Editors' Note

This writer's history essay opens with an image of Kyleigh Rogers in preschool. Rogers circles back to that preschool classroom at the end of the essay, using the metaphor of building blocks to highlight some important moments of growth in her life as a writer. Rogers explains that with each experience, she has come to realize the key to her writerly voice: emotion. How does Rogers add emotion to this piece, and how does that help readers to better understand her thoughts? What word choices does Rogers offer to depict a clear picture of herself as a writer? Have your past writing experiences helped you to discover the key to your voice and why might that be important? If you had to name a few blocks that have built you into the writer you are today, who or what would those blocks be?

Small Beginnings

Kyleigh Rogers

It all began at a small desk in a preschool classroom. My tiny hands knew how to make no more than squiggly lines and the occasional letter, still unsure how to turn those letters into words. Fast forward fifteen years, and I am now a successful college student, with hundreds of written essays under my belt. How did I get this far? That is a question that has come to baffle me. Did it have to do with the diaries I kept as a preteen struggling with the pressures of middle school? Slightly. What about the endless social networking sites I have signed up for: Blurty, Livejournal, Myspace, Facebook? Somewhat. Did it have to do with the English teachers and countless professionals whose paths I have crossed? Partially. There are many different contributing factors, all of which that have made me the writer I am today.

Middle school consisted of three years that were extremely difficult for me. Me, and every other person who has ever endured that awkward stage in life. Between fighting with my parents over control, and struggling to fit in, yet stand out from my peers, I had more than enough material for my diaries. They were full of expression, mostly negative, but what else can one expect from a twelve-year-old drama queen? Looking back on this stage of writing, it taught me a lot about putting my emotion into my writing. I wrote in short sentences, with carefully chosen words, that were meant to get my message across to the reader with impact. When my mother wept after finding my diary, twice, I realized that I had accomplished that goal.

My diary was not the only form of self-expression that has supplied my writing. Blurty and LiveJournal were the beginning of my social-networking experience, closely followed by Myspace and Facebook. All have enabled me to write entries about my everyday life, my thoughts at any moment, and my encounters with people who have affected me. Through these sites, I was able to sample friends' writing. The words and phrases they use, the style they form their sentences in, and the way they present their ideas, add to my writing history on a daily basis. My friend Shelby, for example, has always posted entries with perfect spelling and grammar. Following her example, I stopped typing "u" and "i" early in my social-networking career, spelling out my words and using proper capitalization. I also began using different words that had the same meaning to express how I felt about something. I used "sure" when asked to do something that was of little interest to me, or "definitely" when I was asked to do something I was excited about. Although both mean "yes," they carry very different tones. Not only have these sites built my writing style, and further taught me how

to add emotion to my writing, but they have taught me to give the reader what he or she may be looking for as well.

My new-found knowledge of giving the reader what he or she is looking for has not always been successful. Actually, it failed me quite often when it came to my eleventh grade American Literature teacher, Mr. Firestein. If you want conflict, this man not only created conflict in my life, but every other student life that he encountered. Firestein loved to prove you wrong. Many of our assignments consisted of analyzing the novel, short story, movie, or image we were given. There was no right answer, there were only wrong answers. How I got through an hour of class with that man everyday for an entire year without pulling my hair out is a wonder. However, at the end of that gruesome year, I came out of Firestein's class with a new outlook. I began to notice that what the author meant can only be assumed. Without asking the author, there is no right or wrong answer. Everyone has a different perspective, not one more correct than the last. This realization brought a new understanding to my writing. Although everyone has a different perspective, it is important to add emotion to my writing so that the audience is able to analyze my thoughts and feeling to the best of their ability. Without clarity, it is only a guessing game.

My writing history is much like the building blocks you may have found next to my small desk in preschool. From trying to fit in with my peers on LiveJournal, to believing that I knew what people wanted, to understanding that everyone perceives what I write differently, my writing has come a long way. Each year, a new building block has been placed. A new experience, a new idea, a new friend, a new teacher: these factors have all made me the person I am today, but more specifically, the writer I have grown to be. I write to appeal to the reader's emotions. I try to find ways for the audience to relate to my writing, to keep their interest. So much analysis goes into every word choice, every sentence structure, every building block. After all of this, I have found that emotion is the key to my voice as a writer.

Kyleigh Rogers is a social sciences major.