explores the obligations and responsibilities faced by many children of deaf adults (CODAs). The story's main character Ruby Rossi, played by actress Emilia Jones, is a seventeen-year-old girl caught in between her duty to her family and her dream of pursuing a music career. Her parents Frank and Jackie, played by deaf actors Troy Kotsur and renowned deaf actress Marlee Matlin, rely on Ruby's hearing and knowledge of sign language to keep their fishing business afloat; however, Ruby finds herself pulled away from her home and towards college in Boston. With the threat of Ruby leaving, the Ruby's parents and her brother (played by deaf actor Daniel Durant) are faced with the question of their own independence as they consider the daunting task of running a successful business without their hearing daughter. In the end, Ruby must decide whether to put her family or her future first. The movie *CODA* examines the barriers to communication that affect deaf families and hearing children, establishing that it is possible for both CODAs and deaf families to develop independent identities while still maintaining a strong family bond.

Throughout the movie, Ruby's form of communication in any given situation (whether speaking or signing) presents a true depiction of her feelings by revealing the authenticity of her words. As a child of deaf adults, Ruby's first language is American Sign Language (ASL), not spoken English. Having learned to communicate through signs, Ruby has a different outlook on expressing herself to both hearing individuals and her deaf family. When Ruby's music teacher, Mr. V, asks her to explain how music makes her feel, Ruby first responds with "I don't know. It's hard to explain," before expressing her thoughts through a series of signs (0:32:46-0:33:00). In Ruby's mind, her thoughts and feelings are better expressed through signing (her first and most comfortable language) as opposed to verbal words. Additionally, it is clear to the audience that Ruby's movements are not official signs in ASL with specific meanings; rather, they are a visual representation of Ruby's emotions with no literal translation. Despite a lack of literal meaning or translation, the significance of Ruby's signs is perfectly clear to the audience in effectively communicating her answer to Mr. V's question. Psychologist and CODA James MacDougall explains that an effective conversation between hearing and deaf individuals constitutes "...anything that increases communication and understanding and facilitates full inclusion in all aspects of society" (MacDougall 644). Not only was Mr. V open to interpreting Ruby's signing as her most authentic means of communication, but Ruby was open to actively communicating in this way to a hearing individual, fostering a collaborative environment between the hearing and deaf worlds. MacDougall writes, "In the context of Deaf culture, of which I am a part, narrative plays a significant role as a way of knowing and communicating" (MacDougall 641). With a foot in both the hearing and deaf worlds, Ruby has learned how to utilize narrative not only to interpret verbal words into signs for her deaf family but to interpret her own emotions as well.

Increasingly throughout the movie, Ruby relies less and less on verbal speech and more on signing to express herself to her family. In outbursts or moments of indignation, her feelings

are often communicated through both signing and speech, such as when she says, “I hate you!” to her parents (0:45:00-0:45:05), or even more sincere sentiments such as “I can’t stay with you for the rest of my life!” (1:02:30-1:02:35). Though the latter may be a real and valid concern on Ruby’s mind, her delivery is blunt and aggressive, giving the impression that speaking is her way of venting the excess of emotions often experienced by teenagers in tumultuous family situations. Her tone during this outburst directly contrasts the pleading and genuine statement that immediately follows: “I have been interpreting my whole life. This is exhausting. Singing is what I love. It’s everything” (1:02:40-1:02:55). It is clear as Ruby signs in silence that this is the core of her argument, a well-thought-out and sincere stance on the most important part of her life. A similar contrast occurs when Ruby comes home to discover that her father and brother have lost their fishing license, blaming her for her absence. After a period of verbal words supplementing her argument, Ruby goes fully silent, emphatically signing the phrase that narratively represents the crux of all conflict so far: “No. Don’t put this on me. It’s not my fault” (1:13:30-1:13:50). Despite being a hearing child, Ruby’s most authentic method of communication and expression is through ASL, which occurs at the most pivotal points of the narrative.

The loss of her family’s fishing license is only one instance of the Rossi family’s dependence on Ruby as their sole bridge into the hearing world. Frank and Jackie rely heavily on their teenage daughter to run their business, putting the weight of the family’s financial stability on her young shoulders by asking her questions like, “You want us to fail?” (0:58:38-0:58:40). While her parents depend on her for success, Ruby’s brother Leo constantly fights to gain independence and autonomy as a deaf man in a hearing world. In an argument about running the family business, Leo tells Ruby, “Let me do this! I got this! I’m the older brother. And I get treated like a baby (1:20:31-1:20:40). This statement reveals Leo’s insecurity and feelings about

being infantilized by both the hearing world and his hearing sister. His masculinity is threatened, and his sense of control deteriorates when left out of important decisions that would, if he weren't deaf, undoubtedly be his primary responsibility. Bernard Beck notes that "The necessity for being someone in particular is even more pressing for people who are socially marginal," providing the motivation behind Leo's need to establish himself as an autonomous individual in a society that marginalizes and victimizes him (Beck 187). When Ruby heatedly asks how he expects to interact with hearing people if she leaves for college, Leo responds, "Let them figure out how to deal with deaf people! We're not helpless!" (1:20:47-1:20:55). His frustration is evident in this statement; he no longer wants to be dependent on his sister, or the hearing world as a whole. This struggle between communities is a through-line throughout the entire movie. The argument between Ruby and Leo is a crucial point in CODA, a movie that constantly "...raise[s] the question of whether the Deaf and hearing worlds can coexist in the same cosmos" (Singh 102).

While Leo wants to work towards a future where both communities accommodate each other, Ruby's parents are more hesitant to seek such a radical change. However, Ruby's father Frank eventually arrives at a moment of own independence when he takes a stand against the oppressive fishing authorities affecting his business. Before Ruby arrives at the meeting, Frank and Leo are unable to follow the argument ensuing between the authorities and the fishermen. When she finally arrives to translate the conversation, Frank stands of his own accord and bangs a chair on the floor to get everyone's attention (0:48:00-0:49:00). He signs, "We're tired of this shit, Geo" in a defiant tirade that garners the approval of all other fishermen watching (0:50:40). Though Frank must still rely on his daughter to effectively communicate, he took independent action to be heard as a deaf man in a crowd of hearing people. In Beck's assessment of the movie, he writes, "One of the important changes they introduced was redefining deaf people not

as victims of a disability but as members of a self-defining, autonomous community with an alternative way of living” (Beck 186). This scene expresses the beginnings of the idea that Frank and Leo may be able to make their own way if Ruby weren’t there, though it may take time to adjust without her guidance in translation and communication. Leo and Frank’s character arcs throughout the movie serve as evidence that deaf individuals are not helpless victims of their disability, but autonomous and independent individuals that can effectively take control of their own lives.

The movie *CODA* provides a chance for hearing audiences to gain insight into the lives of deaf families, presenting issues and ideas that many hearing people may have never thought about before. Ruby struggles with her own sense of identity, constantly caught between two different worlds: deafness and hearing, music and silence. Likewise, Ruby’s family confronts the reality of their dependence on Ruby as the only hearing member of their family, slowly finding ways to overcome the obstacles they encounter in the hearing world. This interplay of family dynamics in a unique setting allows the audience to fully appreciate the obstacles faced by deaf families and CODAs everywhere. Ultimately, *CODA* definitively establishes that, although family ties may remain strong, deaf families and hearing children can develop mutually beneficial independence from one another to lead fulfilled and autonomous lives.

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Score

V. DC al Coda

Revision

Summer Gomez

The musical score is for a piano piece in 3/4 time, marked 'Piano'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score begins with a Coda symbol (§) above the first measure. The music consists of a series of chords and single notes. At the end of the piece, there is a double bar line followed by a 'D.C. al Coda' symbol (⊕) above the staff, indicating that the musician should return to the beginning of the piece.

Coda (n): Da Capo al Coda, often abbreviated to D.C. al Coda, tells a musician to return to the beginning (the capo, or “head”) and play until they reach the Coda symbol. It provides an opportunity to go back and review earlier themes from the movement, now understood with the added context of the rest of the symphony.

Color Code Key:

Structural Changes

Phrases/Words Omitted

Phrases/Words Added

Rephrased

Grammatical

When I was a music major, I considered myself to be a good writer. This is because, like many other music majors, I never had to actually write anything before. When it comes to harmonic chord progression charts and tonal voice leading, I was in my element; however, writing music isn't the same as writing an essay. When I sit down to look at a blank music staff, to me, it's not really blank: I have hundreds of rhythmic and melodic patterns at my disposal, and several hundred years of music-writing knowledge passed down from Medieval monks to Bach to Stravinsky, to me. There's a science to it.

By contrast, when I sat down to write my first essay for English 1102, I looked at a blank page and it was exactly that: a blank page. Letters make words, which make sentences, which make paragraphs, but with about one million words in the English language I found myself at a loss for which ones to use. I knew there was at least one similar thing to writing music that I could employ to help me here: I needed a process. I needed to walk myself through writing the essay, completing bit by bit, until I had a finished product. In this class, I finally learned how to develop my own writing process through outlines and drafts instead of word-vomiting onto a page with no rhyme or reason. Below, I've included the three stages of my writing process as I worked on my essay "Independence in the Deaf Community: An Analysis of the Movie *CODA*." I discovered that making my outline as detailed and comprehensive as possible was of paramount importance in helping me write my draft. There are many differences from my outline to my draft; I tend to include an excess of information, so I'm more likely to feel overprepared instead

of at a loss. As a result of my careful preparation in the initial stages of the process, the revisions from the draft to the final product are much more surface level, usually consisting of minor grammatical changes rather than structural ones.

OUTLINE:

BODY 1: Ruby's form of communication in any given situation, whether speaking or signing, reveals the authenticity of her words and establishes that as a CODA, her first language (signing) is an integral part of her characterization.

- a. Ruby expresses emotional outbursts as words first, but her deepest feelings are signed only.
 - i. "I hate you!" (0:45:00).
 - ii. "There will never be a good time. I can't stay with you for the rest of my life!" (1:02:32). -Ruby (spoken, signed).
 - iii. "I have been interpreting my whole life. This is exhausting. Singing is what I love. It's everything" (1:02:43). -Ruby (signed)
- b. Ruby signs more and more with her family throughout the film, and audibly speaks less and less.
 - i. "...in context of Deaf culture, of which I am a part, narrative plays a significant role as a way of knowing and communicating" (MacDougall 641).
 - ii. "...anything that increases communication and understanding and facilitates full inclusion in all aspects of society" (MacDougall 644).
- c. Ruby expresses her feelings as signs before words (her first language).
 - i. "I don't know. It's hard to explain" (0:32:46).
 - ii. Contrary to what many may assume, growing up with deaf parents seemed totally unremarkable to me." (MacDougall 641).

Comments: Though detailed, I don't strictly adhere to my outlines when writing. I treat it as a tool to help me gather all of my information in one place, often more likely to include a surplus of ideas and quotes than a streamlined itinerary of steps to follow. In this outline of my first body paragraph, I begin with my supporting argument, or topic sentence. Below, I include three supporting details (labeled a, b, and c), as well as several quotes from different sources that align with my ideas (labeled i, ii, and iii). I liked the concept of my supporting argument, but felt it needed to be reworded for clarity and conciseness (a recurring theme in my writing). I also decided to omit a few of the quotes I included for conciseness, as I felt they conveyed the same information. Other quotes, and even whole supporting details, I actually decided might be more

effective if I included them in other paragraphs of my essay. Several quotes highlighted in red are omitted in the draft, but included later in my essay where I thought they could better support my argument.

DRAFT:

Throughout the movie, Ruby's form of communication in any given situation (whether speaking or signing) presents a true depiction of her feelings by revealing the authenticity of her words. As a child of deaf adults, Ruby's first language is American Sign Language (ASL), not spoken English. Having learned to communicate through signs, Ruby has a different outlook on expressing herself to both hearing individuals and her deaf family. When Ruby's music teacher, Mr. V, asks her to explain how music makes her feel, Ruby first responds with "I don't know. It's hard to explain," before expressing her thoughts through a series of signs (0:32:46-0:33:00). In Ruby's mind, her thoughts and feelings are better expressed through signing (her first and most comfortable language) as opposed to verbal words. Additionally, it is clear to the audience that Ruby's movements are not official signs in ASL with specific meanings; rather, they are a visual representation of Ruby's emotions with no literal translation. Despite a lack of literal meaning or translation, the significance of Ruby's signs are perfectly clear to the audience in effectively communicating her answer to Mr. V's question. Psychologist and CODA James MacDougall explains that an effective conversation between hearing and deaf individuals constitutes "...anything that increases communication and understanding and facilitates full inclusion in all aspects of society" (MacDougall 644). Not only was Mr. V open to interpreting Ruby's signing as her most authentic means of communication, but Ruby was open to actively communicating in this way to a hearing individual, fostering a collaborative environment between the hearing and deaf worlds. MacDougall writes, "In the context of Deaf culture, of which I am a part, narrative plays a significant role as a way of knowing and communicating" (MacDougall 641). With a foot

in both the hearing and deaf worlds, Ruby has learned how to utilize narrative not only to interpret verbal words into signs for her deaf family, but to interpret her own emotions as well.

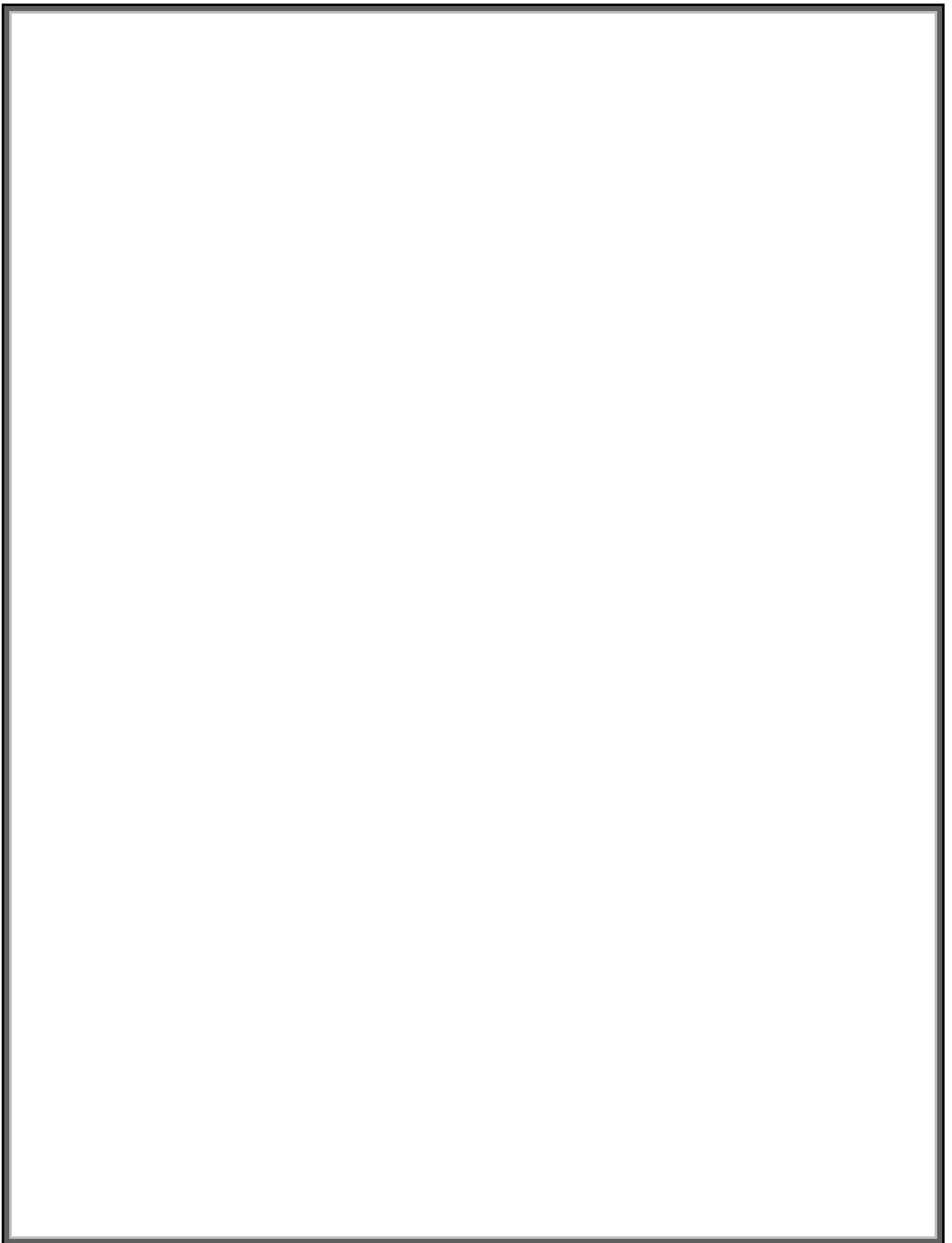
Comments: The drafted paragraph ended up being very different from what I originally intended. I kept the concept of my supporting argument, but reworded the topic slightly for clarity and conciseness. In addition to omitting some quotes as evidence, I also included some more relevant quotes and scenes from the movie; for example, I added context for the scene that occurs between Ruby and Mr. V. I discussed this supporting detail first instead of last in the structure of this paragraph, as I thought it led me well into my next few points; new ideas, which I highlighted in yellow. Where my outline was mostly focused on how specifically Ruby communicates, in the draft I chose to expand on how the hearing and deaf worlds communicate with each other, emphasizing the exchange that takes place between these two communities. In doing so, my drafted paragraph contained a more comprehensive and holistic analysis of the movie and how it relates to the real world than the outline did. Though my final drafted paragraph ended up incredibly different in tone and concept from my outline, it was necessary for me to go through the process of organizing and structuring my ideas to effectively communicate my analysis.

FINAL (PORTFOLIO VERSION):

Throughout the movie, Ruby's form of communication in any given situation (whether speaking or signing) presents a true depiction of her feelings by revealing the authenticity of her words. As a child of deaf adults, Ruby's first language is American Sign Language (ASL), not spoken English. Having learned to communicate through signs, Ruby has a different outlook on expressing herself to both hearing individuals and her deaf family. When Ruby's music teacher, Mr. V, asks her to explain how music makes her feel, Ruby first responds with "I don't know. It's hard to explain," before expressing her thoughts through a series of signs (0:32:46-0:33:00). In

Ruby's mind, her thoughts and feelings are better expressed through signing (her first and most comfortable language) as opposed to verbal words. Additionally, it is clear to the audience that Ruby's movements are not official signs in ASL with specific meanings; rather, they are a visual representation of Ruby's emotions with no literal translation. Despite a lack of literal meaning or translation, the significance of Ruby's signs is perfectly clear to the audience in effectively communicating her answer to Mr. V's question. Psychologist and CODA James MacDougall explains that an effective conversation between hearing and deaf individuals constitutes "...anything that increases communication and understanding and facilitates full inclusion in all aspects of society" (MacDougall 644). Not only was Mr. V open to interpreting Ruby's signing as her most authentic means of communication, but Ruby was open to actively communicating in this way to a hearing individual, fostering a collaborative environment between the hearing and deaf worlds. MacDougall writes, "In the context of Deaf culture, of which I am a part, narrative plays a significant role as a way of knowing and communicating" (MacDougall 641). With a foot in both the hearing and deaf worlds, Ruby has learned how to utilize narrative not only to interpret verbal words into signs for her deaf family but to interpret her own emotions as well.

Comments: The majority of my revisions took place during the initial drafting, so I changed very little from my draft to my final. Most changes were grammatical; in this example, I adjusted a verb to be singular instead of plural and omitted an unnecessary comma. These revisions, though few and far-between, allow me to polish and perfect the academic style of my writing.



Score

VI. Moderato

Peer Review

Summer Gomez

Moderato

Piano

Moderato (adj): A moderate tempo, providing listeners with an opportunity to consider each phrase individually with care and attention.

In music, we are often taught to compare our work to the work of great composers like Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. By looking at the structure and form of these perfect (or near-perfect) compositions, music students can better understand how to apply the same techniques to their own writing. However, trying to replicate perfection can often leave a student composer at a loss for how to transfer the skills they study into the work they actively do. Often, I've learned more about my own areas for improvement through the process of peer revision with my immediate classmates. Not only do I get useful, insightful feedback on how to revise my own work, but I also glean important information about my own habits when analyzing the work of others. I can then apply the revisions, ideas, and plans I've suggested for my peers to my own paper. Sometimes, a change of perspective is vital for self-improvement.

With the permission of Alexa Koopman, I have included my revisions for her initial draft of an essay discussing the movie *CODA*. Many of my revisions are purely grammatical, but I also noticed that the structure of the first paragraphs could be reorganized for clarity, and to better suit her narrative and analytic purposes. While revising her essay, I realized that the structure of *my* essay could benefit from some thoughtful reorganization as well, and I developed many useful ideas to expand on in my analysis that I wouldn't have thought of otherwise. When

we reached the end of the peer revision process, Alexa and I discussed the direction her essay would take moving forward. She mentioned that she wasn't sure how to go about crafting an outline or guide for the upcoming paragraphs she planned to write, so together we developed a very rudimentary outline (which can be seen under the section "Notes for Final Essay"). It was at this point that I realized how much I've learned throughout the course of this class. Only a few months ago, I would have had no idea where to start the writing process for a research essay. Now, after the last unit of ENGL 1102, I was able to productively collaborate with a peer to develop a plan that not only helped her create a successful final product, but also allowed me an opportunity to practically apply my newfound writing skills and improve my own work accordingly.

Peer Revision:

The 2021 movie CODA, directed by Sian Heder, is a drama revolving around a teenager Ruby, who is the only hearing member of a deaf family. The narrative explores the challenges and triumphs of navigating a deaf family. Ruby faces the unique challenge of balancing her own individual responsibilities along with those to of her family, as they depend on her for communication among other people. Her family, known as the Rossi family "the Rossis" (for clarity), consists of the her father Frank, mother Jackie, and brother Leo. Ironically, Elaborate on why it's ironic- it might help your argument to "state the obvious" here Ruby grows a deep passion for music and hopes to pursue a career. As Ruby grapples with her responsibilities to her family and her own aspirations, the film delivers a poignant message about the importance of communication, the complexities of love, and the pursuit of one's dreams. The structure of the movie CODA encourages audiences to observe the idea of pursuing one's dreams while honoring family obligations, ultimately defying the stereotype that deaf people are not independent dependent and rely on caretakers to get them through daily activities.

The beginning of the film serves to establish Ruby's internal conflict with the weight and pressure of having to help her family. As previously stated, Ruby's responsibilities are larger than others as she is the only hearing member of the family, ultimately turning her into the primary interpreter, communicating for her own family members. Great supporting argument! This responsibility is vividly portrayed during the family's fishing trips, where Ruby juggles her own aspirations while ensuring her family can engage with others. Ruby's passion for music becomes a source of both hope and conflict; her dreams clash with her family's needs, underscoring the film's central theme of balancing individual aspirations with familial duties. This kind of seems like a separate idea- I would elaborate on how pursuing a music degree seems unattainable because of her family's need to keep her home by using specific examples or pieces of evidence. The scene where Ruby gets blamed for the loss of her family's fishing license and the one where she tells them that she's decided not to go to college may be a good start. .

The shift towards the end of the film is when Ruby performs at a concert scene that overall resolves the plot and conveys her growth and family's support. If you need more content, you can talk about the contrasting moments that led up to this performance- is it just the ending concert, or are there more moments where Ruby combines her experience as a hearing person in a deaf family? She has finally learned a balance between chasing her dreams and finding a way to connect with her family while also fulfilling her responsibilities. During the concert, she performs with deep emotion, and her family, now fully supportive, cheers her on with pride. This moment symbolizes Ruby's triumph and the strength of the Rossi family. By the end, "CODA" challenges the idea that deaf people always need caretakers, showing instead that love and support can help dreams flourish. Ruby's story encourages viewers to think about the balance between family love and personal ambition, demonstrating that both can coexist.

Great ending! Your use of vocabulary, thesis, and supporting arguments are all great strengths. The thesis is clear and specific- make sure you keep circling back to it in your paragraphs, to show how your arguments specifically prove it! The first paragraph's supporting argument is strong, and the second one is good but may be too narrowly focused in on only one moment of the film- you may be able to incorporate some more evidence here. Try to incorporate more quotes from the movie and your research articles to prove the points you're making- some parts have good evidence (using the final concert at the end), but need a citation! Great job overall.

Notes for Final Essay:

- I. Intro II. P1: Ruby's family relying on her/weight on her shoulders. a. Outbursts b. Blame for the fishing license c. Arguing with Mr. V III. P2: Hearing and Deaf worlds collide. a. Final concert b. Singing for Dad c. How does music make you feel? IV. Conclusion Need to rework thesis statement
 - Possibly writing about the film CODA reinforces the idea that deaf people need caretakers as seen through Ruby throughout the entirety of the film?
- Work more quotes from the film into the body paragraphs – rewatch for the specific scenes and take notes
 - Ruby's solo performance, family fishing scene, the audition, and the concert finale
 - I am a little confused as a whole how to incorporate quotes in this essay and I plan on scheduling a meeting when the list comes out.
- Is dividing the essay from the beginning to the end a good way of organizing?
- Overall i realize that this is mainly just a summary of the film and does not include much evidence so i will work that in for the final paper

Score

VII. Final Performance

Wild Card: Mama Who Bore Me

Arr. Summer Gomez

Piano



The Final Performance (n.): What it all leads up to. When endless preparation, hard work, and self-improvement come together in a final product representing the wealth of new knowledge and confidence a performer has gained throughout the entire process.

Wild Card Video Link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pJBZ7_BXqQXD_eC8pE9HUBvqhm90jBIg/view?usp=sharing

In 2015, a revival of “Spring Awakening” (a 2006 musical) opened on Deaf West. Deaf West is a theatre organization based in Los Angeles that features performances in sign language, immersing audiences in Deaf culture and providing musicals in an accessible format to those in the Hard of Hearing community. Considering my research and close analysis of the movie *CODA* included in this portfolio, I thought it would be apt to combine my love of music and my new knowledge of Disabled representation in media for my Wildcard exhibit. I learned choreographer Spencer Liff’s highly interpretive translation of the song “Mama Who Bore Me” in American Sign Language, using an analysis of the poetic song lyrics and corresponding signs to express the totality of all that I’ve learned this semester. This is the final performance in my Symphony of Reflection—I hope you enjoy!