

## WRITERS' HISTORIES

**Editor's Note**

*In "A Writer's Reflections," Sean Krueger mentions his desire to emulate his favorite writers—Walt Whitman and Mark Twain. He laments how some teachers squelched these creative tendencies, even as he recognized the harsh—but somehow necessary—lessons on organization. Krueger explains that he was ultimately able to break out of these boundaries, though his writing does maintain an organic structure that works well in this piece. He discusses how he was inspired by his class readings in English 134. How does reading affect your writing? Watch, too, how Krueger stretches his diction and punctuation throughout the essay, with simple, yet effective words like "lackluster," "renegade," "doldrums," and sophisticated punctuation like dashes and semi-colons, as well as precisely placed italics.*

**A Writer's Reflections****Sean Krueger**

I wouldn't be so bold as to claim that I'll go on to be the next Voltaire or Walt Whitman, two of the more influential writers from my past. Even so, I've come to realize through my experiences over the past ten weeks that I'm capable of creating engaging and creative pieces of writing. These productions come about through lengthy revision and development on my part, yet these processes have not always been easy for me. My writing classes and teachers throughout the years have been challenging, frustrating, and sometimes even hopeless. Nevertheless, they've all been essential in shaping me into the writer I am today, and who I'll be in the future. How I write is not only a way for me to satisfy the audience I write for, but also to suit my own needs as an individual. It's quite remarkable to me that I've had this realization now, only after so many years of writing and revising. What intrigues me is that I believe this class has helped me in acknowledging my writing process, the strengths and weaknesses I possess, and what it is I love to write about—all firsts, in my book.

In the past, structured writing was a common, if not a universal occurrence in my English classes. The outline, the organization, and the entire structure of the essay were all laid before me. These "boundaries" that I wrote within were my teachers' hopeful pleas that I would write relatively coherently and organize my ideas properly. These types of writing classes played an important role in teaching me what they were intended to teach me: structured writing. Grammatically I was writing correctly, but almost robotically, and was (unknowingly) falling short of my true potential. I failed to write like an individual. The structured, bland writing style was imprinted into my writing persona, and it's how I continued to write for a considerable amount of time. My renegade writing period in tenth grade was brief—my writing "voice" that attempted to

WRITERS' HISTORIES

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emulate Whitman, Twain and others became stamped out the following year, and even more suppressed the year after that. My senior year culminated in a structured, completely emotionless essay about how Karl Marx would apply his socialist principles in a restructuring capitalist society (a wordy topic):

The conflict that Marx speaks of requires an enormous majority of workers to be dissatisfied with their working conditions, and the restructuring (downsizing) of hundreds of corporations simultaneously, which would generate an enormous amount of unemployment. Realistically, this is not a rational situation.

Here I can plainly see my conformed, dull writing at its full height. I promised myself that I'd make an effort to change as I moved into college, as I had thoroughly enjoyed writing creatively in tenth grade. My good friend who attended a local community college in my home town often showed me essays that he had written for his "college level English classes." Some specific things he got away with were amusingly wonderful, as I read in a few of his papers. "Now then, young squire, what here do we see but a large, phallus-like unicorn horn mounted above my fireplace? Nothing short of an emblem that personifies a blood thirsty gentleman who enjoys the hunt. To arms! We are going to catch some grunions!" Needless to say, I was excited for the opportunity to write creatively once again in college and break the doldrums of high school writing structure.

With the arrival of college, I saw myself learning to write creatively once again. However, I felt I didn't need to write in the ridiculous prose that possessed Mr. Montgomery, as after I read my beginning draft of my first essay aloud to my peers, I realized that sometimes ridiculous humor was not the path to writing success. Reading *Convergences* was truly an inspiring hardship; I desired to be as witty as the individuals who wrote the essays within, yet still succeed in conveying a message that was both strong *and* supported. With this, I took my writing to a more calculated level. I found that it was still important to pertain to the rules that governed writing, yet there was no need for me to be their slave. A combination of structured ideas with free-flowing creativity is truly a deadly way to write, and I attempted to implement this in my essays. I found that research was much more important to me than it had been in the past. The more time I spent focusing on how *I* wanted my writing to be read, the stronger my ideas became. English 134 was pivotal in allowing me to see my faults in both extremes: being too lackluster in one and being too absurdly senseless in the other.

I will here admit that I fear for my writing in the future. Though *Convergences* and the essays I wrote allowed for me to become the writer I am today, I understand that I will not be taking a substantial amount of English

WRITERS' HISTORIES

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in college. I worry that once I take an unavoidable technical writing course, my creativity will wane. Being an engineering major and knowing professionals with engineering degrees, I can safely assume that I will once again be reduced to a dull, complex writer with little or no imagination put into my pieces. This, understandably, won't be my own choice, but to be successful in my major, I need to adopt the traits and characteristics of an engineer. One of these traits, as I've seen so clearly, is being able to write precisely. I ask myself what I'll take with me into the future from my past experiences and English 134, and I recognize that I'll be able to write freely on my own. Journals, letters, or just regular pieces of writing done on the side—these can all be done in my style, which I have come to understand is creative yet concurrently relevant, and I've come to welcome this fact.

As a writer, I've learned to take what I get. In the past, when teachers would tell me to write a certain way—I would write that way, no questions asked. Being in English 134 has been a somewhat motivating experience, in that nobody has told me how to write, yet simultaneously I've been given valuable information on how to develop myself and further enhance my essays. Armed with the knowledge that essays can relay tremendously strong, significant messages to the reader without being bland boxes of text, I believe my writing has undergone a most appealing metamorphosis. The use of today's media is another thing I've learned to appreciate (though at times loathe). In the future, though I predict I'll fall into the technical loop once again, I feel I'm now at a place where I can comfortably write on my own without fussing too much about critics. This is a great gift to me, and I'll always use this gift as a writing guide from here on out. Understanding how I wrote in the past, coupled with how my writing has changed to this point has allowed me to finally meet and understand the writer within. I'm eager to meet the writer I will become.

*Sean Krueger is a biochemistry major at Cal Poly.*