

Dear Reader,

I believe it is important to preface my portfolio with an explanation of my greatest flaw as a writer: my stubbornness. For as long as I can remember as a writer, I've been hindered by a terrible habit of rejecting any change to my style and process of writing. This has been a huge problem in highschool and now college, as being a flexible writer is very important for the different genres and expectations set by teachers and professors. While in this class, I decided to make it a primary goal of mine to overcome this horrible flaw and learn how to accept (and apply) criticism and change to my writing process — essentially forcing myself out of my comfort zone. I sincerely hope my progress is evident in the final product of my projects.

My first challenge was, unsurprisingly, writing the initial draft of my literacy profile. Since I opted to have my genre be a podcast instead of a normal paper, I had to engage in creating a completely different type of media than I was accustomed to. Instead of writing a formal argumentative paper or professional research paper, I had to write an informal script that was instead intended to engage the curiosity of the audience as a piece of entertainment, similar to other podcasts in its genre. This was very challenging to me; it resembled creative writing more-so than the scholarly writing I usually focused on, and as mentioned in my literacy profile itself, I hadn't written in this way for a majority of my life. The audience itself was completely different as well, and I had to learn quickly how to write a piece of entertainment. So, I wrote my draft and asked a peer and friend of mine (conveniently, a drama major) to look over it and help me write an engaging script.

Through plenty of constructive criticism by my peer (and hesitance from me), I wrote the script. To many readers, this may not seem noteworthy or impressive, but it demonstrated a change from my usual process and style of writing. For most of my writing career, my stubbornness as a writer enticed me to refuse help from even my peers, and instead stick to the same strategies I had always employed: write an outline and paper nearly identical in flow and structure as the ones I always had, and turn it in. Instead, with help, I was able to write words and a story of my experiences that actually sounded relatable to the audience that deviated from the structure I had always written. I was able to appeal to the audience as a story writer under the conventions of a podcast, sounding conversational in tone with a flowing and simple story structure (not to mention literally changing from writing to audio). I described situations that other writers may have experienced, briefly referenced my past to add a more captivating story, ask questions and answer them throughout the paper (“So, what happened?”), and used informal words and phrases to sound more exciting than formal and bland (“Even when the writing is terrible, the writing is still *good*”). I learned that I was capable of severely altering my writing style to incorporate rhetorical strategies that vastly improved my variety of writing. Yet, I

realized that my writing for everything else still felt as resistant to change as ever, so I adhered to my goal and sought help.

After realizing I was too attached to my process of writing, I sought help during Dr. I-Tremblay's office hours. I had always written my papers in one sitting, without any "first drafts" or major revising, similar to how I wrote the first project's script and all my history papers for other classes. Expecting to be told a decisive way to fix my issue, I was told instead that the process in which I wrote may not have been the problem. After reading sources in class suggesting that the best way to write was through consistent draft-writing and personal revising, along with my determination to change my stubbornness, I thought I had to revamp my entire writing process. Instead, I learned that my process was okay as long as it worked for me. I realized my issue wasn't my stubbornness in how I wrote my drafts, but my stubbornness in adapting my writing to different genres and adhering to constructive criticism. For my second project, I stuck to this advice and what I learned from constructive criticism in the first project.

After deciding to write my second project on the history discourse community, I made an effort to focus on employing the recommendations from my peers during the proposal peer review, which helped my writing. I specifically noted the types of research they believed I should study for the communication of my discourse community (books or articles with similar topics to demonstrate converse arguments and how they are used, which became a core aspect of my research in the method section of my paper). This eventually helped me understand the ways in which historians argue, which was the core aspect of my paper. Because of the similar books I used, I learned specifically how possible biases can be incorporated into historians' arguments (as described in the discussion section of the paper), and how historians use specific research to support their arguments. I also learned how these books' arguments are structured (in the results sections).

Overall, I believed I improved upon my flaw and worked towards becoming a more flexible writer. Through learning to genuinely listen to criticism and incorporate it into my projects, it is obvious (to me at least) that I am capable of adjusting my style of writing and improving my rhetoric in many different genres, which will definitely help my future writing career in college. Importantly, I learned mostly about my writing process itself (as I had worried about it extensively) and discovered that my personal draft process isn't as crucial as adapting to the genres themselves. Additionally through being more accepting towards suggestions, I learned effectively how historians are able to communicate their arguments, and had sufficient research to support my claim. If I had more time, I would most likely ask more peers to review these projects' approach to their genres, as both were fairly different from what I was accustomed to, but attempted to reform to the conventions of the genres (informal podcast, academic research paper). However, I still have to ensure that I don't fall back to the stubbornness I was accustomed to before, since I feel I've made a lot of progress.

Thanks for reading,

Robb Ridgley

