

INK
WELL

the student guide to
writing
at the evergreen state college

the writing center presents

inkwell

volume two, 2007

the student guide to
writing

at the evergreen state college

inkwell

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the writing center

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www.evergreen.edu/writingcenter

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friday:

12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

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12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

primetime advising

housing, "a" dorm, room 220

sunday - thursday

6 p.m - 9 p.m.

The expressions presented in this publication reflect the views and artistic sentiments of the authors. The Evergreen State College Writing Center does not take responsibility for any negative effect this writing has on anybody.

Re: Non-sexist language: Sometime in the 20th century the habit of using the masculine signifier was challenged. As an alternative has yet to be found/agreed upon/achieved, the Inkwell Editorial Board has chosen to let each writer decide for ___self how to address this issue.

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editors' note

I climb down the steel ladder anchored in the side of the well, and in the darkness at the bottom, I feel for the bat I always leave propped against the wall...The touch of the scarred old bat in the darkness at the bottom of the well fills me with a strange sense of peace. It helps me, too, to concentrate... Down here there are no seasons. Not even time exists. I always wear my old tennis shoes and my plastic watch, the one I had on the first time I came down into the well. Like the bat, they calm me. I check to see in the darkness that these objects are in firm contact with my body. I check to see that I am not separated from myself.
- Haruki Murakami, The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle.

Inkwell –

We begin by going “in” – to the place where language defines desire, where two selves dwell, the physical and metaphysical you who seeks to articulate its self through words. We make a motion to move the pen, to ‘ink’ into the paper.

Before the work is complete, the black ink begins to blur. Each word leaks into the one beside it until the whole page is swirling in rivulets of arrested concepts. The page becomes evidence of an attempt to interact directly with the vastness of language. We have reached the ‘well.’

The well is an uncertain place. You don’t know how deep it is. Once you’re there, it’s inhospitable and different from the human. The narrator in the well represents a reader or a writer engaging with the place where words and ideas come together. In the bottom of the well, or the front of the conversation with language, the narrator uses human tools to help interact with a system larger than the self. Tools like the bat ritual and the glow-in-the dark watch are designed to make this interaction manageable.

Like the bat, they calm me. Like words when you’re trying to articulate something. Like weapons in the darkness, they calm an anxious person trying to confront uncertainty.

Like the bat, they calm me. Like an outside perspective when your well tunnels your vision. Like another set of eyes on your paper when you don’t know if you are expressing yourself.

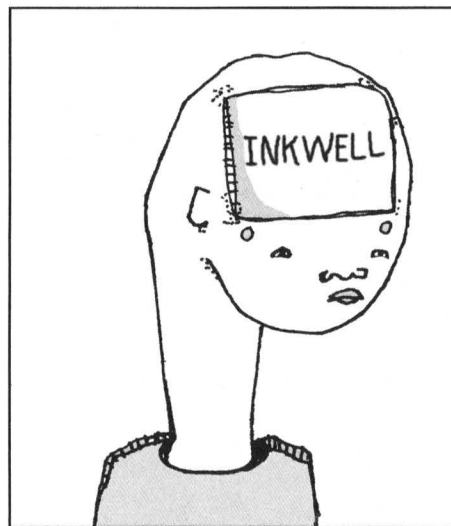
Like the bat, they calm me. Like a personal, tried and true, ever-refining process that encompasses every part of your writing. When you take the familiar into the unknown, you forge new relationships without separating from yourself.

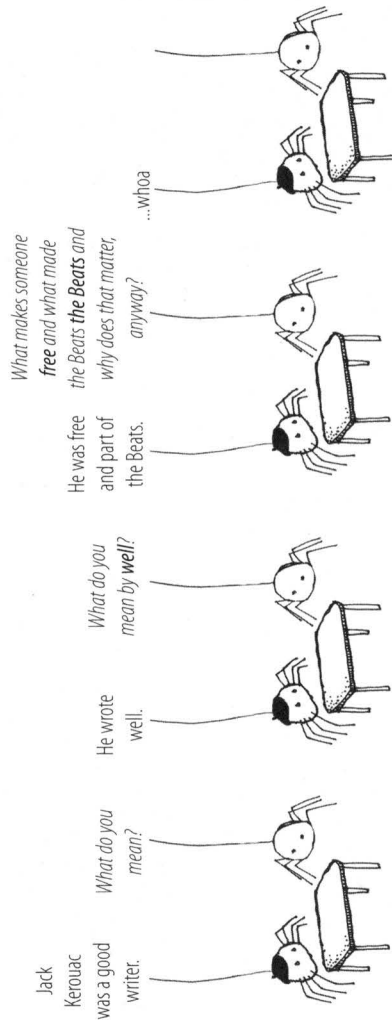
One of the most useful items in a writer’s toolbox is a capable peer. The Writing Center will stand with you during any kind of interaction with language. Like the narrator’s bat, we can be one of your tools when you’re down in the well. We can assist as you replace your cotton and nylon rope ladder with a steel ladder anchored to the wall.

So begin the journey into your own well. Let’s explore together.

-Shawnell Johnson and Andrew Olmsted
August 28, 2007

Work Cited: Murakami, Haruki. (1998). *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (Jay Rubin, Trans.). New York: Vintage. (Original work published 1997)





shootin' the shit

by jais brohinsky

You've got a paper. It's late. You want some advice or an edit. Or maybe you've been working on a murder mystery, or a poem, or you just want to know what this whole self-evaluation thing is all about. Whatever. You come to the Writing Center, get an appointment, sit down, and your tutor starts asking about what you're writing. *It's right there*, you think. *Just read it and mark it up.*

But your tutor seems intent on chatting.

What's going on?

You see, conversation is an integral part of tutoring. But no cookie-cutter, fit-all framework governs conversation in a tutoring session at the Writing Center. Rarely will a dialogue focus on the proper use of a semicolon or the difference between MLA and APA citations—we have handouts and books to cover pedagogical regulations. In the Writing Center, every conversation revolves around the intricacies of the individual, of you. Every interchange is honed to the specific combination of tutor, writer, writing process, and piece of writing. These ingredients blend to form the shape and taste of a Writing Center conversation. On the surface this approach seems straightforward. Conversation is talking; a tutor tutors; a writer writes; and the writing process is putting thought down on a page.

Easy. Or so it seems.

Conversation is alive with immediacy. Spoken words are flexible and can be explained, amended, changed, expounded. This flexibility makes talking about writing beneficial at every stage of the writing process. From placing the finishing touches on a final paper to brainstorming without a single written word, discussion can help organize and focus a piece. A tutoring session can revolve around a draft without ever looking at it, yet will still address important aspects like organization and purpose. Conversation is a tool that can be used to chip away at confusion—a tool used to accentuate curves and shadows, to smooth away rough edges and buff a surface until the intended meaning sparkles with clarity.

When we write, we know what we mean to communicate, and sometimes we think our language is clear, when it is, in fact, convoluted or obscure. Talking about a piece of writing helps bridge the translation involved in reading, in writing, in thinking and composing thought into language to scratch at the core of meaning. Writers are encouraged to think and read out loud and to compare what they say or hear to what is written. A tutor rewords an idea in the form of a question using the writer's own language to key her back into the process and to help to cement understanding.

Questions are essential for elucidating muddled meaning, and something resembling a Socratic dialogue is enacted in a tutoring session. Open-ended questions like “what are you writing about” are effective, because they allow writers to reiterate their ideas. These questions can lead to greater understanding or to completely new angles. Answers will be questioned, and the answers to those questions will be explored, compelling a writer to articulate ideas in different ways, using different language. Question-fueled dialogue encourages a writer to find her own answers and truths organized in her own language, regarding her writing process.

A tutor is both a guide and cartographer in foreign territory. If a writer's process is a jungle, then a tutor is one familiar with *jungleness*, which is to say that a tutor is familiar with the

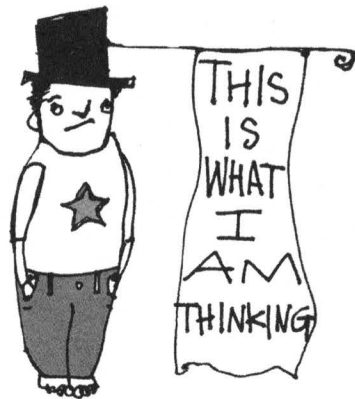
notion of a writing process, though not necessarily accustomed to an individual's personal procedure. Together, writer and tutor create a map diagramming the writer's language. The straight and narrow trails of grammar and punctuation are avoided. Instead, side trails of tone, audience, and technique are traversed, leading through lush canopies dripping with intent and so thick that substance clings in the dank underbrush where meaning soaks the darkness.

A writer comes to the Writing Center curious, unsure, or perhaps just lost, and is presented with an array of avenues to walk and learn, hopefully discovering an individual path on which to continue. A writer may come for guidance, but ultimately leaves as her own guide.

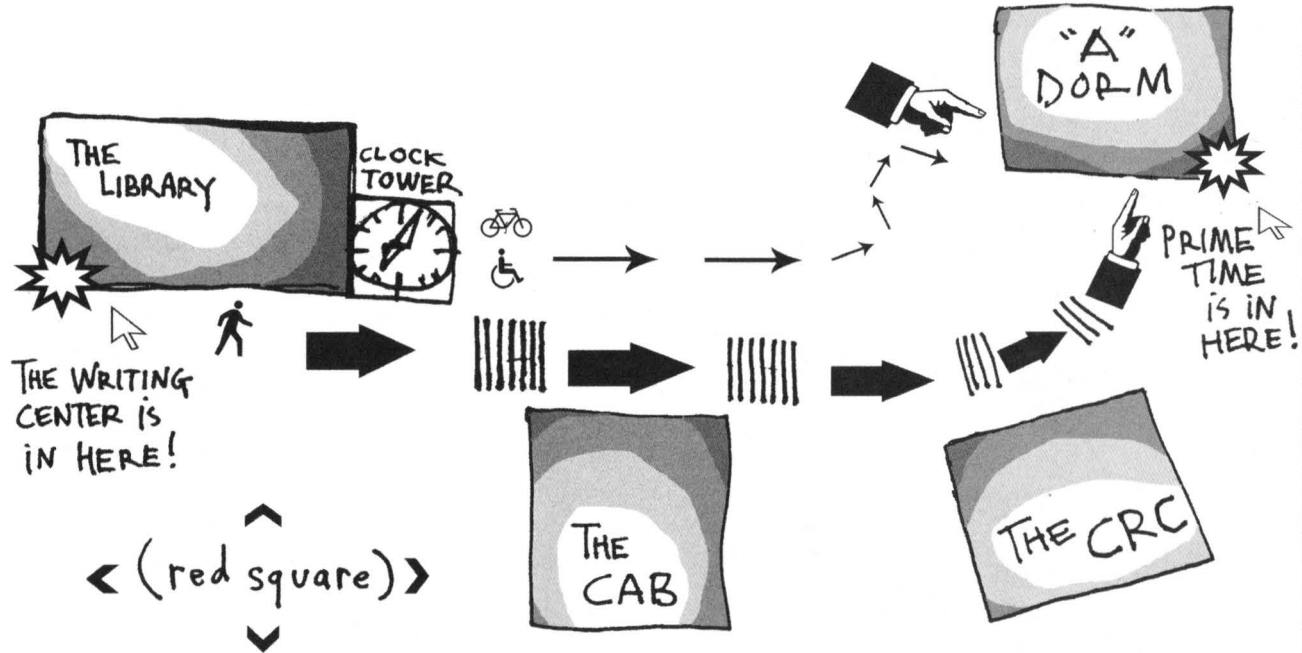
A tutor uses questions like a torch to share these trails and teach a writer to find them again, because once the session is over, writers are alone to choose their own paths, and to set their own cardinal directions. A writer comes to the Writing Center curious, unsure, or perhaps just lost, and is presented with an array of avenues to walk and learn, hopefully discovering an individual path on which to continue. A writer may come for guidance, but ultimately leaves as her own guide.



The writing process applies to everyone, at every moment of every day. It is an evolution of articulation that manifests in written form, yet is not confined to it. This manifestation is a snapshot of fluid thought—a snapshot abandoned to a page. In this sense, everyone is a writer, accumulating information and integrating it into her own writing process. A writing tutor, in our Writing Center, is one who encourages the growth of another's process. And since the writing process involves the translation of perception to language, a tutor actually fans awareness into flares of expression. To help light such blazes of written expression, a tutor must ask the right questions, use the appropriate tone and words fitting each situation. A tutor is a conversationalist—a chameleon of sorts—melting into a writer's perception of reality to help that writer sear a clear and timeless stamp into the world.



map → prime time

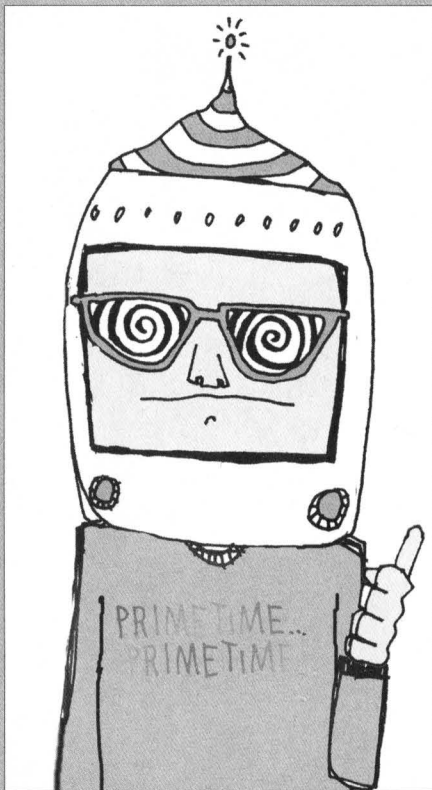


sunday-thursday • 6pm-9pm

housing ° "a" dorm ° room 220 ° 360 967 6410

time-travel, steam-engines, super-powers: prime time

by matthew kreiling



Let us assume some powers. Time-travel and super-speed for starters.

And flight. And x-ray vision. And the ability to split ourselves into two people. Why? So we can help a struggling freshman in 1994. Why are we interested in him? Because he is me. It is nighttime, the computer monitor glows in monochrome. Sounds of Portishead's "new" album, *Dummy*, leak through the many layers of impersonal dormitory paint. As we hover outside the third floor room, looking through the wall with our x-ray vision, our hearts break, remembering what it was like: the desperately blank screen, the baffling questions, "Why can't I write?...Why can't I think?" The scene is especially painful because I know who could help the freshman me of 1994...the writing tutor me of 2007. Three floors down, three thousand miles away, thirteen years in the future, in the "A" dorm at Evergreen, I am waiting for myself.

Because of its location, Freshperson Central, and its hours of operation, six to nine at night, Prime Time is particularly suited to the prematurely aging first-year student with a deadline, but it is also perfect for anyone who wants to work on their writing, share their writing, talk about their writing, or just talk. Officially, Prime Time is a satellite of the Writing Center and Academic Advising. Unofficially, it is headquarters for time-travelers. It is a warm place. This is not just because the heating system of the "A" dorm is fueled by brimstone. Prime Time has a warm personality. Strings of white and blue lights surround a whiteboard usually covered with quirky poems and drawings. The couches are comfortable. There are plants and funky lamps. People come in to help themselves to Italian sodas and a vegan brownie. And I am waiting there. Or Dan, Shawnie, Andrew, Jais, Liz, America, Ian or Aislyn: tutors who could have asked for a schedule that kept their evenings free, but love Prime Time, being there at night to talk about writing. The other half of Prime Time, the Academic Advising half, is there too. Haley, the coolest academic advisor (I can say this because she has *Sly & the Family Stone* in her CD case), waits in her office to talk with students about anything from applying for a campus job to studying abroad in Zimbabwe. If Haley is busy, peer advisers like Tim or Amanda can advise in a peer-like manner.



Without superpowers, I've had to travel through time

and space in the normal way: slowly, painfully, and eventually, westward in a broken down pick-up with all my stuff in the back. I've lost scholarships and found regrets. I don't want to say that all the moments of my life have led to this one, here in Prime Time, as a writing tutor, except for this: *they have*. Those moments spent staring at blank screens, moments wondering why my brain wouldn't work the way I wanted it, mind-expanding moments and brain-cell-destroying moments (often the same moment), awkward moments trying to explain why I dropped out of college, moments of denial, moments realizing that the trouble with these moments was my addition of chemicals to them, moments of withdrawal, moments of serenity and moments of chaos have all led to the dramatic and emotional moment of finishing this sentence. Thank god that's over. The point? I'm not sure yet. That moment will come. Hopefully before the end of this essay.

Tutors in Prime Time are in your house, literally if you live in A-dorm, but also figuratively, because we are also students at Evergreen, with papers due. And let me re-iterate: "We're totally laid-back."

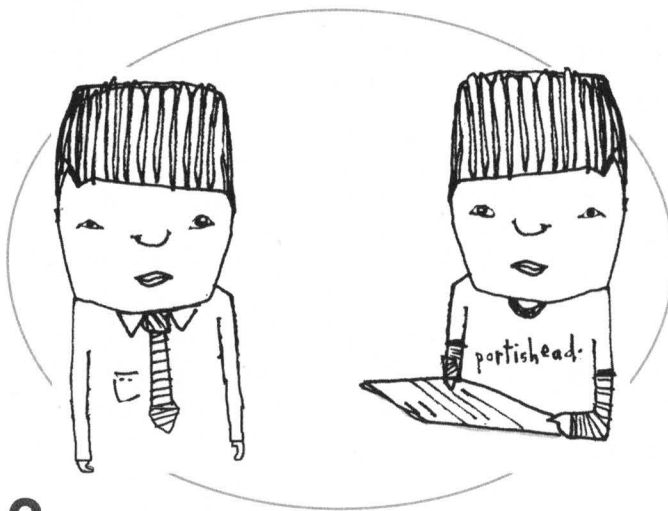
But this is an essay about Prime Time. And whether you are bothered by conjunctions at the beginnings of sentences or you are bothered by the fact that you don't know what a conjunction is, you are welcome at Prime Time. If you are on page twenty of a research paper

or word one of a haiku, you are welcome. Before I build up to another dramatic and cheesy moment, let me have another tutor, Andrew Olmsted, put it another way: "We're totally laid-back & we're in your house." Tutors in Prime Time are in your house, literally if you live in "A" dorm, but also figuratively, because we are also students

at Evergreen, with papers due. And let me re-iterate: "We're totally laid-back." If you wander to Prime Time on a Wednesday, at 8:00, the tutoring gently gives way to a poetry reading that is the epitome of laid-backness. Yes, I said it: laid-backness. Anybody, whether or not they call themselves poets, can lean back into the couch and vent verse out into the air as steam, or recollect it, a generator for powering next week's poem. No judgement, just steam, venting and collecting, like the wheezing boilers in the "A" dorm basement.

Of course, we're not always making up words willy-nilly, starting sentences with conjunctions, or acting like beatniks and steam-engines. We are available to sit with you one on one at a couch, a table or a computer, at any stage of your writing process, to help with any type of writing. At appropriate times throughout the year we provide "eval" workshops. Prime Time is also the venue for other workshops organized by Housing, KEY services, or Academic Advising. These workshops are held almost every week and range from crazy crockpot cooking to scholarship applications to finding a summer job to study abroad tips.

Now let us assume the power to teleport other people and teleport the me of 1994 to a room in the "A" dorm. It is very possible he won't notice, but just in case, let us also hypnotize him to think that he has lived in "A" dorm the entire quarter. While we're messing with his brain, we might as well make him thirsty. This way, he'll go downstairs for a drink, where I'll be disguised, leaning casually on the door to Prime Time.



Here comes 1994 me.

I hope the universe doesn't collapse.

"Would you like an Italian soda?" I ask him.

So far, so good. He takes a sip. It's delicious.

"Man, I just can't seem to get it together," he says.

"Don't I know it," I can't help muttering.

"What?"

"Um...I said, 'You don't show it.' What's bothering you?" (Good cover.)

"It's this paper..."

Finally. He's come to the right place and it's prime time.

*If each day falls / inside each night, / there exists a well
/ where clarity is imprisoned. / We need to sit on the rim
/ of the well of darkness / and fish for fallen light
/ with patience.*

- Pablo Neruda, *The Sea and The Bells*
translated by William O'Daley

writing from the well

by chalen kelly

Standing above the well, balancing between night and dark water, with a real moon above and a reflected moon below, I too am real above, reflected below. Insignificant against the backdrop of stars, yet magnified in the water, I am both distorted and beautiful. My toes clutch concrete and loose stones, stones fall. Ripples disperse stars and fragment me, water crashes against itself. I am crashing against myself within a universe crashing against itself, this well reveals confusion and repetition. I come to this ledge to participate in these collisions. At this well I break the silence to hear the collision. Sometimes collision sounds like invitation, this time collision sounds like an invitation to cease writing.

Submit. In the face of existence, choose silent appreciation or mute despair. Making meaning from chaos is equal to carrying water in the immemorial sieve. Don't write; nothing will come of it. Forests don't appreciate novels. Bookstores are thinly veiled parking lots. Nobody listens, less reads, and it wouldn't matter if they did. Let go, your descriptions fumble at the garter belt of mystery. Your writing displays inadequacy. Don't write unless you are ready to acknowledge yourself a fool, unless you are willing to hope your deity of choice prefers comedy.

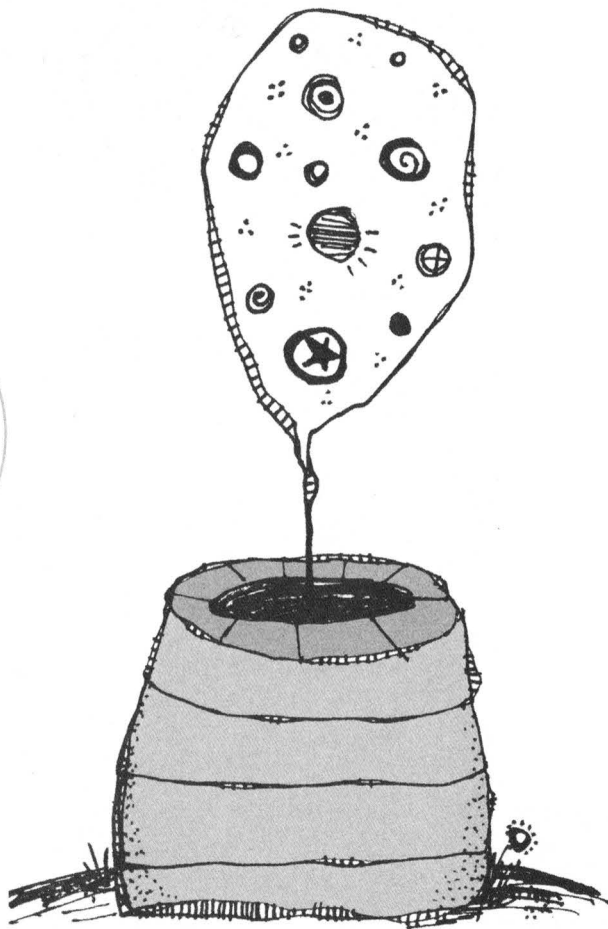
Defying the urge to slip into the well, I choose levity. I choose to play the fool and write to induce laughter. At the well I name things, assign meaning. I come to the well, stand on a ledge, maintain balance.

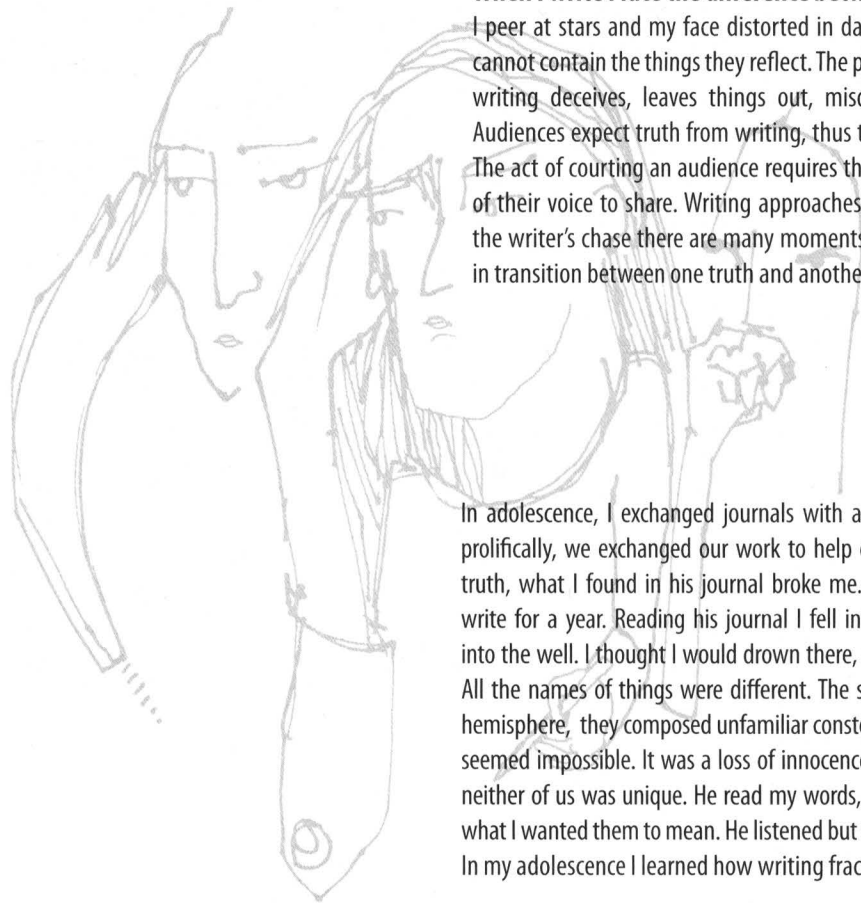
I listen and remain standing.

I write.

Watching collisions, I observe relationships between night, stars, and self. I notice how the relationship I maintain with writing matters. Water calms, stars settle in place, my fragmented body begins to coalesce. I observe that circumstance and context matter, relearn how writing must be different things at different times. Though I prefer writing as an approach to mystery, I respect the beauty of writing when it is work, a plow horse breaking soil.

Writing is never what I envision it to be. In youth I learned not to draw with pencil because my love of erasers eroded my work. I wanted to capture images like water captures images. From this desire to capture my visions, I learned to paint. I came to love paint because in paint there is no going back, one moves forward in layers. When I write, the delete key beckons.





When I write I face the difference between desire and possibility.

I peer at stars and my face distorted in dark water, I remember mirrors cannot contain the things they reflect. The page offers a similar distortion, writing deceives, leaves things out, misdirects, has limited capacity. Audiences expect truth from writing, thus these limits challenge writers. The act of courting an audience requires the writer to choose which part of their voice to share. Writing approaches truth, but truth is elusive. In the writer's chase there are many moments where self is lost then found in transition between one truth and another.

In adolescence, I exchanged journals with a friend. We both wrote prolifically, we exchanged our work to help one another. I expected truth, what I found in his journal broke me. Afterwards I could not write for a year. Reading his journal I fell into our differences. I fell into the well. I thought I would drown there, swimming in his words. All the names of things were different. The stars were from another hemisphere, they composed unfamiliar constellations. Understanding seemed impossible. It was a loss of innocence, we were not alike yet neither of us was unique. He read my words, and they did not mean what I wanted them to mean. He listened but could not hear me. In my adolescence I learned how writing fractures faith.

But when friends keep writing to one another, alchemy sets in. I climbed back up to my ledge. I focused on our differences, I learned how to make writing cross the empty space between us. By doing this work I learned to deepen conversations, assist memory, savor details, notice subtlety, and offer praise. I learned to question. My faith expanded to make room for misunderstanding. I began to see how best to represent myself; I stopped thinking it was unnecessary. I learned to vary my writing because the different ways in which one writes create different ways to be human.

I now embrace the versatility writing offers, because I desire multiple ways of responding to questions posed by community, family, and politics. I continue my attempt to make connection and I continue falling into the well, but with each successive fall I increase my familiarity with the strength it takes to return.

When I fall, I often wish to go numb, to remain in the well. But each time a terrible hope entices me. It compels me to crawl up the wall, remain alive, and stay vulnerable. I cannot stop; I am too deeply in love with possibility.

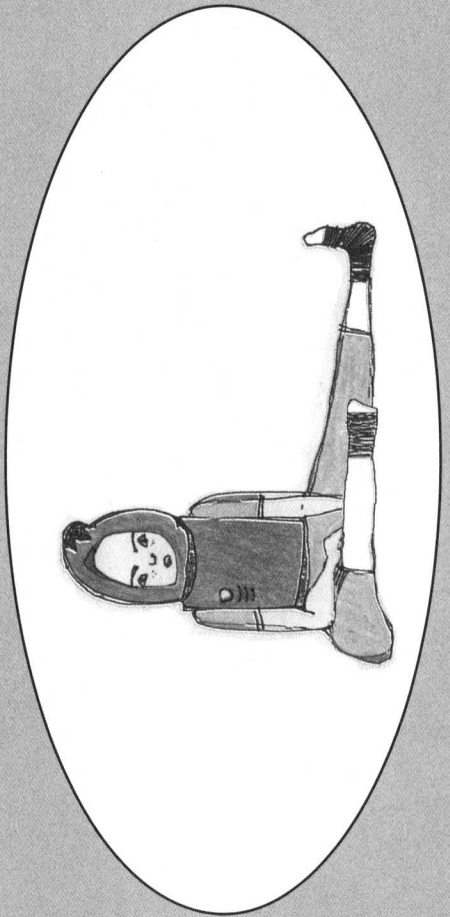
**I learned
how to
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Writing, like giving birth, involves sacrifice. It is a process that does not guarantee happiness. The changes writing invokes are not simple. Writing involves seeing, acknowledging, and accepting responsibility for your life. It involves sharing yourself with others. Writing as a chosen journey requires feeling and thinking. When I choose to write I choose to throw a stone in the well, I choose to risk the possibility that ripples will erode all the things I have grown accustomed to. I choose to induce collisions, to change myself and the world I am a part of. I stand at my ledge, gather my strength, and reach to pick up the next stone. I choose to shatter again.

Writing is hope and a sort of prayer. Writing is me, it isn't me, it is the easiest and hardest thing I do, it is the most reliable and the most terrifying conversation I participate in. I investigate the nature of writing here to offer a mirror, to invite others to stand at the well, to see themselves, and to develop their own relationship with writing.

women's work: the fence around the fire

by anya albers



On Release...

My writing is a political act of healing. I rely on it as a tool for negotiating this world and my experiences as a target of oppression. I write to claim ownership of these experiences, to bring them into the reader's consciousness as truths, and to heal myself from them. For me, this process of creative truth-telling is ritually interrupted with the violence of systematic silencing that's inflicted when I release my words from the cages of their generative womb into a critical space.

Here my writing becomes too brash and too soft, too emotional and too violent. Too personal, too close, too distant or too removed. These are not observations based on a foundation of respect and trust for me as an author that would allow me to maintain ownership of my writing throughout the revision process, rather they are judgments that speak to the doublebind expectation of female writers to be emotionally hyperactive without crossing the illusive threshold where our writing loses academic credibility. We're questioned when we do not cry, and when we do, it's assumed we can't see straight through our tears.

Despite the pain of these myth-based realities in academic and peer writing circles, I still choose to release my writing. For my words can breathe only when they are being read. If I hoard them in the safety of privacy, they will never be heard. I will end up carrying their dead weight around inside me. If I choose to make my writing public, each reader can help carry around my truth when my words come to life inside them. Thus the load is lighter as it is distributed, and the truth is more real and complex as it exists outside of myself.

On the Violence that follows...

The violence that I write myself out of does not end when I've written something down. Nor does it end when I find the courage to offer it to the public sphere. Now, I have to fight to maintain my authorship against the deep groves of powering over the truths of women writers. As writers coming from the underside of power structures, we must not only defend the content of our writing as truth, but figure out who is there to help us grow as writers and who is there in an effort to silence us.

There are cracks in all writing. And opening them creates the heat of potential. Some cracks let light through to illuminate the piece, while others allow the whole piece to cave in on itself. The problem with the structure of the classic academic revision process is that it splits open these fissures without a dialogue on ownership, authorship, and power that works to control the splitting process. Without this dialogue and/or agreement, we fall into the path of least resistance, where male-identified folks continue to define good writing and attempt to rescue and re-write women's writing to fit the dominant male standard. The cracks are filled with the reader's voice, agenda, and assertions of power and defense. The writer disappears. The crack becomes a rip that tears the writing and the writer in two. And the mending process is long and grueling. And it's almost always the victim who's left to put the pieces back together.

On Recovering...

Like everywhere else in the world, the Writing Center is a place where a discrepancy lies between intention and impact, theory and practice. Tutors are taught a methodology that insists on the writer directing a session and maintaining her authorship. Yet, as I was being tutored on this very article, a tutor told me exactly what he would do if this were his piece. His use of language was one that assumed authorship over my work and set fire to the multi-generational wounds of silence within me.

Tutors at the Writing Center have access to information on anti-oppressive tutoring and are expected to uphold this effort. The existence of this pedagogy opens a space for dialogue, accountability, and collaborative un-learning and re-learning. The reality is that this process is painful and messy and imperfect. Hopefully, as students, humans, and writers, we are all trying to unlearn the engrained patterns of silencing ourselves and/or those we have power over. But even with this effort, we're going to make mistakes – mistakes that are understandable, but not excusable.

On Holding Ground and Taking Care...

I choose my readers carefully, and I choose the writing I bring into a critical space deliberately. I have developed a kind of sensor to help me decipher when criticism is budding out of the fear and sexism of the reader and when it is sprouting from the fault lines of my work. Frequently, both occur simultaneously, and I'm left tangled in the two. It's confusing and exhausting and painful. But sometimes I can hear beyond my hurt. Sometimes I can look past the presumptuous language of a power-asserting reader to the part of my writing he is reacting to. And I'm able to look directly into the words that are causing his discomfort, fear and defense. And then I'm in a position to decide if there is a way to communicate my ideas without shutting the reader down. Or do I want to shut the reader down? This is a on a good day.

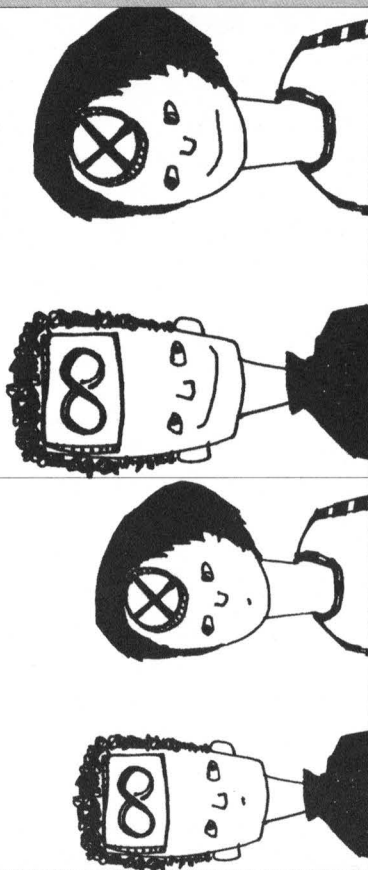
Then there are days where there is no room for negotiation and reframing. In these spaces, I protect myself before anything else. I block out comments or entire people, I walk out of workshops, I go home and cry and stop writing for a year and then start all over again from the ground up. I do this all out of preservation. Preservation of myself, my love for writing, and the truth I have that is important for others to hear.

In order to maintain writing as an act of healing, you as the author need to hold your author-ship and author-ity throughout the entire process. If it is being taken away from you, that is an abuse of power. Sometimes, you can transform the experience of being shut out of your writing— perhaps by making the reader aware of his impact, or by reframing/re-visioning his comments to something that lets you see his perspective as a reader and/or an agent.

Other times, even when you and your reader are doing your best, it's impossible to reframe or rescue the situation. At which point, I want you to value protecting yourself and your truth. This might mean leaving the situation and finding people who support you. This might mean using this experience as fuel to feed your next piece of writing.

Folks at the Writing Center may be doing their best to learn the extent of their own power, and where asserting that power begins to erase the person they are interacting with. But the unlearning is a process, and power-overs still happen. I've learned to walk through these spaces holding self-protection in one hand and reconciliation in the other. I hold the protection of my truth, and my writing. And I hold the reality that attacking someone for a learned societal behavior recycles violence. My agenda is to be heard, and I must improve my writing for this to occur. My agenda is to let "the other" know that re-writing my story is not okay, and that we can learn the ropes of accountability without the futile violence of blame.

transcend language



welcome to our neck of the woods: linguistic diversity and the writing center

by miss rapuzzi

“Our Neck of the Woods” is an idiom implying “my local community” or “the area in which we live.” Whether you’re visiting our fair campus for a quarter or a year on exchange, you decided to attend Evergreen all four years from your native country, or you grew up in a multi-lingual household, this article and poem are a letter to you. I want to welcome you and all the beautiful language you know. I’m inviting you to talk.

What happens when you come in for an appointment?

When you bring in a paper to get tutored, you’ll meet with one of our tutors. Each one of them is ready to have a discussion with you on your work. They understand the unique talents of every writer, and appreciate the language diversity you bring. Usually, your tutor will discuss what kind of writing you are doing, where you are in the writing process, and then read it aloud. It may seem scary to have a stranger read your paper, especially if you’re uncomfortable with your English, but no worries—your tutor can quickly become your friend!

One way to become comfortable with tutoring is to visit the Writing Center regularly and meet with the same tutor. This allows a tutor to become familiar with your work, and as you two meet, you’ll soon find that the conversations get easier and easier. Not only will you be practicing English in your sessions, you’ll be identifying any common grammatical errors in your writing, getting accustomed to American Academic Standard English composition, and learning the ins and outs of Evergreen writing assignments.

English Composition at Evergreen

Something to keep in mind, especially if you are an exchange student, is that every culture in the world has a different preference for writing style. American Academic composition is known for its adherence to the thesis-driven essay. American college students are expected to write in this form for most of their education and have long practiced this way of writing, usually since grade school. If you plan on writing for an English-speaking audience, it may be helpful for you to get comfortable with this form. In saying all of this, I must also introduce you to the fact that we are at Evergreen, where the regular way of doing things is often changeable. Evergreen is much less known for its strict style than its allowing students to be creative and new in the ways they do anything, but not least of all, writing.

A note on faculty:

Each teacher you meet will have different ideas of the writing process and different expectations of writing. Communicating with faculty about your language abilities and goals can be very beneficial.

Evergreen Writing:

Evaluations: Evaluations are page-long assessments of your own work in a class, and they replace letter grades. You also can evaluate the faculty, the course, and your entire Evergreen experience.

Journaling: Faculty may ask you to write personal responses to texts as you read them, and turn them in at various points in the quarter.

Integrative/Synthesis Essay: Taking ideas and concepts learned throughout the class and connecting them together.

Reflective Essay: This essay can take many shapes, but is most often assigned for the end of the class to look back on the material you've learned.

Autobiographical Writing: Writing about yourself, possibly with themes (ex: "My History with Nature," "My Biggest Influences").

Research Papers: Writing these will involve gathering information from many sources and then citing them, creating your own thesis and arguments.

Prime Time Tutoring:

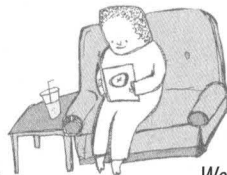
located on the 2nd floor of A dorm

Primetime is an extension of the Writing Center, and is conveniently located in the "A" dorm. If you live on campus, this is a great place to go in the evening if you're looking for more tutoring opportunities. This location has four internet-connected computers and plenty of space to work on papers. If the tutors aren't in a session, you can always ask them questions you have about writing as you work on a paper. Consider it an extra study space with built-in tutors.

Writing Center Handouts:

found in the handout section at the Writing Center

Handouts can be useful to use before, during, or after a tutoring session. They are sheets with information on the thesis-driven essay, how to write evaluations, how to plan a research paper, and that's just the beginning. It's nice to have something in your hand with guidelines for different pieces of writing, and they are available to all students.



Writing Center Website:

<http://www.evergreen.edu/writingcenter>

Go to the main site. To the left of the page is a column with various links. Under the "For Students" section, there is a link called "English Language Learners." After clicking on this link, you will find descriptions of online interactive English grammar quizzes with links to the websites. These quizzes are suggested if you find that a particular piece of grammar is difficult. You can practice again and again on any of these sites, without charge. Grammar and spelling are not the most important parts of writing, and so by practicing on your own, you and your tutor can focus on content, flow, organization, and your own voice.

Grammar Garden:

Wednesdays from 1pm-2pm in the Writing Center

The Grammar Garden is another resource the Writing Center provides for practice of the "its and bits" of writing: grammar, punctuation, parts of speech, and sentence structure. Grammar Garden is run as a workshop, with tutors inviting you to participate in activities, writing exercises, and more once a week.

Dialect by miss rapuzzi

a. You come to America.

You've taken English for six years in Japan.

Grammar drills, recitations.

You have the tools of a new language,
but now need those tools put in context.

Confucius and a poem stake your essay soaring.

b. Hymnals. Gospels of language.

A rich history of lyrical, rhythmic, flowing speech

Your vast oral history overwhelms

all the stories told in American mainstream

Imitated by many but shunned by most,

the grammar is like any other;

consistent, universal, yours.

c. The sacred colors of a vibrant house.

Mama's going on at your brother in Spanish,

Pops is Boston Irish

with the slang and sound to match.

When you were learning to write,

the song of Neruda and the proud Irish ballad

inspire where your plot twist goes

and just how peach-blue that sunset at the end is.

d. Standard Dialect English has no equivalent
as warm and inviting as "y'all."

Closest speech to Middle English,

a vital and bubbling melody.

Traditional oral stories ricochet in your dreams
and out of your pen tip, flow like the river down the road.

e. American Academia.

Persuasive, strong kings of their papers.

A judging source to new ways of writing.

Bring a hoi polloi perspective,

a voice born of such a pretty color.

f. Studies:

sociolinguistic and economic;

of education and of home.

Chomsky and a universal grammar

Oh let us acknowledge and enjoy the inherent gift of

language

Sometimes that research paper on

Judaism needs to be expressed through song

Is a haiku and reverence

a more appropriate synthesis paper?

g. Language not deterministic

Not imperialistic but innate

The recognition of

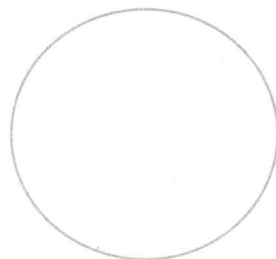
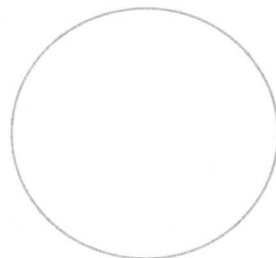
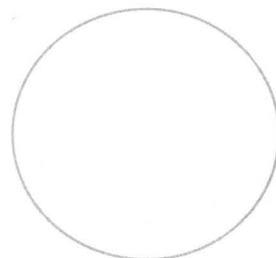
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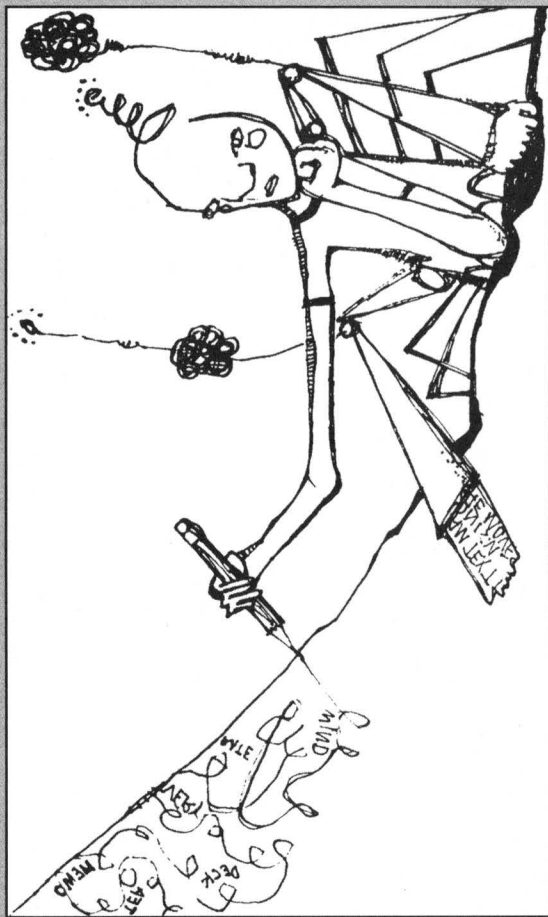
and

distinct

voices will enrich academia,

express the full range of humanity.





inking voice: a radical act

by victoria larkin

The power of the Word: We know it exists: Books have been banned and burned, people have been killed for writing publicly and privately. The written word has been the catalyst for both liberation and enslavement. It was death to teach a "slave" to read and write, death to be a slave learning to read and write. Ideas committed to print and to circulation have shaped our lives: they have created and altered perceptions held by human kind, for better and for worse.

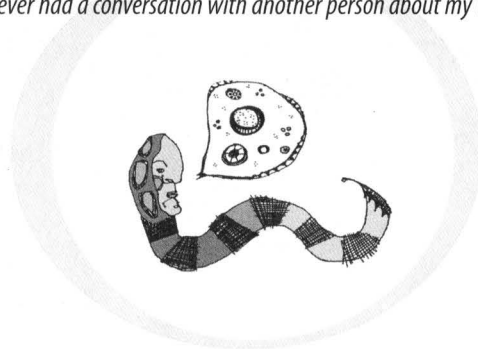
Writing all of myself into my little journals, small enough to carry in my pocket, thinking about/writing about the crazy world I lived in, the beautiful, the sad, the amazingly inexplicable world... Writing me into my book, wondering if one day I'd write out loud...

The Bible had been The Book about the origin of our species, until Charles Darwin wrote one that challenged the belief that humans sprang from a Creator; in 1774 Thomas Paine wrote a little pamphlet, titled *Common Sense*, which denounced British rule and led us all the way to the *Declaration of Independence*; through fiction, writers from Charles Dickens to Harriet Beacher Stowe, James Baldwin, and John Steinbeck have all used the pen to tell stories of the struggles of people under the lash of one kind or another. Writers like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Jean Genet have broken language and thought wide open, and have caused people to think differently, just by putting themselves onto paper.

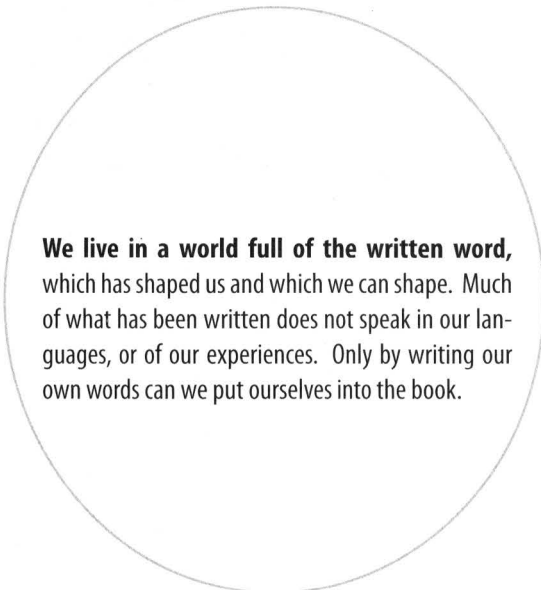
After years of solitary scribbles, I went back to school eager to be given challenges, to test my wisdom and my ability to convey. I wanted something demanded of me, and I wanted someone else's eyes on my work. I wanted feedback. I loved having professors read my clever and well-supported rantings. Getting a good grade and a few comments in the margins tickled me to write even more.

Writing takes courage. It means drawing from your own ideas and stories and carving into the book. It is saying: Here I am, and this is what I think. Writing is setting your self down on the line. Writing is claiming voice.

I never went to a tutor until I enrolled in the Practice of Professional Tutoring class at Evergreen. All those notebooks, poems, essays and grades, and I'd never had a conversation with another person about my writing.



Within my first few tutoring sessions, my conceptions about being tutored changed entirely. I'd expected someone to tell me what to do with my own writing, which I knew I wouldn't like. But something different happened: as I sat nervously over my paper across from a perfect stranger, windows opened and blossoms occurred. I was entreated to share my thoughts; I was given new perspectives; I came up with new ideas; I learned more about what I didn't know. In order to be clear about what I was saying, I had to be mindful with my language. My writing got refined, coming ever closer to my desires for it. I was inspired; I was renewed. All of this happened during face-to-face dialogues with other people who wanted to talk about ideas, about language, and about my writing achieving its fullest potential, representing me, the individual that I am. In these experiences with tutors at the Writing Center I was not prescribed to, I was cultivated.



We live in a world full of the written word, which has shaped us and which we can shape. Much of what has been written does not speak in our languages, or of our experiences. Only by writing our own words can we put ourselves into the book.

Words are the most fluid and precise medium we have to communicate with others about ourselves; they can bring us closer to understanding, and they can break us apart. Considering exactness, fullness, and tone becomes imperative. In order to be precise, we have to think about what we think, what we know, and what we truly want to say.

One of the first things to go in repressive times is the right to voice thoughts of one's own. Our school system is not known for cultivating originality. From early on, kids are drilled into regurgitating prescribed formulas. As a tutor, I notice how hard it can be to get people to write without censoring themselves. I notice many folks trying to satisfy the powers that be, to write what they think their professors want them to write. The idea of a unique style is often discouraged/overcomplicated/overlooked in academia. Yet even in a research paper there is style and subjectivity: the author of the text chooses a thesis, reaches a conclusion, and sets the whole tone of the piece by their choice of trajectory and language. Each choice reveals something about the individual behind it.

Writing is a brain exercise: You have to think to write; you have to process and to analyze. You have to organize your thoughts more scrupulously than when just speaking, or emailing. You have to think hard about how to communicate ideas in coherent form.

Tutoring is working with the exercise of writing. Dialogue between a tutor and a writer forces both to think critically, and to wrestle with ideas. A good conversation about writing and its subject matter can illuminate hidden pathways and buried gems. Different facets shimmer and new perspectives occur when things are said out loud. Think about times you've told a dream to somebody, and only in the act of telling did you achieve insight. The power of engagement with the other is that it fosters new knowledge to arise.

Engagement is what tutoring is all about. We gather around tables with writers and have conversations about what they're writing and how they're writing it. Together, tutor and writer excavate ideas, polish them and show them off in their strongest voice. We help writers uncover and flourish their selves in their writing.



Writing is a radical act, an act that has set and changed the course of history. Individuals have spoken to/written to millennia after them by writing down their unique experiences, perspectives, and wisdoms. Tutoring is one way of cultivating the unique voice of an individual. Empowering others/tutoring others to write in their own voices, to write themselves into the book, using their own turn of the pen, is radical, and it is my underground response to armed combat.

redefining authority

by sandy yannone

Here's a dose of reality: every one of you is going to be asked to write something during your college career. Each of you will be asked to become a "writer," and one of Evergreen's expectations is that you will graduate with writing as an intact skill to serve you well. I'm reminded of a scene in one of my favorite films of the 80s, *Broadcast News*. Fifteen-year old Aaron Altman is delivering the valedictorian speech at his high school graduation. Cut to the next scene. On the playground a scrum of boys still clad in robes hold Aaron down while the lead bully pummels him to the ground. The future network news reporter rises defiantly, and with a swollen, bloodied lip and loose tooth hurls the biggest insult he can muster: "Okay, take this: . . . You'll never know the pleasure of writing a graceful sentence or having an original thought. Think about it" (Brooks 9).

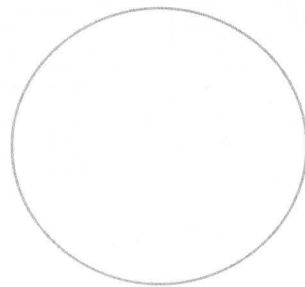
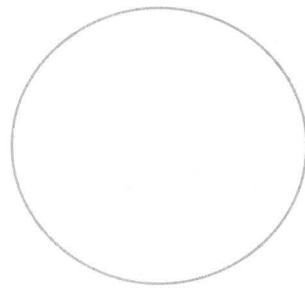
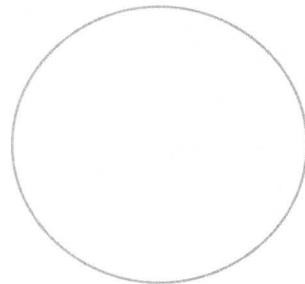


Yes, think about it. Along with “pleasure,” I’d like to add privilege. To write is a privilege. During your time at Evergreen, which is also a privilege, you have the opportunity to hone this craft that separates you from millions of others in the world who are unable to write or to claim a voice because they lack access to education or because a tyranny of political power renders them silent.

Yes, think about it. I’m thinking about the student who stood in front of the tanks in Tiananmen Square. Through his single act of autonomy, this student helped tell the world a powerful story. This student defied authority by creating his own authority. Through the writing process, you, too, can change the direction of authority and change how we view a particular story.

There are millions of important stories to tell and an equal number of ways to best tell them: personal essays, persuasive essays, research papers, lab reports, poetry, etc. An assignment, therefore, is an invitation for you to practice being an author, a person with authority. This doesn’t, however, mean you are an expert. It does mean that you have the privilege to share your ideas and imagination. Faculty at Evergreen invite you to put your authentic ideas before them and others in your program. Every time you participate in the conversation through writing, you cultivate a new definition of authority.

Through the writing process, you, too, can change the direction of authority and change how we view a particular story.



The responsibility to tell your truth as you see it rests with you.

The ability to know the best way to render the telling rests with you, and the humility to write in the service of creating rather than destroying rests with you. Any telling, any story, carries with it an awesome responsibility.

Yes, think about it. Writing anything worth sharing

can be a long, arduous process. Take for example, this article: I've spent the latter part of four months struggling to discover what I've wanted to say. I've struggled long past my deadline and watched while all the other articles in this publication have come into being, withstood the storm of revision and review, and reveled in their final edits. Four months is a little more than the span of time you might have to write a research paper, and many of your assignments will have shorter deadlines. Nevertheless, I've taken the time I've needed for four months to think about the relationship between four powerful words: author, authority, autonomy, and authenticity. I've taken the time because I'm not an "authority" on this subject; instead, I've taken seriously the responsibility as an author asserting my authority to speak authentically about what I'm beginning to know in a way that respects my audience, including myself.

Who will you decide to be as an author? How will you assert your authority? Will you claim autonomy over your original thoughts? Will you stand up and shout your authentic voice in the face of bullies who

seek to silence you? What relationships will you create between these four powerful words: author, authority, autonomy, and authenticity? Only you can write this story. Think about it.

Works Cited: Brooks, James L, *Broadcast News*. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

the author's note:

Poet, essayist, and activist Muriel Rukeyser reminds us: "we need to know our resources and ourselves. In a time of suffering, the long war, and the opening of the horizon, there is no resource which we can afford to overlook or misunderstand" (Rukeyser 8).

A powerful resource designed to lend support to your authority as a writer is a document I recommend you write along with each piece of writing you share with your faculty and peers. The Author's Note will take you ten minutes to write. However, these ten minutes of writing will assert the authority you have over your work. The act of documenting your authority over your authorship is too powerful for your faculty to ignore. To download a copy of an Author's Note, go to the Writing Center's Website at www.evergreen.edu/writingcenter. Of course, the Writing Center is also a powerful resource to support you in your endeavor to claim your authority as a writer.

Works Cited: Rukeyser, Muriel. *The Life of Poetry*. Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 1996.

writing as a process

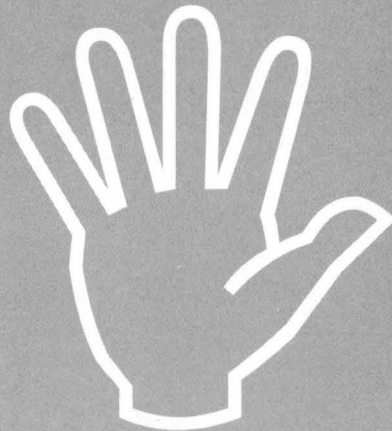
by sandy yannone

The Writing Center dedicates its work to exploring the many ways writers write. Our tutors have thousands of appointments each year, and each represents a different approach to writing. The Center considers its most important work to empower you to write in your own voice, in your style, and with your individual process. To do this, we urge you to examine and track your writing process with each important piece of writing you do.

The following grid gives you space to answer three important questions related to each stage of your writing process. After each stage of the process on the grid ask yourself:

- 1) What is your desired "product"? What will you have when you complete this stage of the writing process? For example, after brainstorming, you may be the type of writer who will have a list of all the possible ideas you are considering before you commit to a draft.
- 2) What strategies do you use to create the product for this stage? For example, in the drafting stage, you may create the first draft by taking your list from brainstorming and making an outline. The product is the first draft; your strategy is to create the draft is outlining.
- 3) Who/what are your best and most realistic sources for feedback during each stage? Most people seek out intentional feedback with writing that matters. For instance, I had one of the Writing Center tutors read this article over after my first draft and after I completed a revision to help me consider further revisions.

I like to think of the writing process as an open hand, each finger extending to represent a different stage of the writing process. Some writers collapse all stages into one, creating a closed, tight fist. The tight fist doesn't encourage thoughtful development; the tight fist doesn't allow the writer to witness the distinct stages of the writing process.



the writing grid

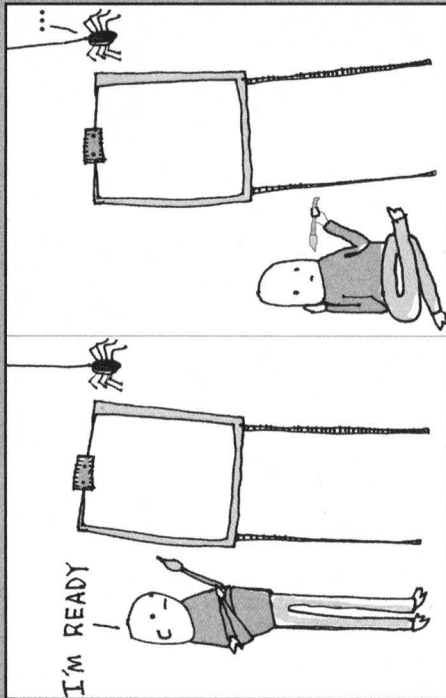
	product	strategies	feedback
brainstorming			
drafting			
revision			
editing			
proofreading			

In this issue of Inkwell, we've dedicated an article to defining each "finger" of the process. Once you begin to learn to articulate your process, you begin to create a guide you can use as a tool for any piece of writing. Seeing your process, what you do and don't do, allows you to make informed decisions about how to approach writing your first seminar paper and your final self-evaluation. Keep in mind that this is your process, not a generic template. Also, the writing process is fluid, dynamic. It is not always linear, often folding back on itself time and time again: to revise a particular idea, I might need to brainstorm. Many strategies find themselves listed in multiple stages.

Using the grid in conjunction with an author's note (see the text box in "Redefining Authority") can further empower you during conversations with peer writers, with writing tutors, and with your faculty. Knowing your writing process like the back and front of your open hand can help you eliminate some of the struggle that can accompany writing and leave you more time to grapple with your ideas and your imagination.

beingstorming

by grant miller

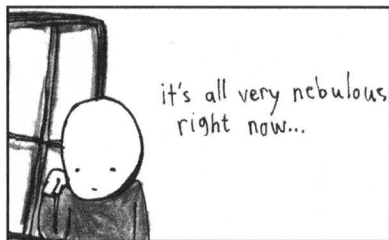


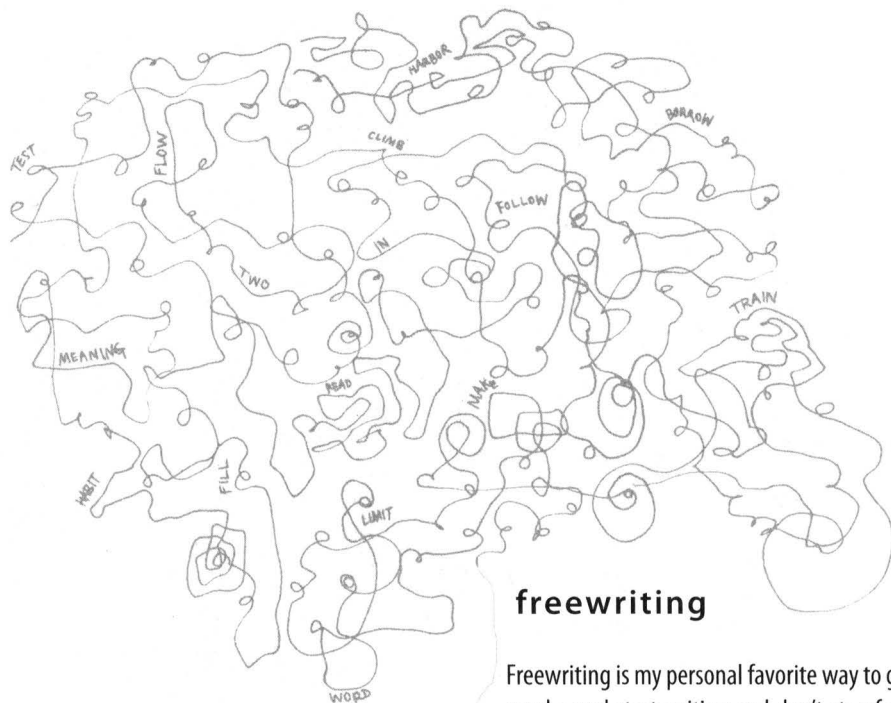
Simulated images of the brain resemble a vast and rigid countryside, or some unexplored planet illuminated by flashes of lightning that allow the viewer brief glimpses of the landscape of thought. Synapses fire. It looks much like a brainstorm. But what about this: A dull pain behind the eyes. Obsessive scratching. Pacing. Seemingly empty words flow through swollen fingertips. The clucking of the tongue. The wall. The tightened chest. The reading and note-taking, thinking, the ineptitude of language to stand in for thought, the futile attempt to pull concepts from the sky like snowflakes that melt as soon as they touch the page. Brainstorming quickly becomes bodystorming becomes beingstorming in this attempt to arrange ideas into that sluggish dialectic that is the writing process.

But are there ways out of, or ways into, this blank page ?

There are.

Brainstorming (or beingstorming, whichever you like) is the first stage of the writing process and is often referred to as “prewriting,” that is, **writing before writing**. All stages of the writing process are similar in that one can find support during any stage by visiting the Writing Center. But this stage is special in that this is the stage where Spellcheck becomes irrelevant, the stage where one’s internal editor goes on a short vacation to a sunnier place. Because brainstorming is just that: a storm. Ideas of raindrops fall indiscriminately, black clouds of freeflowing thoughts roar thunder and strike lightning where they may, without reason, and leave the blank page ravaged with tiny treasures of thoughts and ideas. And with any process or ritual, there are ways to conjure up this storm.





freewriting

Freewriting is my personal favorite way to get ideas on a page this is what you do just set a timer maybe and start writing and don't stop for anything until the timer goes off do not edit do not worry about grammar or punctuation do not worry about anything but getting those ideas out of your head and onto the paper or screen or whatever if you get stuck just write the same word over and over and over and over again until something comes and when you do go back through and highlight everything that may be relevant to your topic it is a wonderful way to go about it but it isn't for everybody so let's look at some other ways we might go about it

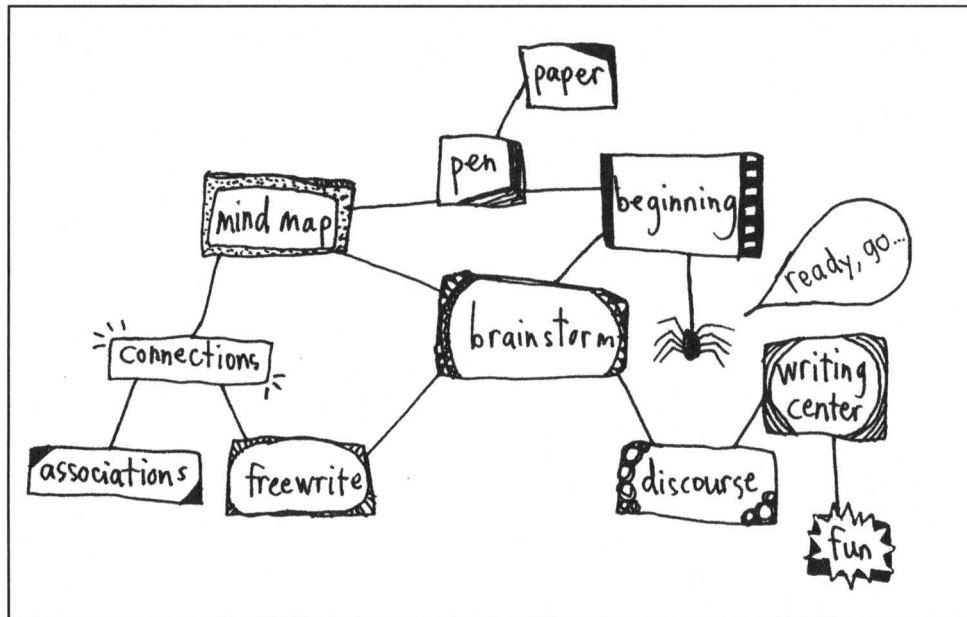
Go through
your syllabus
your reading
your notes
your mind
and jot down
everything that
seems relevant

this may look like
a strange free-verse
poem

or perhaps,
a to-do list
of ideas so one can
gather
them
into

clustering

murky puddles
with which one will
build
a
sandcastle



concept maps

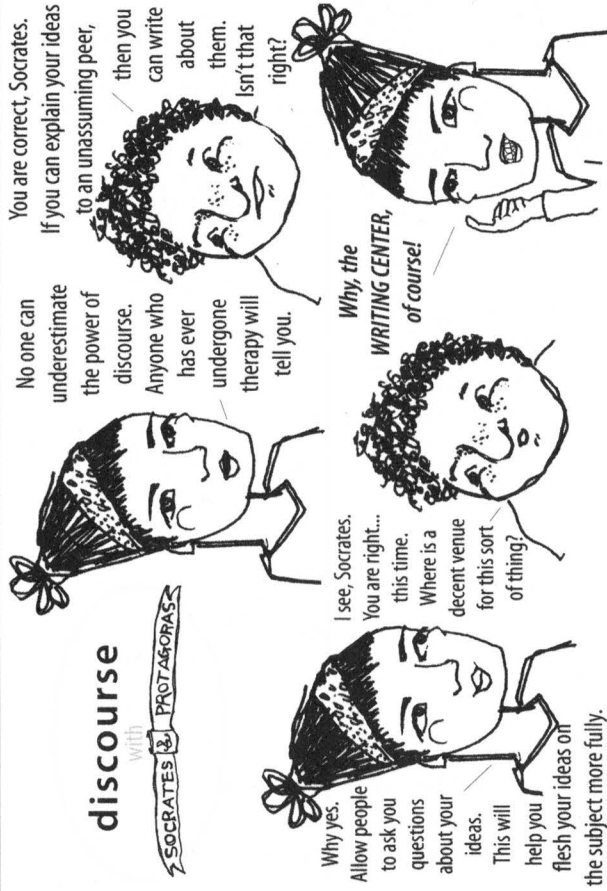
Take out a piece of paper and write down your main ideas and circle them. Look for links. Draw lines between ideas.

Break out the watercolors and paint your ideas and how you might translate them into words.

The more ideas you put in circles, the more your ideas will come together into something you can work with.

discourse

with
SOCRATES & PROTAGORAS



These are simply a few examples of how to engage with brainstorming (beingstorming), this first stage of the writing process. The process can be sluggish, and it is the brainstorm that bridges the gap between thoughts or ideas and a blank page or screen. The brainstorm is the ante, the beginning, the blueprint. The space where the ideas form and solidify, become words, which become sentences, which become paragraphs, which becomes your first draft.

This is just the beginning.

Trust the process.

Begin...

"...and like everything else this strange morning the words became symbols, wrote themselves all over the grey-green walls. If only she could put them together, she felt, write them out in some sentence, then she would have got at the truth of things."

- Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse

drafting:

how to ride a dinosaur and look good doing it

by ian ettinger

It is time to begin "drafting." The brainstorm (beingstorm) has filled your page with spidery ciphers and the white void has become a darkly inked surface; a complex landscape of verbiage begins to gesture toward meaning. The screen of the mind, teeming with wraiths which compete for your attention, must now be sorted through in order to make sense, to create meaning. From the scattered thoughts which litter the mind/page in the aftermath of the storm, it is time to begin making choices about which to carry along with you and which to leave behind. The second stage in the long, loopy curve of writing now begins to pull you into its revolving motion: it is time to start writing your First Draft...

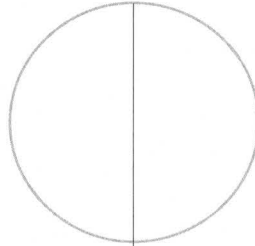
One important thing to remember is that the process of writing often requires us to exist in the realm of *potentialities*. When we write, many things are possible, including the potential for failure. Using language means wrestling with the limitations of linguistic construction, means attempting to wrestle language into a shape that can *point toward* meaning. This task, entailing (as it does) a certain degree of ambiguity, can feel uncomfortable and maybe even unsafe. As writers, tools like the Writing Grid provide us with the structure needed to keep us on track, but the bottom line is that what makes a paper provocative is often a wild card.

There is no right way to approach the drafting process, no simple method to begin writing, no readily apparent point of entry: some of us tend to wait until the last minute while others of us give ourselves plenty of time; some of us work linearly toward our goals, while others of us sneak up on our query from alternative routes. But a paper's being compelling doesn't always depend on how prepared you are or how systematic you are, any more than waiting until the last minute is bound to produce a low-quality piece. There are undoubtedly many good ways one can go about this tricky business, but concepts like the Writing Grid help to *improve* one's process, which is likely to help generate better work.

Procrastinators (like me) are among the most in need of a better-functioning process. For many students and writers, there is a certain mystique in waiting for the magic of a one-night writing marathon; many see the ability to pull off an undertaking like this as impressive, even heroic. The fact is, however, that this strategy often leads to *more* headaches than it's worth. Also, the paper doesn't usually turn out as well as it could have, since one is essentially trying to accomplish every stage of the writing process simultaneously. I know very well that the pressure of waiting until the last minute seems like the only circumstances under which a lot of us are able to write, but this sort of mentality is what the Writing Grid is designed to counteract. By emphasizing the equal importance of each stage of the writing process, the Grid helps illuminate the reasons why collapsing all the stages into one night of writing (however epic) often leads to shoddier results.

Sometimes the only way to know you have a lot to say about something is to try writing about it.

The fear of beginning is perhaps the number one cause of procrastination, and the key to getting over this fear is simply not being afraid to *make a decision* and *run with it*. The act of making a decision, no matter how arbitrary, can often help get you into a writing groove, even if it's not ultimately the topic you decide to go with. There really is no "right" choice, since the point is just to set yourself in motion. Once you have started down one path or another, things will probably begin to snap into place in terms of whether or not you're moving in the right direction, and if you're not, it will give you a better idea of where to try going next! Breaking the barrier of inertia is essential if you are going to build up the momentum needed to *keep writing*.



Generating the Raw Material

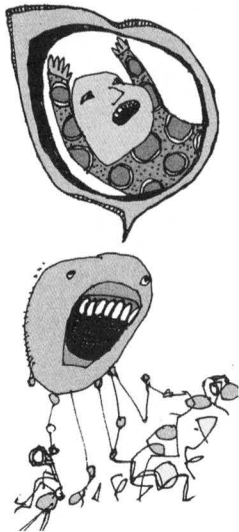
Sometimes the only way to know you have a lot to say about something is to try writing about it. After writing a few sentences about each topic that relates to the overall theme of the paper, you might find that you're able to write *more* about a certain one. Paying attention to which topic you are most drawn to is often a good way to figure out what you want to write your paper on. Also, if you find that a few of your paragraphs complement one another thematically, then start pulling them together and looking for common threads. In any case, once you think you've found a good focus, try to start generating as much material as you can, no matter how unpolished or incoherent it may be.

The Guiding Question

For those of us writing thesis-driven pieces, developing a guiding question can be an important part of the drafting process. Essentially, it is like an inverted thesis statement: it contains all the same elements as a thesis, except that it poses a question rather than making a statement. You can refer to Aislyn Matias' article as well as the Writing Center's handouts on thesis development for more detailed advice and information on the thesis itself – the guiding question is simply a tool to help get you there. It keeps you focused and on track by giving you something to refer to from time to time so you don't stray too far off the topic. It also helps you to start thinking selectively about what key elements and ideas to look for in your source material. In this sense, it is very much like a thesis because it provides a hub for your thoughts and investigations to revolve around. However, it can be discarded or revised at any point: it guides rather than constrains the direction of your paper because it is open-ended.

Fitting the Pieces Together

Now that the paper is starting to take shape, it's important to begin organizing your thoughts. The *sequencing* of your arguments is often as important as the arguments themselves, especially if you're trying to build some sort of case by guiding the reader through a particular succession of ideas. As you near the revision stage, you might begin to find that certain arrangements make a lot more sense than others. Try to think of the paper as a fluid entity — it should *not* feel like pieces set next to one another: it should feel like a dynamic organism with components that fit together in a certain way which allows that organism to function.



A Loopy Continuum

Writing does not usually happen in a tidy, linear sequence. As one moves from brainstorming to drafting and into revision, one finds that the line between these stages is far from definitive. Just as elements of brainstorming will continue throughout the early parts of the drafting process, so elements of drafting will continue into the revision process. Imagine a roller-coaster with lots of loop-de-loops or the concentric circles of a snail shell — as one moves forward, one often finds oneself moving cyclically toward the end goal. However, this somewhat convoluted process need not be undertaken alone. Dropping by the Writing Center, if only for the benefit of having a second set of eyes on your paper, can be very helpful at any stage. Attending the Center's writing workshops is also a great way to get information and ideas. Because almost all the tutors in the Writing Center are fellow students who are also trying to navigate the complexities of college writing, we are essentially "right there with you."

“If a teacher told me to revise, I thought that meant my writing was a broken-down car that needed to go to the repair shop. I felt insulted. I didn’t realize the teacher was saying, “Make it shine. It’s worth it.” Now I see revision as a beautiful word of hope. It’s a new vision of something. It means you don’t have to be perfect the first time. What a relief!”

- Naomi Shihab Nye

the orbital region: re-envisioning revision

by dory nies

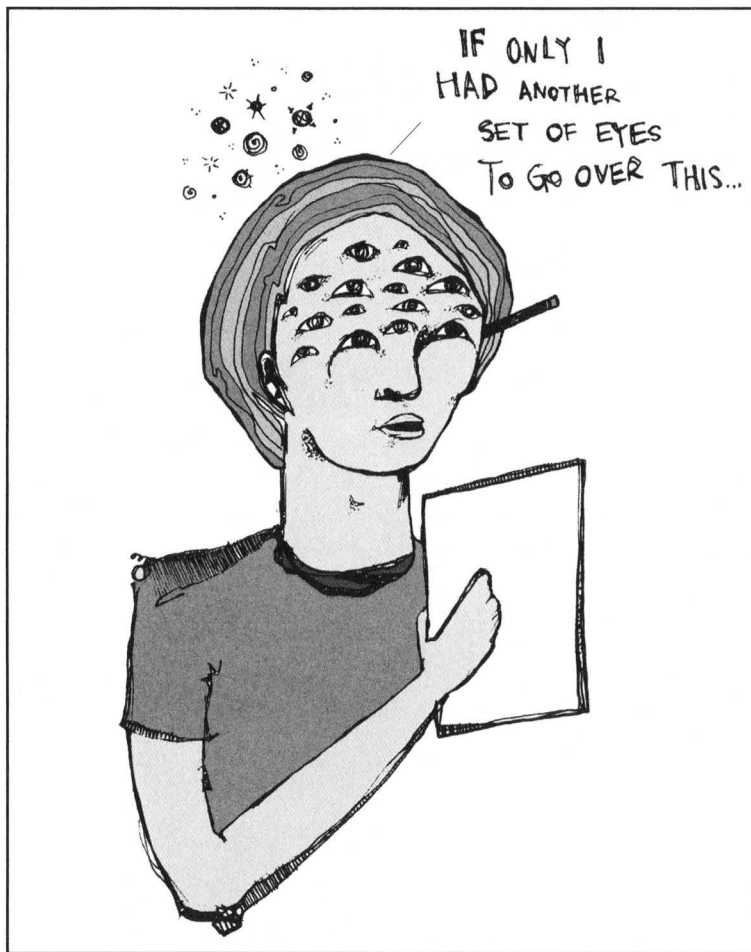
There is a maxim that even the best writers struggle with the process of writing, but this struggle is never apparent! What we read and take in on a daily basis is often the final stage of writing. In other words, you never see the drafts and scratched-out notes and outlines a published (and revised) piece of writing goes through before you hold the final stage in your hands and drink it with your eyes. The myth is that writing *well* is a painless process. With this article I hope to dispel this myth.

It’s ironic that I’m writing a piece possibly trying to convince you, the reader, about the pleasures of the revision process. It’s ironic because I clutch and cling to the words I’m finally able to force through my fingers down through the pen onto paper, or through the keystrokes onto a monitor lit with light and memory. I cling to the words that finally end up on the page, and I resist the idea of taking any of them away, because I fear the more I pull the writing apart, the more it will unravel until I am left with only the ashes of my initial ideas.

The poet Naomi Shihab Nye speaks to her feeling of hope when she realized that to revise is to be more effectively heard. With words we make sense of our learning experience, particularly at Evergreen. I had a similar experience to the one Nye shares in the above quote. My first quarter at Evergreen I was writing short argumentative essays. I would consistently get the drafts back from my faculty with comments like, “You need to convince me.” I resisted the notion that I had to do anything else to prove what I felt were very obvious and succinct arguments. I felt proud of the writing I had done, and I was afraid that I would have to start from scratch if I wanted to rise to the challenge my faculty had set before me.

With practice and time I developed methods for this pulling apart, this unraveling of ideas, to actually get deeper into the ideas. One thing that propelled me was the realization that my faculty was actually saying, “It’s worth it for you to convince me.” I reveled in this challenge. Sure, it was exasperating, and frustrating; it meant I had to sit back down and sometimes start from scratch. It meant I had to get messy, which is really hard for me. It meant I had to let go of the words, ideas, and quotes I thought made the most sense and sometimes find all new evidence, or dump whole paragraphs. But it also meant that what I had to say mattered, and how I said it mattered even more.

Perhaps you have already read the other “Writing Grid” articles. I hope so, dear reader, because reading about these other parts of the writing process may finally help you see that writing is not all about a finished product. The Writing Grid exists to illuminate all the stages of writing, because the truth is, you can start from anywhere and get somewhere. The stages of writing are subtle, and they flow into one another. In an attempt to give you a technical definition of revision, I will say that revision should mostly consist of conceptual, textual, and transitional changes. All those mechanical and grammatical changes? Yes, they are a part of revision, but they are tertiary. Revision wants to focus on ideas, not commas or font changes or just cutting and pasting your paragraphs to different places.



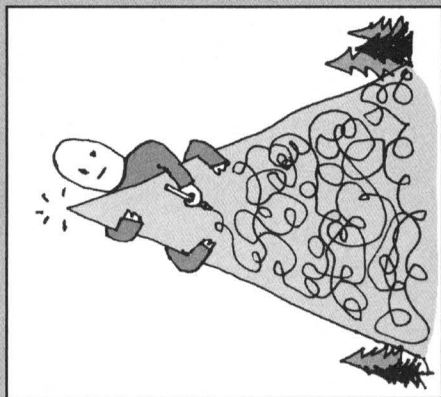
Most writers start with an introduction and end with a conclusion and everything in between is pat and in place. Start with A, go to B then C then D, and then you're done and you hand in your paper and when you get it back it says, "Too many commas," and, "This isn't how you use a semicolon." Nye suggests that the revision process entails letting go of your idea of perfection. This may mean ignoring those red pen comments, and digging into the real process of revision: to see again.

This seeing again can sometimes feel overwhelming. It can feel like you're constantly sifting and tweaking your ideas and transitions. Often when you think you totally have to start over, you're really just starting. It's sometimes the whole dumping process that casts light on where you're really going. It is a courageous act to take a step back and gleefully cross out the lines or cut and paste: extract words and ideas; expand on words and ideas!

One way to step back from your own writing is to have another person review, read, or respond to your writing. Here's where the Writing Center comes in. The folks at the Writing Center are fellow students: people who have ideas of their own, and have some good training in how to help you articulate your ideas. The word "tutor" doesn't begin to really define what goes on in the Writing Center. The word tutor is often mistaken to mean needing to be fixed, or *repaired*. Working with a tutor on your writing is to have someone help you to see and think about your words and ideas from a new perspective. Working with a tutor on your writing is a chance for you to be more effectively heard.

The writing process itself is shadowy. It is fluid and liquid, and to my own dismay, there is no one right way of doing it. Writing is language and thought! Writing is dreaminess and desperate! Writing is you speaking to what you think and believe! And what a relief, as Nye says, that you don't have to get it all right the first time. Revision for me, means letting go of what I think is the perfect form for my words. Dear reader, you have no idea how this article has evolved. This is my eighth draft, but really it's officially my fourth, because all the drafts in between were secret. I was mired in the revision process, which left me lost, like a starving mad woman out in the deep waters with no raft to hold on to. To write this article I brainstormed, got tutored, drafted, got tutored, at one point I even compared the Writing Center to a giant eyeball. But then I pushed through it. I let go of first one idea, then another. I let go of previous forms. I completely changed the whole damn thing, and finally, finally I have a conclusion and this is it.

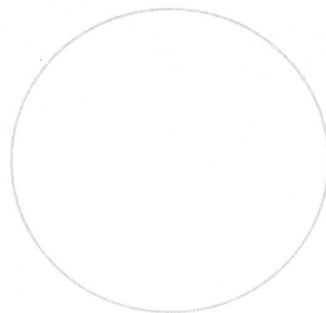
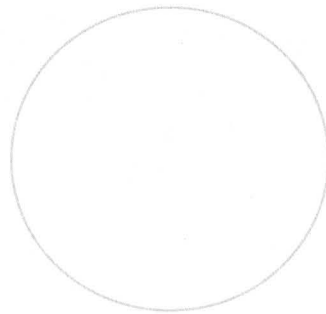
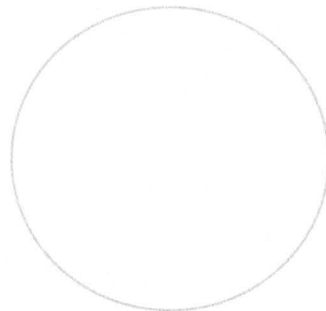
Works Cited: Janeczko, Paul. *Seeing the Blue Between: Advice and Inspiration for Young Poets*.
Massachusetts : Candlewick Press, 2002.



Editing, like all the other stages of writing, is part of a larger process and as a result cannot be reached by taking short cuts. For me, the writing process is like hiking through a wilderness that has no clearly marked trails. Brainstorming, drafting, and revising are the stages that allow writers to forge a trail to their desired destination. Editing is the breathtaking view at the end of an enjoyable yet strenuous hike, for editing is the stage that enables writers to extract and illuminate the underlying essence of a piece.

As a tutor, I often speak with students who are eager to edit their piece, and it doesn't surprise me because when I think about the stage of writing that appeals to me the most, I always find myself gravitating toward the editing stage. Although I enjoy writing, it is not something that is easy for me. In fact, more often than not, I find myself procrastinating when it comes to writing because I know writing is not about instant gratification. Writing is a gradual progression that helps to unravel the mystery of a particular idea. Whether it is a personal narrative, poetry, prose, or an academic essay, the decision to take on writing as a means of expression comes with the need for time and patience. However, I like to think of editing as the long awaited panoramic view that inspires writers to reflect on all that has been said, and to hone in on all of the poetic peaks of a piece.

Although editing can be referred to as the high point of the writing process, it is by no means the end, for in order to be able to share the beauty of an amazing journey, writers must make it back down the trail of proofreading in a cautious and mindful way. However, because arriving at the mountaintop vista requires a healthy dose of patience and endurance, I like to encourage readers to revel in the wonder that is making it to the editing stage and to take the time to reflect on all of their hard work and efforts by asking them to search for the inherent beauty of their ideas and to work on threading that beauty throughout the entirety of their piece.



While gazing from atop the editing peak, writers are rewarded with an opportunity to revisit the trail that led them to their current destination. Editing is the stage that asks writers to look at each individual sentence in order to identify whether each sentence is helping to guide readers forward. Is each sentence contributing to the forward movement of the piece? Or is there a sentence that forces readers to circle around in a confusing manner? Are there sentences that ask the reader to carry more information than is necessary or helpful, especially in terms of the larger picture? Are there areas that can be further explored in terms of vocabulary? Would using a thesaurus help expand your understanding of language and provide your reader with an opportunity to read something fresh?

Reading a piece aloud allows writers to feel the weight of each word and to reflect on the auditory effect of each sentence.

One of my favorite exercises to do with writers when they come into the Writing Center is to have their piece read aloud. I like to remind them that language was an oral tradition before it was translated into the written form. Having a piece of writing read aloud can prove to be an incredibly transformative experience because it requires writers to breathe life into their words and by doing so places them in the position of both the writer and the reader. Reading a piece aloud allows writers to feel the weight of each word and to reflect on the auditory effect of each sentence. More often than not, if a sentence does not feel good on your tongue, it's probably not going to feel good to the reader.

Ultimately, I like to make the distinction between editing and proofreading by saying that editing is solidifying the poetic resonance of a piece, while proofreading is about polishing the grammatical and visual aspects. Editing is about creating a piece of writing that encourages both the reader and the writer to engage in the sensual and ideological journey of a piece. Editing is about clearing the underbrush from the path you created in order reach the pinnacle of your ideas.



becoming reader

by megan mcnealy

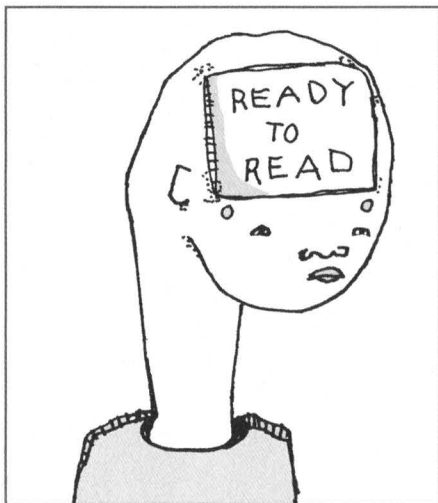


The final stage of our writing process is the integral moment of becoming, of morphing or transforming *from* the writer and back *into* the reader. Reading is the Other of writing, perhaps the opposite, yet also that which contains writing, which requires and allows for writing to exist. The completion of the writing process is reading, becoming the reader, experiencing our own work and owning, really knowing the text. "...[T]he text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading" (Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*).

To understand this completion, this “finishedness” of the text, is a tricky thing. Have we not been reading through the text all along, fixing and moving and pouring out since the first moments of the brainstorming? When can we call the text “done” *enough to read it*? Putting the pen down. Taking off the writer-face, and sitting down with a text, a new text, just finished, just for us to read! Editing is done now, text is assembled, and is *ready* to be read. When we read our own work, we allow ourselves to understand what we meant, to see where we meant something else, perhaps, or to inspire ourselves with a new idea completely, a new voice, structure, meaning, or practice. We see our ideas as they have fit themselves together into an entirety, a wholeness. When we write for a particular audience, we are testing the work by reading it, interrogating the words at their connections before any other reader gets the chance to do so, knocking on the wall of this work we have constructed, trusting the solidity, comfortable, knowing.

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text we have created.

Becoming the reader of our own work is the way we get to know the work, the real work, the culmination of every step of the process, every moment from revision, switching and changing, re-writing, pausing and thinking; this piece of text that we have created is the story of that process. Only we can understand that, and we can only understand it when we read the text. The writing, the whole process and the text itself, is an extension of ourselves. Each word and phrase is determined by our voice; we must know this voice and be proud of it. Reading is taking ownership of a text; we project ourselves onto any text we read, and that text paints itself back onto us; we form relationships with a text when we read it. The effect of forming this relationship with a text that we have written is astoundingly important, phenomenally vital, and stupendously powerful. This is true no matter what type of writing we are referring to, always. In order to come full circle in our writing process, we must make time to converse with, analyze, investigate, critique, and question (read: read) the text we have created. All of the writing we do is our own, and reading our work gives us the freedom to keep going, to plunge deeper into our inquiry and expression. Reading our work gives us the ability to understand our processes and practices at every step of each piece of writing, as well as the chain that each of those texts creates.



Once we have become reader of our work, it is likely to be beneficial to seek out a new reader, for the text to be read by new eyes, like a piece of music played on a different instrument. Tutors in the Writing Center are thrilled to read any piece of writing that happens upon them, but for them, *tutoring* does not mean just *proofreading*. Proofreading is a specific act, a special one, the final moments of the writing process, the readiness of the piece, and is most important when enacted by the writer. Tutors are interested in working with writers in a way that will support them in their whole process and in the particular stage they might be in. The proofreading stage could be very brief, perhaps minutes before the paper is due, or it could take a while, revisiting our lines and our words; it may even lead to discussion and conversation about the ideas and work as a whole. Often, a tutor might read our work to us. Hearing our work read by another voice is a great way to get a sense of how our writing translates to another person, and how the writing *feels* when another person is sensing our voice, emphasis, and tone in the work.

The most important thing is that we read our writing, that we know it, hear it, sense it, sign it, reference it, remember it, and step away from it, look at it from a very different angle and become inspired by it.

Works Cited: Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure of the Text*. New York : Hill and Wang, 1975.

The Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate: How the Evergreen Writing Center Can Help You Meet Them

by eddy d. brown

Beginning in 1998, the Evergreen faculty went through two years of arduous and contentious deliberations on General Education, which at its philosophical core, defied the founding premise of The Four No's: no departments, no faculty ranks, no (specific graduation) requirements, no (letter) grades. The outcome was the establishment of General Education Expectations.

By this time in the College's history, a number of external factors and forces were at work, not the least of which was accreditation. However unique Evergreen had been at its founding and remained nearly thirty years later, however marvelous its track record in terms of successful alumni and a growing national reputation as a model learning community, it had to be like every other college in the country that wants credibility: it had to explain itself in order to be granted official legitimacy as a higher education institution. Likewise, as students were pursuing their studies in preparation for graduate school or careers in the work force, there was a perceived, practical need to build a bridge between those goals and their Evergreen undergraduate degree. As well, it was decided that there was the need to establish a set of guidelines that weren't exactly standards in the traditional sense, but clearly articulated, reasonable outcomes that could be assessed, and that had something to do with what alumni would do in the 'real' world after graduation.

To make the story short enough to fit in this article, let it suffice to say that one significant outcome of the "GenEd" deliberations was the Six Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate.

So what's the connection between these expectations and the act of writing? More pointedly, how can the Writing Center help you to meet or fulfill them? In answering those questions, let's also consider how and why a good writing process is essential in order for students to fulfill the Six Expectations, as well as succeed as individuals.

1. Articulate and assume responsibility for your own work

The Writing Center encourages students to achieve an understanding of their own writing through conversation, questioning, active listening, and by writing author's notes. This negation of authority (or assumption of responsibility) allows students to begin looking inward, at their own thinking and writing processes, and demands knowledge of their own abilities and interests in making the most of their education. This Expectation is covered from a slightly different angle in number six below. For now, I'll just say that this is in part about simple authorship, and the responsibility that comes with that package. Most of the writing we do is not intended for an audience. It's often called "low-stakes" writing. When I teach writing, particularly the narrative memoir or documented essay, I have students submit a Process Portfolio. It's a compilation of everything they've put on paper leading up to and including the final draft. In most cases, well over 90% of that writing is never intended to be read by an audience. Still, along the way to that final version, the author is in charge of what's produced, and should have done practically all of it alone.

The author's notes mentioned above is a great way to apply some useful objectivity to your work. You may also discover the power of writing as a vehicle for self-awareness in general. Simply put, writing can take you places that you can't begin to reach by simply thinking or talking, even at length, about any topic, including your own writing process and products. This is something of a digression, I admit, but is closely enough tied to the notions of articulation and responsibility to belong in this section. You can learn about a number of "low-stakes," self-reflection exercises by working with your tutor. Likewise for what it means to eagerly take charge of your writing, rather than being intimidated by the prospect of doing it. The former, that is this positive attitude, is an essential aspect of a successful writing process that's transferable beyond college writing.

2. Participate collaboratively and responsibly in our diverse society

Just as they are for the College as a whole, collaborative learning and thinking are Writing Center staples. Working with a peer, instead of, say, a professor, facilitates trust developing between two individuals that may not have otherwise become acquainted, and perhaps across significant differences. Similarly, responsibility is key in the Writing Center. Students are encouraged to look more thoughtfully, broadly, and deeply at their writing to discern if it may be offensive in some way, or if it addresses an issue without regard for how others could possibly perceive and be negatively affected by it.

In a slightly broader sense, this Expectation is about one of the key elements in any intentional communication: audience. For whom is the writer's words intended . . . ? If it's a broad audience, the proverbial hypothetical audience that's established for most undergraduate academic writing, then it's all the more important to presume that as a group your readers will typify diversity in every conceivable (or inconceivable) way.

As we revise for our audience, we must consider how our world view windows not just affect, but in many instances determine how we see ourselves and others, and in turn communicate and respond to them. That doesn't mean tiptoeing around important issues, or mincing our words to avoid offending others. But rather, to practice some proactive empathy and simple civility when we consider who might be reading our well-chosen words. More generally, being educated adults gives us privilege and its cousin, responsibility, which we must use unselfishly. That is, we must ultimately write for our audience, and do so with the intention of sharing our insights, observations and opinions in a way that puts others first. Especially if those 'others' may very well be seeing the world through significantly different lenses than our own.

3. Communicate creatively and effectively

Need I say more? Okay, I will. Among other qualifications, Writing Center staff are expected to be not only adept at writing, but also equally or more importantly, accomplished at facilitating the refinement of that skill in others. The planet is teeming with examples of individuals who are among the world's best at doing something, but not even respectably ranked in their ability to teach it to others. Let's put what "creatively" means in realm of the no-brainer, even though there are lots of things that term could mean. It is the term "effectively" that needs some defining and clarifying.

At the Writing Center, the staff is consistently striving to help writers to see how language can empower both themselves and others. For example, the typical, classic expository essay is commonly considered or defined as an attempt to make a point in an interesting way. Being successful at accomplishing this objective can most certainly be empowering. Sharing a thoughtful, articulate, compelling opinion with a receptive audience can and should have that impact for a writer. If the piece is well-written, and deals with something that's important or critical to know, that empowerment will likely be transferred to the reading audience via the knowledge, inspiration, or direction that they receive as readers and potential agents of change, whether it be as a citizen, consumer, voter, parent, suitor, or any of the many roles we assume as adults. Time and again, a well-written letter of application, solicitation, a love letter, or essay has had a momentous impact on its audience, and in turn, its author. Indeed, creative, effective communication is far more than an academic expectation. It is an invaluable life skill.

4. Demonstrate integrative, independent and critical thinking

The Writing Center, which operates to diffuse authority, strives to instill the writers who come in with the confidence and ability to think independently outside the Center. Through one-on-one sessions and workshops, student writers are introduced to and taken through an array of low-stakes writing exercises, such as free writing, brainstorming, so in turn, these process steps can be practiced and integrated with their own strategies to round out the writing process. In these instances, the role of the peer tutor takes shape in the most significant and powerful ways.

Another type of integration has to do with the interdisciplinary nature of the typical Evergreen education. For example, writing about how and to what extent an academic discipline may mirror, contradict, or interconnect with others. Likewise, how does what one studies in an academic program reflect, relate to, or contrast with what we see or know about the world around us. First-year programs such as *The Art and Science of Light* and *Visualizing Ecology* exemplify this type of interdisciplinarity, and the kinds of writing that requires similar types of integration.

That said, although no writing process, particularly in academics, is complete without some sort of peer review, it is common knowledge that writing is most often a solitary process. As writers, we must ultimately be our own worst (and best) critics, and at the end of the day, are responsible for what we produce and make available for an audience. We must delve into and wade through the three, in my view inseparable, aspects of textual literacy: reading, thinking, and writing. With the guidance of Writing Center tutors, these dynamic elements can be examined, explored, and articulated via students' writing projects—in their own words, and based on their own thought processes and intellectual conclusions. There are already far too many people who cannot or simply don't think for themselves.

5. Apply qualitative, quantitative, and creative modes of inquiry appropriately to practical and theoretical problems across disciplines

This is a natural and closely related follow-up to the previous Expectation. Programs such as *Calculated Fiction* and *Money, Meds and Molecules* demonstrate how different modes of inquiry are applied to interdisciplinary problem solving—via writing. Likewise, there's something called symbolic reasoning that's nearly synonymous with what we usually think of as purely number-based actions. The same procedures used in arithmetic calculation often apply, but are called names such as compilation, reduction, deduction, and analysis, and expressed verbally for a reading audience. Some specific examples are the lab reports and field notes prepared by students studying ecology or biology, and as implied above, fiction, particularly novels. All of which are supported by your friendly neighborhood Writing Center.

6. As a culmination of your education, demonstrate depth, breadth and synthesis of learning and the ability to reflect on the personal and social significance of that learning

Evergreen students are expected to write several types of evaluations, some quarterly. Perhaps the most important of these pieces of written self-reflection is the self-evaluation. The final, overarching version of this self-reflection is the Summative Self-Evaluation. Once finalized and submitted, these documents become a permanent part of the transcript. So of course, the quality of this piece of writing should be as high as possible. To help make this possible, the Writing Center holds individual tutoring sessions, workshops, and provides printed guidelines and strategies for writing evaluations. It's a time, place and opportunity for students to bring to bear all the textual literacy skills they have acquired and enhanced during their time at Evergreen. No pressure intended, but once on record, they

cannot be removed or exchanged. This is an historical document, one for the ages, and intended for a wide range of potential readers. It's also a chance to go on record about your learning experience—academic, personal, and pre-professional. Of course, personal information is most often that, consequently irrelevant, and potentially damaging. But things like improved ability in time management, work ethic, collaboration, and cultural awareness are fair game. Your evaluations by faculty may address your engagement, participation, quality and quantity of work completed, etc., but only the student can articulate a first-hand account and assessment of his or her learning experience and related growth and development, not to mention preparedness for the next academic term, or, of course, life after graduation . . .

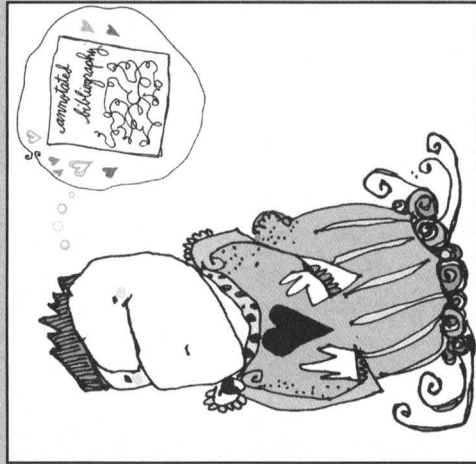
About the Author:

Eddy D. Brown is Evergreen's Dean of First-Year Programs and Student Academic Development. He is also an author, Member of the Faculty in writing and humanities, and has administrative oversight of the Evergreen Writing Center. He has a vested interest not only in students' intellectual and academic development, but also their overall wellness. Nothing would please him more than for them to become informed, engaged, responsible individuals, citizens, professionals in their chosen fields, and members of their respective communities.

a tao of annotation

or, how to make friends with your annotated bibliography

by john haltiwanger



What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a regular bibliography, except that each entry includes a block of text explaining the source that entry describes—this explanation is the “annotation.” Annotated bibliographies are often assigned as precursors to, or elements of, larger independent research projects. It could be that an entire quarter is dedicated to assembling an annotated bibliography for use the next quarter in independent research, or one could be assigned as part of an independent research credit block. With the number of entries expected usually at least 15, with as many as 30 or even 50, beginning your first annotated bibliography can be intimidating. Don’t be fooled: more work now means less work later. This is because the nature of annotated bibliographies is foundational: not only is it due long before your paper’s final draft, it will document the progress of your research project. An annotated bibliography is like a backbone, and each annotation like a vertebra: it cannot and should not be your entire research project, but every argument you make in your paper will be reinforced and held together by what you discovered while assembling your annotated bibliography. Effort poured into this part of a research project can make life a lot easier later on in your project. You should be able to look at your annotations later and see new interconnections, new reasons to return to old sources. To this end, I do not place brevity at the highest importance in this process; much more important is getting down whatever it is you took from the text.

Annotated bibliographies come in two basic forms: a) for the purposes of individual research and b) for publishing, as a sort of “Review of Literature” for future research. The majority of annotated bibliographies are created for personal research, either academic or otherwise, and the expectations of the academic and publishing communities overlap. They both (usually) expect complete sentences, while an annotated bibliography assembled for personal use may not even contain complete sentences—something clearly inappropriate for professional or (most) academic expectations. If you are not clear on the exact standards your teacher expects in terms of length, the use of “I” statements, and grammar, you should ask.

That’s great, but how do I annotate?

A good annotation should include summary, analytic responses, and pure gut reaction. Keep your broader goals in mind at all times while being aware that you are also building the foundation research. Just as often as not, the very sources you are annotating will change the exact direction of your research.

A major element of your annotation is summary. The most important element to a good summary is condensing the author’s argument. Start by highlighting the thesis statement, then keep an eye out for important sentences that support the source’s thesis. Highlight these as well. Once you’ve highlighted all the argument’s main points, try to summarize them in a compact yet comprehensive manner. I usually include the thesis statement verbatim as a quote, then summarize the argument the best I can. A summary should really be just long enough to provide the essence of the author’s argument—since you’ve highlighted the argument’s main points, you will be able to come back and look at the argument in greater detail. Another part of summarizing is providing the context of the source (this is especially important with primary sources). Not only does this help flesh out the source’s relevance to your research, you will often find that the context summary will fit snugly in your final paper without requiring too much revision.

The next step in annotation is to make sure that you include relevant questions and responses that arose during your reading of the source. Perhaps you know for a fact that the author was either misinformed or lying about an important piece of their argument—if the author’s argument hinges on a false connection, you would do well to point out the flaw in your annotation. Perhaps the source contained an angle you haven’t seen before—emphasizing that angle in your annotation can be a great clue for finding sources in the future. Maybe this source’s argument is a great refutation of another source? Pointing this out now may help remind you of this connection when writing your paper. I don’t want to beat you to death with this—it’s your annotation, and you will know what’s best.

Which leads us to “pure gut reactions.” This is the category of statements such as “Well written!” or “Something smells fishy!” or “Awesome!” or, of course, “Bullshit!” These are all fine and can be included at your discretion. The reason, however, that this step is listed last is because these gut-level statements can easily become a crutch if you are not careful. They should be used only after you’ve included a proper summary and your analytic responses.

Since all good research is based on the inclusion of conflicting opinions, it is important to treat all articles seriously. Remember to summarize the argument of a piece even if it is complete trash. Think of yourself as putting in the work to dive in and come back from that soiled text—you don’t want to have to go back in there yourself, do you? What about others? Wouldn’t it be nice to put up a warning barrier around this article, one that articulated its essence well enough to inform others of its usefulness as you see it? Better to write what’s in it when you have your freshest chance than to have to stick your tongue back in it to get a list of its ingredients later.



Part of annotating is evaluating the usefulness of a source for your project. Even a useless source can provide an annotation; just explain why it doesn't fit in, such as what it's missing, and you're done. If you've read it and thought about it, take that reading and thinking and write it down—this is the essence of annotation.

One issue that causes a lot of stress and which therefore must be addressed is the annotation of book-length sources. It is not uncommon to incorporate book-length sources into a research project; in fact, good research is rarely done without them. However, when your annotated bibliography is due as early as week five and you also have the regular load of class reading, the idea of annotating a book-length source can be cripplingly daunting. Until, that is, you find out that you don't need to read the entire text before you begin annotating it. State the argument of the source, evaluate its usefulness, and leave yourself enough information about the source to incorporate it later. Oftentimes, a book will state its argument and avenues of reasoning in an introduction and a conclusion—read these and attempt to answer the following: What is the book trying to accomplish? What is its thesis? What ground does it or does it not cover? Check the table of contents, and then the glossary for anything relating to your research, read it and include what you find in your annotation. If your topic is barely mentioned or is missing, note this. If a new angle on your topic appears, note that.

Hopefully you now feel equipped to start your annotated bibliography. Don't let the assigned number of entries scare you, whatever it may be. Take it one source at a time, and keep your goals in mind. Remember that the more work you put in at the annotated bibliography level, the less work you will find yourself doing later on. Your annotated bibliography should prove an invaluable friend.



citation:

MPA and APA styles are the generally accepted formats of citation. They are simple to do, but almost no one has them memorized. The Writing Center has tutors, handouts, style guides, and our website, where you can access this information.

"The spirit of inquiry is the itch to know and learn and discover...it involves the ability to ask researchable questions, the instinct to look in the right place for answers, a willingness to suspend judgment, and an openness to changing one's mind."

- Bruce Ballenger, The Curious Researcher

a(nother) process of growth the journey of writing a thesis-driven paper by aislyn matias

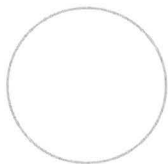
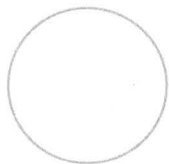
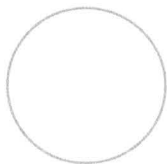
Ballenger's term "spirit of inquiry" nicely frames the attitude with which to approach a research paper. An unfortunately popular belief is that a thesis-driven research paper begins with the writer having an established thesis. From my experience, beginning the inquiry and initially having an established thesis is incongruent with how I understand the writing process.

My inquiry begins with my own curiosity. It could be a question, opinion, or idea brought up in seminar, books, or conversations with friends. I've found it helpful to begin with an idea that I can explore in a variety of contexts. Many aides assist my initial research process.

Some useful tools are brainstorming, mind mapping, and freewriting. For example, I was sitting in a coffee shop today writing this article, and a businesswoman with green glasses walked by the window. The sun was luminous and her glasses caught the light—just for an instant her frames glowed gold-green and sparkled.

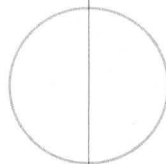
**There are
many ways
to generate
questions and
all of them are
useful.**

I began with the word “green” and quickly generated all sorts of ideas about the color. What makes fireworks spark green? What does green represent on different country flags? Where did the word green originate? I also questioned how much I actually know about the role of modern businesswomen. There are many ways to generate questions and all of them are useful. I spoke with a writer who once said she did her best thinking when she was making her bed or moving around outside. Regardless, the key to writing any length of paper is having sustaining and interesting questions and also having resources (including time) available for investigating.

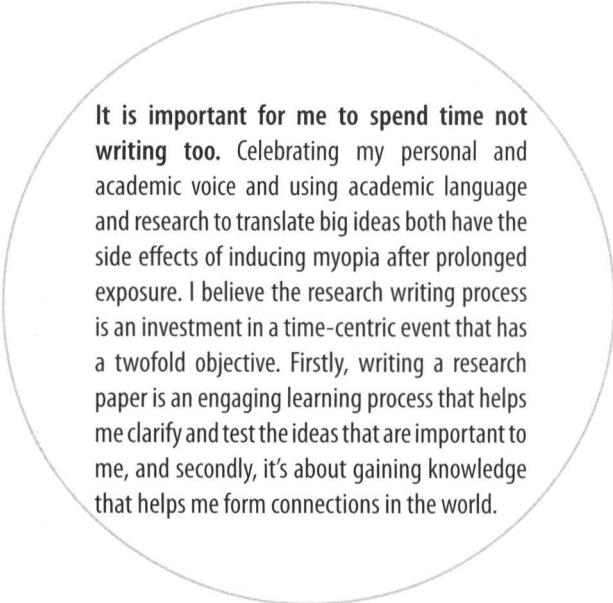


It is necessary to know what informational resources are accepted in a research paper. The sky's the limit, and professors all have different ideas about what types of information are valid. Are interviews okay? What about television and newspapers? Are personal anecdotes acceptable? When I gather information, I've found it helpful to use the "journalistic approach" asking who, what, when, where, why, and how the information works. I then have an initial method for addressing different angles of my hypothesis or question. Still, I don't write with the intent to prove or answer a thesis, but rather to expand my ideas and questions into coherent paragraphs that I can develop and strengthen. I organize my ideas into main topic sentences with supporting details, analyze quotations from my research, and start to think about how my ideas fit together.

After I finish the initial draft I take my writing process public, reading it out loud to friends and peers. I find it helpful to be able to talk about my ideas in the paper, checking for clarity. I review my rough drafts in paragraphs and write out my main idea of each paragraph in the margins. Creating this "reverse outline" aids me in determining the structure, so I can address how the paragraphs reinforce my central ideas. I remember having a memorable conversation with another writer about generalized learning processes. He told me that I would remember what was important to me, and forget the rest. When I write, I write about what I remember from researching, in reference to my initial inquiry.



Developing my thesis statement is a process. I wait to define my thesis until after I've written a first or maybe a few drafts because the main idea requires substantive content that is, in this context, the research paper. The keystone connection between the writer's personal and persuasive voice and the contextual artifacts such as quotes, cases, examples, and paraphrased research is the crux, the "this is what I believe about my subject because..." statement. The statement—the thesis—requires a bit of shaping throughout the writing process. It changes. Initially, it is the driving force of the inquiry, then it becomes the segmented subject of close scrutiny, and towards the end of the drafting, the thesis becomes the definitive explanation necessary to unify the whole. The initial researching process, writing and revising drafts, and developing the thesis all take time.



It is important for me to spend time not writing too. Celebrating my personal and academic voice and using academic language and research to translate big ideas both have the side effects of inducing myopia after prolonged exposure. I believe the research writing process is an investment in a time-centric event that has a twofold objective. Firstly, writing a research paper is an engaging learning process that helps me clarify and test the ideas that are important to me, and secondly, it's about gaining knowledge that helps me form connections in the world.

My research paper becomes the evidence of my inquiry, and I have a store of knowledge that I gathered along the way. Writing is a process of making meaning, sculpting knowledge into form, and making choices that inspire growth and understanding. Writing helps me contextualize my curiosity and gives me a way to speak about the world.

**I begin with a question,
and answer with my voice,
all in the spirit of inquiry.**



Works Cited: Ballenger, Bruce. *The Curious Researcher: A Guide to Writing Research Papers*. Massachusetts : Allyn & Bacon, 2001.

Tips for editing thesis-driven papers:

Once you have defined a thesis statement, you can look at your paper differently. Where before you were turning ideas into words, now you are using those words to support your main point as effectively as possible for the reader.

Your thesis should go at the end of your introduction. It is usually one long, complicated sentence. Restate the thesis in your conclusion referring to the main supporting ideas from the paper's body. Your reader will expect to find your thesis in these places. This will reinforce the idea that your thesis statement is constant and true.

Each paragraph should work toward proving your thesis. Topic sentences usually ought to have words from the thesis statement itself. This will help keep the thesis present throughout your piece.

Transition sentences should use the thesis-idea as a link between separate ideas.

Most research papers feature quotations. Use the thesis to test whether a particular quote is appropriate to include. Also, use your thesis to guide your analysis of the quote. You can generate a lot of writing by including, explaining, and interpreting quotations in the context of your thesis.

After your paper is drafted, read your paper and check to see if every part of the paper serves to help prove the thesis statement in a cogent, straightforward way. Go back and fill in the gaps and remove the excess language.

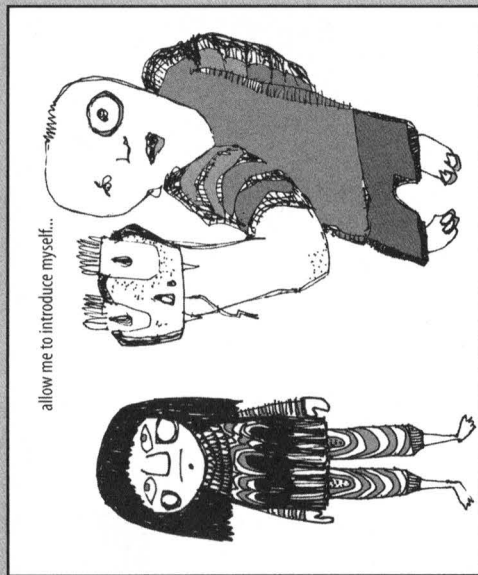
Come to the Writing Center and the academic writing workshops for support and for another set of eyes.

A thesis-driven paper is a tried and true format for conveying ideas in an academic setting. The format itself does most of the work because your reader will automatically identify your main argument and your supporting ideas. You have an opportunity to be very creative and unique with the topic you choose to write about and the evidence you present.

The thesis-driven paper is a vehicle for your voice and your ideas. Get into the driver's seat.

evaluations: a how-to guide

by america fitzgerald



"We don't get grades at Evergreen": a statement every student at this unique, if slightly unorthodox, institute of learning will find themselves faced with justifying at one point or another. In the stead of grades and the ominous GPA, we have evaluations. Our faculty write narratives of our work, we write about our own learning experience, and these two strange animals known as "evals" come together to form the Evergreen Transcript.

The Evergreen Transcript is big: both in terms of its importance, and in physical comparison to the transcripts that students accumulate at other colleges. Your transcript is where your evals end up; it's what you hand to possible future employers or grad schools to persuade them to acquire you based on your college experiences. Here's what your transcript will look like:

The most important part of your transcript is the self-eval: it says so much more about you and your learning experience than a grade ever could. Use your eval to provide a firsthand account of your learning; show what you have learned and what it means to you; tailor it to the particular audience you plan to be showing it to (grad schools, employers, etc.). If nothing else, remember this: show, don't tell. Show the kind of student you are. You can back this up by writing well, with passion and excitement.

1) The cover sheet comes first. This lists the programs, classes, contracts, and/or internships you took on.

2) Beneath the cover sheet is your Summative Self-Evaluation (if you choose to write one). The Summative Self-Eval is completely optional, but *absolutely recommended*. This is really your big opportunity to say what you want to say about your time at Evergreen; it's a perfect opportunity to show your accomplishments and growth.

3) Next is your program information. Each program will be included (beginning with your most recent, which means that the first program you ever took will be on the very bottom), and each consists of three (3) documents:

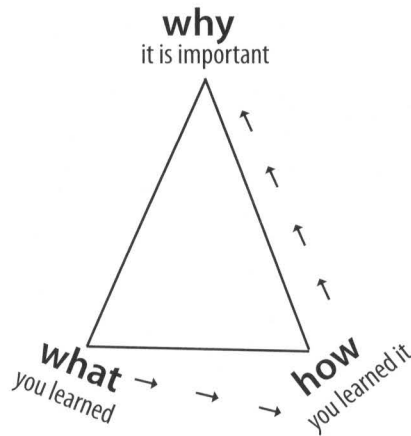
a) The Course Description: the faculty writes this, and each student in the program will have the same one. It outlines the expectations of the program.

b) The Faculty Evaluation: your faculty's evaluation of you in the program.

c) The Self- Evaluation: YOUR evaluation of you in the program.

So, now you're ready to get started. Go to the Writing Center. You don't have to have a draft, we can help you brainstorm. We're all students, so we've been there too. Most of us are still there. Come talk to us.

Basically, the format for your self-evaluation is:



Each of your examples of what you did, what you learned, what you hoped to learn, etc. should follow a format similar to this:

Through doing _____, I learned _____, and that's important because of _____.

There are some general points covered in the typical self-eval, that you can almost look at as a “before, during, and after” template (before I took the class, I thought something. During the class, I learned/did/experienced something else. After the class, I plan to do something similar/different because of something):

1) What’s your program? Why did you choose it?
What did you expect, and why did you expect it?

Do you have any related background to the program learning?

2) What did you learn in the program? What did you do? What did you encounter that you did not expect? How did you improve? What do you still need to improve? What did you do particularly well?

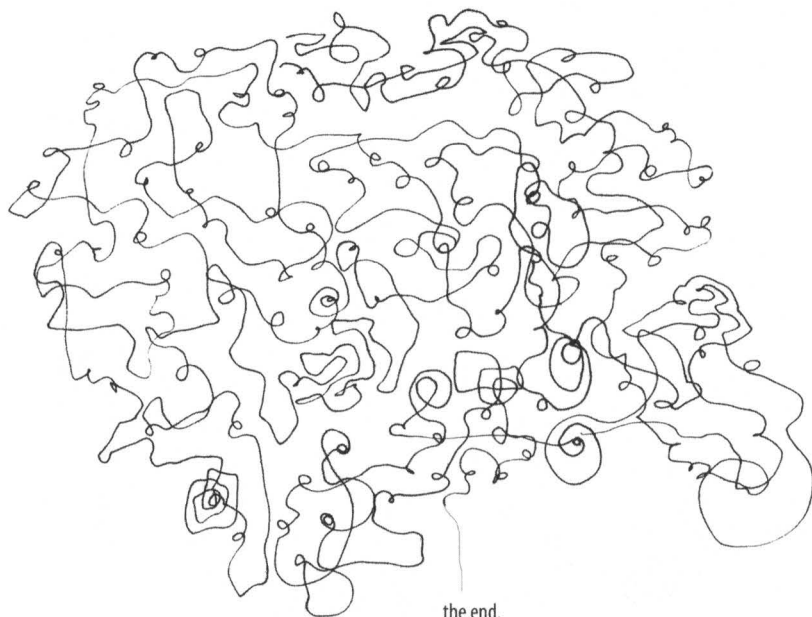
3) What’s next? Do you want to keep studying the same type of thing, or have your interests switched and, if they have, what brought about this switch?

The Writing Center (as well as the Writing Center’s website) has some very handy handouts that can instruct you as you write and revise your evaluation.

We also hold workshops to help you write your evaluations. These typically take place weeks 9 and 10.

When you feel that your evaluation is concise, clear, and complete, use your evergreen.edu username and password to sign on to my.evergreen.edu to write evals and save them in the correct format (these will be saved for as long as you remain an active Evergreen student). From here, you will print two (2) copies of your evaluation(s), sign them, and turn them in to Registration and Records.

Now, when you find yourself faced with the “No grades! What?!!!” conversation, maybe you’ll be a little better prepared to explain the strange and daunting idea of the evaluation. More importantly, maybe you’ll be a little better prepared to write yours.



the end.

the writing center

the evergreen state college
library, room 2304

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{ ideas }