

Editor's Note

Rosalia Rochon's "A New Perspective" offers a process analysis that employs elements of contrast in each body paragraph to illustrate the difference between her writing before and after her sophomore English class. The author recalls specific comments from her teachers as support, helping the reader to appreciate her two teachers' input and influence. The first body paragraph discusses writing in terms such as "content," "coherence," "revision," and "editing." Can you recall similar moments of assessment from your writing history? How did such moments shape your development as a writer? Her essay reveals the perils of too much focus on audience approval and the value of critical thinking and reading. Rochon suggests that "a well-written essay addresses a hidden issue behind a conflict." Do you agree?

A New Perspective

Rosalia Rochon

Have you ever had a teacher or professor whom you absolutely loathed? Did you loath him or her because he or she challenged you to do something new or step outside your comfort zone? Well, my challenger haunted me throughout my sophomore year of high school in the form of an English teacher by the name of Mr. Richey. Throughout my academic career, I had always enjoyed English class. During elementary and junior high school, grammar came easy to me, and I could diagram sentences until the sun went down. I loved creating poems, and I found writing as a way in which I could thoroughly express myself. However, Mr. Richey made English a chore and a class I dreaded each day until I realized my writing skills truly developed because he challenged me to become a better writer.

Mr. Richey helped me understand that there is constantly room for improvement in my writing. Before I set foot in Mr. Richey's Sophomore Honors English class, I thought my writing was just about as close to perfect as it could get. In my freshman English class, my teacher often scored my essays with high marks such as ninety-eight or ninety-nine points out of one hundred. Her comments usually praised my writings with *you are an advanced writer*, and the words *excellent*, *awesome*, and *great analysis* cluttered the margins of my essays. However, after Mr. Richey finished reading my first essay, words such as *awkward*, *why*, *how*, and *where is your evidence* clung to the sides of my substandard paper. I was shocked to see these comments on my paper and felt as though he had punched me in the face when I saw that I had earned seventy-one out of one hundred points. Most of sophomore

year, I resented Mr. Richey for being so particular about my writing and picking at my every word. Whenever I thought I had finished revising and editing my essay, he would swiftly send it back to me with a tedious list of corrections. Because Mr. Richey was the first teacher to have critiqued my essays so deeply and thoroughly, I simply reasoned he was just a miserable, unfair man taking out his life frustrations on poor, innocent students, such as myself. However, my eyes were soon opened to my writing's disorganization and choppyness. I began to realize that there was more to essay writing than just correct grammar. Content and coherence were more important during editing than an essay's grammatical structure. Thus, what seemed like aggravating comments soon became helpful tools I could use to build a stronger writing foundation.

Mr. Richey challenged me to write for a purpose, not just to fulfill a writing assignment's requirements. He asked me to think critically and challenge the reader through my writing. At first, I was so focused on trying to write about what I thought Mr. Richey wanted me to write about that I quickly became frustrated. All I could think about was trying to earn an A in his class. Thus, I sat for endless hours trying to develop a thesis and write an essay he would reward with a high score. I soon felt confined by his expectations and did not think I would ever be able to write creatively in my own style. I was so busy trying to read Mr. Richey's mind and write to please him that I completely missed what he was trying to teach me. However, over time, I finally began to understand he only wanted me to think critically and go beyond the surface of stating the obvious or listing facts. He challenged me to dig deep and write about why the surface appears the way it does and how it became that way.

I realized that a creative essay is not just about fancy words, fluffy writing, and correct grammar. A well-written essay addresses a hidden issue behind a conflict. For example, as our class studied southern literature, I quickly discovered racism as a common thread within the required reading materials. Thus, when it was time to write an essay on selected southern works, I felt I could do so efficiently with the techniques Mr. Richey had been drilling our class all year. Instead of writing about racism at the surface, I chose to go deeper and investigate why racism was such a dominating issue in the southern culture. It would have been easy for me to state the obvious about discrimination among African Americans and how unfairly they were treated. However, I knew a more compelling essay should focus on why African Americans were being treated unfairly and what the reader and society could do today to prevent such discrimination. By challenging the reader to think about racism from a different angle and possibly make a difference in our society today, my essay finally had a purpose. The reader could now walk away with a new perspective and

I, the writer, could walk away with the satisfaction that my writing had helped to make our world a better place.

After having endured Mr. Richey's class, I now feel more confident and a greater sense of creativity in my writing. Although the basic writing skills he taught me have helped me expand my writing and prepared me for future writing, the most important part of Mr. Richey's challenge was the experience. I could have easily switched out of Mr. Richey's English class or completely ignored his advice, yet I persevered and was willing to face the challenge. By no means was it easy, yet I learned a great deal about myself and developed into a stronger person because I was challenged to look at life from a new perspective.

Rosalia Rochon is a nutrition major.