



Composition 1
Aaron Sears

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12-5-18

Farrow

Unit IV: Reflection

I left the doors of high school with one regret of how I should have done my classes. That one regret was I should have taken Composition 1 and 2 while I was a senior. Everyone who I talked to told me how much of a cakewalk class it was, how the teacher did not care and how it was an easy A. Though I would not have minded that in high school, I now know it was best that I did not go that direction. In Composition 1, I have learned the values of a class outside of that easy A protocol. I have grown as a writer and I learned to write in ways I did not particularly care for using my strengths.

Persuasion was a topic for a large part of the semester starting with looking at how other organizations or individuals persuade an audience on a certain topic. As a class we moved on to writing our own persuasive texts. For this particular unit, I chose to write a letter to the Board of Paroles for the state of Tennessee. I was already going to write this letter but being able to write it and use the tools we learned in class only helped write a more persuasive text. I was able to write a letter that focused on a strength I have: inducing emotion. This topic, and the rhetorical situation surrounding it, created the emotion in the letter. Pathos was the main form of persuasion and it was not difficult to follow. This topic probably wasn't the best paper I wrote all semester. The genre conventions did help and I wanted the paper to be read by the board, meaning I did not want them to stop halfway through because it was too long. This paper however, is what I am most proud of. I had a decision to make: do I really want to write

something that asks to keep someone in prison? I thought past my own emotional decision and tried to look at the situation from an unbiased stance. I thought about the ethics of it all and I finally came to the conclusion that it was ethical to write the letter. I am proud of that process. It has not been released whether the person who I wrote to deny parole for will be denied however the family of the victim was told it was likely her parole will be denied. If I did not take Composition 1, I am not sure I would have written the same letter with the same emphasis, or maybe I would not have known to stay in the genre conventions and it would not have been read.

I believe the best work I did all semester was the literacy narrative. As I went back through the units and read over them, I felt that was the most well-written of the three projects. I received the most helpful feedback from a student and I spent a good amount of time editing and going back through. That paper would be the one I would want hung on the refrigerator. The comparative analysis project was the one I had the most difficulty with. I set myself up for an awkward paper by choosing two completely different genres. They were unconventional from the project and they were vastly different from each other. I ended up writing a lot about one text and little about the other. I found myself repeating or revisiting parts later in the paper trying to reach a page limit. If I would have chosen conventional genres and texts, it would have been a stronger paper. However I think it was a good experience to write something that is difficult to put together. I do not regret it, the paper was just not the strongest.

I had an absolutely fantastic literature teacher my junior and senior year. I was apprehensive about taking him my senior year but I was told to stick with him because he changes the way you view the world. That was a pretty bold statement to me, but I stuck with his class and that came true. The way I view music, books, movies and even events in real life was

influenced by his class. In the same way, my view of persuasion was reinforced by this course. In class we looked at commercials and I wrote my comparative analysis over a graduation speech and I viewed the speech differently because of the way we looked at methods of persuasion. Along the same lines that paper called me to look at how an author can emphasize certain points in a speech to make it a speech that will be remembered.

Composition is the first course that has allowed me to write on topics I wanted to write about. There were still some restraints but we could choose and change what we wanted to. It was a different experience than literature classes I had in high school and I look forward to Composition 2.

Literacy Narrative Final Draft

Aaron Sears

Farrow/Comp 1

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Creaky Stairs and Turned Chairs

It was in the nights spent at home a stone's throw away from the cotton fields of middle Tennessee that I soaked in the creativity of stories and the endless places they could take me. I look back now and imagine the bookshelf I left at home and think of the children's stories my mom would read to me in the late hours of the night. These stories, I recognize now, have themes and lessons I did not know to look for and learn from. *Baby Beluga* and more of my favorites are still on my bookshelf at home waiting and collecting dust while I learn to write my own experiences and stories.

I can still hear my mom coming up the stairs. The fourth from the top always creaked so I knew when she was coming. I had hastily gotten in bed and was already waiting on her. I was excited to get through another chapter. I didn't think bedtime stories were still a thing as a second grader, but I wasn't ready to read the full book of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* quite yet. With just my bedside lamp on, I listened to my mom recount the first book as Harry, Ron and Hermione tried to figure out what was locked away in Hogwarts. I always wanted my mom to read another chapter but we usually had to be up early the next morning to get to school. The entire book was finished before I knew it, and much to my dismay, my mom wanted me to wait before reading the others. Fourth grade rolled around and a green covered book came into my hands: *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan. I flew through the five book series always

buying the next one as fast as I could. I even did extra chores to earn credit because I wanted to have *my* own copies.

I was finally ready to tackle the Harry Potter series, and oh man, did I. Going from a three hundred page book to a seven hundred was intimidating, but I loved those books and they didn't feel nearly as long because I was so captivated by them. I paved my way through the journey with Harry and his friends, not quite appreciating the literary genius of JK Rowling. I tore through young adult fiction and killed AR tests left and right. I learned to love reading, something I didn't enjoy when I was younger and blew off as something I didn't want to do because I played sports and other boyish reasoning. Those authors helped grow my imagination and influence my thoughts and creative ability.

I changed schools in middle school and high school, and with sports and academics becoming more demanding, I found myself not being able to read anything but what teachers assigned. The activity I spent so much time doing when I was younger fell by the wayside, but then I had the experience of re-reading part of my childhood and revisiting memories. Early in my senior year, I re-read the Harry Potter novels, this time I paid attention to little literary devices I had learned over the past eight or so years. I sat in my windowless senior literature class reading "children's" novels not feeling ashamed at any moment. I saw foreshadowing from the first to the last book, themes, and many other literary devices I did not know to notice earlier in my childhood. I recognized the brilliance, though I am sure there is much more than what I found, of JK Rowling and how she can tie every loose end in a nice little bow. I flew through the books just like in fourth grade and remembered that feeling of not wanting the chapter to end. I

skipped lines not to get done with the reading, but to know what happened next, a feeling I had not felt in some time.

Writing took much longer to enjoy, and it wasn't until my senior year of high school that I sat down and wrote something that made me proud. I attended a peer led retreat in February of my junior year. The retreat changed my life and I wanted to be a part of it. I applied to be a small group leader as soon as I got home. Senior year came and with some pretty amazing timing I was picked to lead a small group for this retreat in February. With being a leader, I had the opportunity of writing and giving my own talk to the teenagers attending the retreat. I was writing down thoughts and experiences and getting a lot off of my chest, a process I found very freeing. I also enjoyed editing and revising my work. I was thinking about how I could improve my talk every day for two weeks before I would give it. I learned a lot about myself in that first talk and I really enjoyed exploring experiences of my own. When it came time to give the talk, I stepped up to the old wooden podium on the burgundy platform, set down my papers, closed my eyes and said a short prayer. I looked out at the seventy teens facing me in chairs around the circular tables and began to speak. The butterflies in my stomach quickly fluttered away. I introduced myself and began my incomplete story of faith and patience, finishing with some words of wisdom speaking to the teens and somewhat to myself. I am not one to shy away or be ashamed of who I am and who I want to be. I got to share my struggles and faith with other teens in similar situations. Even if only one person at the retreat got something out of it, it was worth it.

Some time went by and I was selected to lead for the retreat again, except this time I wasn't just leading a small group; I was helping to lead the whole weekend retreat. I had more

responsibility and more people looking to me for help and guidance. I was assigned to write another talk, this time over a different topic. This talk was much harder to complete than the first and it challenged me to think about how to construct it better. The first topic came quickly and was easy to configure the way I wanted it. When the time came, once again I stepped up to the podium in the dimly lit room and told my story. I learned a lot through the process of writing these talks, not just with how to write and give a speech, but also who I am. I enjoyed the process of both talks and the people I met changed my life.

I had lost the feeling of love for reading in high school with the lack of free time and not knowing what to read, and I never knew I would enjoy writing as much as I did. I learned to appreciate reading in a whole new way, and got to apply many of my creative abilities to my own writing. All of the lessons I learned over the course of my education about literature helped me view other forms of entertainment in different ways. I noticed wording and structure of songs, symbolism in movies, and romantic endings to events in my life. Reading was always bigger than just the story to me. Whether it was Baby Beluga when I was three, Harry Potter and Percy Jackson when I was ten, or learning to write and give talks to some of my closest friends and complete strangers my senior year, as I neared the next big chapter of my own story, reading has always inspired me to live my story and not be afraid to share it with others along the way.

Aaron Sears

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Farrow

Unit II: Comparative Analysis

Analyzing Texts from the Room of Requirement

Pictures are worth a thousand words, but a woman's words can be worth a billion dollars. This is an oddly material way to look at something, but the lessons JK Rowling touches on, are not always found by everyday people in everyday life. Yes, her books, characters, and imagination have brought her wealth, but she has shared much more than fantasy stories in her story of life, failure, and endurance.

Harvard University's 2008 commencement speech was given by JK Rowling. The speech is focused on two topics: the importance of failure and the importance of imagination. Ultimately, she responds to two deep questions: "How do we better ourselves?" and "How do we better the world?". She discusses overcoming failures and poverty and how imagination is the key to human empathy. The setting of the speech is Harvard University's graduating class of 2008 commencement speech near Boston, Massachusetts. She briefly explores the potential that, as Harvard graduates, failure has not been a major role in their lives as much as fear of failure has. With millions of views on YouTube and many more who have read the transcript, Rowling's words stretch much farther than the Cambridge lawn where the speech was given. It has become quite popular not only for its rhetor, but also for the overall quality, content, and relatability of the speech. (Rowling, 2008)

During the speech, Rowling calls forward many nostalgic references to her own novels and brings emotion in her details. Just like the novels she handcrafts the speech to deliver many different wallpaper quotes such as “And so rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life.”(Rowling, 2008) She delivers her message while conveying a larger picture of the world we live. Her experiences help show that it is not just storybook endings that occur but the struggles of life that can help construct meaning in the life given to each person.

Rowling is addressing graduating college students, so this plays a big role in how she writes and gives her speech. This speech is given within a year of releasing her final book in the Harry Potter series. Her credibility and popularity are at an all time high. The role she has as an affluent author carries weight, especially with students whose majority has read her books and most likely thoroughly enjoyed them. This creates a certain dynamic that Rowling can build on to give the talk. She brings an informal aspect in comedy and references to her own work. With assuming a large part of her present and invoked audience would understand her references to her books, she creates a pattern of bringing facets full circle. An example is, “So given a time-turner, I would tell my 21-year-old self that personal happiness lies in knowing that life is not a checklist of acquisition and achievement.” (Rowling, 2008) The “time-turner” reference is to a device that allowed a character to go back in time, thus allowing her to tell herself what she has learned and bringing her topic back to the original meaning. Whether this was in the small references or literary romance, she ties everything back to her main points and original meaning. Using this technique, she shows her intelligence as a writer enforcing her credibility and she creates a relationship with her audience by sharing common ground in the books and their references.

She appeals to the listener's logic by depicting what she went through. In her discussion of her poverty, she does not romanticize it, she clearly states "poverty itself is romanticized only by fools." (Rowling, 2008) With stating this she is not saying failure, in this case poverty, is desirable but it leads to greater meaning in her life. Another large logical claim she makes is that of her second topic, empathy. Rowling talks not of the relevance imagination in her story writing but in the "power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experience we have never shared." She uses logic and all tools discussed to persuade her audience to understand that failure is a part of life and is acceptable, but there is something that can be produced from it, and imagination is the key to making the world a better place through empathy.

The second text from the author, comes from a brief tweet. She replied to a fan on Twitter that said, "This may get lost in the noise..but what would you say to someone who has failed to find meaning and wants to finally give up?"(@BrocaeserTV, 2015) Rowling replied four different times telling the individual to look at three certain images. The first image is of a crystal clear sky with millions of stars over a naturally formed arch(@jk_rowling, 2015). The next image is a supermoon rising over the ruins of Athens(@jk_rowling, 2015), and the third is a baby sloth hugging a stuffed animal smiling into the camera (@jk_rowling, 2015). All of these pictures have something in common: beauty. She uses this to bring her final point to light. In her reply she said, "And I'd say, the world is full of wonderful things you haven't seen yet. Don't ever give up on the chance of seeing them."(jk_rowling, 2015) Though this response is quick and simple, it has a powerful meaning. She appeals to many different aspects of persuasion. Her credibility and experience provide a unique way of convincing the person she is replying to that not only is she a very successful author, but, as previously stated, she has been through dark

times in her life with depression and failure. She has gone through these periods and come out of them stronger than before. Her success as a writer certainly carries weight, she has inspired many fans and for her to take time to encourage others to try and live for the best of life.

With the pictures she replied, she is trying to appeal to the emotional side of humans, if someone can see the beauty of the world around them, they can continue to seek out that beauty. Obviously, the individual who has reached out has been and is going through something difficult, and having someone like Rowling reaffirming the value of life is very encouraging to that individual. Rowling appeals to logic by saying that if there is beauty in the world, then someone can go and find it. Rowling is replying to one individual but it is difficult to perceive she would have wanted only one person to see it with her millions of twitter followers, her invoked audience is broad and is not not exclusive in any way. It is certainly a call to the general population to see beauty in the world around and not to give up looking for it.

It is unusual to compare a tweet to a random fan and a twenty minute commencement speech given to one of the most elite universities in the world, but there is a similar message of hope, empathy, and endurance. Both texts are persuasive in their own ways. There is a clear difference in how the messages are delivered and the intricacy of one versus the simplicity of the other. When addressing both, Rowling strongly appeals to emotion, this is certainly expected from an author, but she appealed in every way she could. Logic and credibility play a big role in the way her texts are interpreted and recognized. Whether it is the most popular book series, an influential commencement speech, or an interaction with her fans Rowling brings romance and emotion to the forefront to appeal to the world there is hope, life and beauty all around, “Don’t ever give up on the chance on seeing them.” (jk_rowling, 2015)

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Aaron Sears

Farrow

11-16-18

Unit III

Proposal:

I chose my topic based on the personal connection and the availability to make my work matter outside of the classroom setting. Obviously, with the emotional connection to this event it was not hard to be involved with the topic. The topic of drinking and driving involves Arkansas State more than the letter to the parole board. Keeping students safe is an obvious priority and even if the poster affects one person it would be worth it.

The genres i chose were a letter to the Board of Paroles for the state of TN and a poster persuading students to not drink and drive. The letter was sent and i got a confirmation email. The letter is intended to evoke emotion and persuade the board to deny parole. The poster's audience is students at Arkansas State University. If a poster is put up in the Student Union hopefully someone will take the time to look at the poster briefly to digest the information.

An explanation of the following letter:

Near the end of my eighth grade year, I had a very influential event in my life occur. Clifton Braunwalder, a long time family friend was struck and killed by a driver on the side of the road. His family was on the way to a field trip in Nashville, TN when they had a flat tire. Under a set of very unfortunate circumstances the driver changed four lanes to clip the car hitting Clifton, as he was changing the tire, killing him. Clifton's death was very hard on me. I had family members pass who were older but this was the first time that something like this happened to someone near my age. Clifton was a wonderful person. He always had a smile on his face and I would see him volunteering at our church always laughing. He was the boy whose house we went to after church. I saw him the night before he passed at youth group.

The driver had been cited before this incident with reckless endangerment as she almost ran over her own child trying to get away from the police. She was under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, Xanax, and prescription painkillers when she killed Clifton. She was caught only when someone followed her into Nashville calling the police to get her. She was sentenced to 30 years in prison with charges that included vehicular homicide by intoxication and leaving the scene of a fatal accident. She was sentenced to 30 years in prison. Four and half years into that sentence she is up for parole. This is a letter asking the parole board to deny parole.

I had some original hesitation about writing to deny someone's freedom, but after spending a lot of time thinking about it, I decided that it was not unethical for me to write this letter. I believed that the time served was not fitting and the chance of relapse back into drugs was high. I still believe i made the right decision.

(I put the MLA heading at the end and I kept it single spaced to keep the genre conventions.)

State of Tennessee Board of Parole,

Hello, my name is Aaron Sears, I am 18 years old and I am in my freshman year at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, AR. I play football for the university and attend the Honors College. Football has opened many doors for me and it continues to provide tremendous opportunities to be involved with the community, build friendships, and be a part of something bigger than myself. I played football for Oakland High School in Murfreesboro, TN. The memories I made and relationships I developed were much greater than I ever could have imagined coming in and playing a brand new sport. I was unaware of this until I recently spoke to Norbert Braunwalder, Clifton's father, but Clifton Braunwalder was deciding on whether he was going to play football at Oakland as well. I like to think Clifton would have played football for Oakland, and we would have shared a bus seat coming back from games, as he would've been the only person I knew joining the team. I can imagine us listening to the rest of the guys hollering in the back of the bus, or that he would have been on the field goal unit that protected me as I kicked for the team.

All of those situations are what could have happened, but the friend I truly remember was one of service, loyalty and love. Every memory I have of Clifton is positive, with the exception of him biting my finger when we were 3 years old, but I will not count that. Whether it was in following his lead in cub scouts, making him laugh at our table in youth group, or seeing him helping his dad around the church, I can remember his smile and contagious laugh everywhere he went. Clifton has inspired me to live my life with great service and love.

Clifton's life was ended certainly too soon, a month before he turned 14 when he was struck and killed on the side of Interstate-24 by a driver under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, and prescription medications. His life ended as he lived, serving others. He was changing his mother's tire for her. I am not writing to the Board because I have hatred in my heart, or because I am unforgiving of someone's actions, but I am asking that you deny Ms. Tina Wilson's parole on the foundation that the time served is unfitting and potential for relapse is high. The decisions made and consequences of those decisions do not match the time served. I know Ms. Wilson's intentions were not to end a boy's life that day, but her actions allowed for it to happen. The average prison sentence for drug possession alone is 3 years. However, Ms. Wilson made similar decisions that resulted in the death of someone. With the time served being about the time it took me and would have taken Clifton to go through high school, it is hard to think someone could serve that short of a time for making decisions that ended someone's life. There has also been a history of endangerment of others. Of a 30 year sentence, serving less than five years does not seem to fit the severity of her actions. I hope the Board will deny Ms. Wilson parole.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Aaron Sears

Aaron Sears

11-16-18

Farrow

Unit III: Letter



By The Numbers

In the United States alone, 29 people die everyday in vehicle accidents due to alcohol impaired drivers.



A Sure Thing?

If you are unsure about whether the state you are in is safe to drive, it probably isn't. Don't be afraid to ask for help.



Information is Key

Over 1800 college students between 18-24 are killed every year in unintended alcohol incidents. Do a little research before hand to stay safe.

Drinking and Driving is more than "I have done it many times before"



Think Long Term

Other drivers and your own future is worth more than a few dollars for an UBER! Have someone to make sure you do not make that decision alone.



There Is No Perfect Metric

The weight of someone's life isn't measurable. Someone's mother, father, brother son daughter is getting home. help them get home safely!



Use Your Situational Awareness

Have a plan before for how you will get from place to place and eventually home. This will keep you safe off the road as well.

Source