

Chapter 5: Sample Portfolios

WARNING!!!

Do not trick yourself into laughing at any of these portfolios. It is very easy to see the weaknesses of other writers and not see your own. Many have laughed at the samples of others' only to be laughed at themselves later on.

Instead of laughing, you should be learning. Concentrate on the strengths and weaknesses you see, and relate them to your own writing.

Two Portfolios that Scored 95

Sample Portfolio #1

Dear Assessment Committee:

Thank you for taking out time to read my paper. I'm taking some college courses to expand my learning skills and to get a degree so that I can get a good paying job. But sometimes it's hard to go to school when you're fresh out of high school and trying to work. Right now I'm working at Panda Express in the mall and go to school to get a degree in teaching. Then sometimes it's hard for me to write because I can't get the words on the paper exactly how I word them in my head.

Usually I start my papers by brainstorming. Sometimes it's a little easier to list the details first. Then after I finally get my rough draft finished, I ask my teacher and a classmate to go over my paper thoroughly. What I want them to mainly look at is my punctuations and if the story makes sense.

I find typing everything together for my papers is the hardest. Also I get stuck on punctuation and staying focused. But I've improved on getting started. getting finished is still difficult, because its hard with adding details.

To be honestly, the only change I made as an individual was to plan before I write. Over all, I know I procrastinate a lot, even though that's not a good habit. But the two papers I have chosen for my portfolio were well planned before I started writing. Also I chose them because they were personal, and I just liked the topics.

I hope you will enjoy both of my papers I have prepared. Also I will write more and more to improve my writing skills. I know my writing skills are not the best but I hope the papers are well written enough for me to get into 101. So just thanks again for taking this time to read my paper.

Change

Have you ever had a change in your life that really affected you? Well I've had a change that changed my life forever, and also with her death it made me become a better person. The reason I say I've become a better person is because I've learned not to trust everybody. But my change has not just affected me but my entire family. The change I had in my life was when my aunt died.

It changed my life forever, because this was like my best friend. Because we done everything together, and went so many places doing things. We did things like go to the movies and out to eat. I never had anyone to spend time with me like she did, because she understood what I went through with friends. I never had any close friends in school or outside because of the way I dressed. The way I dressed was fine but just not by other people's standards, because I didn't wear all the name brand clothes. My aunt is 4yrs older than me so I was fifteen when she died. Also it changed my life not only, because she was my best friend, but because she was my aunt.

It changed my whole family life and I say this because they changed their whole way of life. They changed their whole life by being very precautious about things. My mom was very heart broken, because that was her little sister and only one. Then there was my grandmother who just couldn't handle it, because of the way she died. My grandmother said if she would have died of natural causes she would not have took it so hard. My aunt was murder by a fatal stabbing from one of her friends.

My aunt went over her friend's house one night to play cards. They played cards for money and she had won all their money then she was on her way leaving. But as she was getting in her car trying to leave her friends jumped in the car and one tried to hold her down as the other one stabbed her. I believe she fought for her life from what the police told the family.

She's been gone now for 3yrs now. These have been the hardest years without her, but life goes on. This was the biggest change in my life. However I've lost my best friend as well as my aunt and now I'm coping with her death, still down there deep in my heart I feel empty space.

Cheap

Have you ever had a cheap boyfriend or known someone who was cheap? Well I know a lot of people who are cheap, both men and women. But the person who's the cheapest of all people is my ex-boyfriend, Taron.

Yes, Taron is very cheap. When we went to the movies he always tried to get me to put soda, chips, and candy in my purse so he would not have to buy anything. Also he rides the bus to work to save gas in his car. Just think how much trouble it is to get on the buses and get to work! Because since he stays in East St. Louis he has to catch like four different buses just to get to Fairview Heights. Then I say he's cheap because if something brakes down on his car he'll pay a person off the street who doesn't know what they're doing rather than take his car to the shop. Like one times his brakes were going out and to save himself some money he paid a person on the street and the next day they were the same.

Some-times he didn't act cheap because if we went to the mall he bought me whatever I wanted. Then there were times when he took me out to eat every day. So it's not like he was just right down cheap. But he would do anything to save a dime.

Among all of this I found ways he didn't have to be cheap with me. Like when he went to the movies and he wanted me to put things in my purse, I suggested we rent a movie and stay at home. Also instead of him riding the bus every day to save gas, I told him to drive every other day and take the bus the other days. Also when things went wrong with his car, I agreed to go half on maintenance with him. But he wasn't interested in my suggestions.

Through it all, we are just friends now. This was my boyfriend in the 9th grade, so I learned my lesson early. Now I see males as "if you can't do what my mother does or at least half of what she does, you can't talk to me."

Sample Portfolio #2

Dear Writing Committee,

At once a point of time I thought I was the worst writer ever and just couldn't figure out what was the reason for writing. When I use to read a syllabus and it said a paper was due I get all upset and frustrated. Then I started taking this writing class and it gave me a start in figuring out that there is a point in writing. I found out that I'm not the worst writer because I know how to get the reader attention. My strengths is keeping interest and getting some length.

Grammar is my weakness is writing I'm in college and I can still be confused on where to put my commas and other punctuations, but in there papers in my portfolio, I think I found out a lot about there they need to be in my papers. Especially, after just constantly revising my papers just getting more length and making the best paper I can make out of it. I just know it takes time to get a paper. The first draft may not be your best draft but it will come eventually after going over with the class, the teacher, and the success getting feedback. I also like to put a lot of run-ons in my paper but I learn that it's many ways to change that. My point of this letter is to let you know that I put my strongest effort in to getting my best papers in my portfolio that I wrote this semester. All it took for me to do was revise my papers over and over and get help. Hopefully, you can see a better writer than others can see.

My first paper, "A Woman With Support in and out of Labor," just talking about how much pain a lady can take in labor and after if they going through post partum or just depressed because they have no support. How the woman feeling is after they have they

baby and how we have to get adjusted to motherhood.

My second paper which is called "My struggle," is telling you how hard I think it is taking care of an infant, going to school, and working. Also, how much time I get to spend with my child in a week saying how hard it is just to see your child in a little amount of time. Basically how I handled it in the end.

So as you can see I am really just getting adjusted to the whole writing thing. I can just really hope you guys see a good enough writer for me to go to 101. Even if I don't make it to 101 I would just have to work harder to go to 101 next semesters and I will already have a general idea on what I need to work on.

Thank you

Struggles

Is it a struggle going to work, school and taking care of a newborn? I'm here to say it's a hard struggle. While going through all of them, it is a very hard struggle and no one should try to over work themselves.

Having a job, going to school, and taking care of an infant can make me just want to give up on things and not care about anything besides my baby, because I have no choice she's mine to take care of and push her to be a better person in life. I once just thought about dropping out of school just quitting everything that I've worked for but instead I held on. I'm holding onto school because I know what I need to do to achieve my goals in life. When I talk about my goals in life, I'm talking about getting my degree and become a Registered Nurse since I've wanted to become one since I was four. I wanted to become a Registered Nurse because my grandmother was a Certified Nurse Assistant when I was four and I wanted to follow in her footsteps but be making more money. I also talked to a lot of RN's that told me they can get anything they want and they love helping people which made me want to continue going for it. I thought about quitting work but I realized that it would be hard to take care of my baby and keep my car. Unfortunately, I just held on, kept my head up, and kept myself motivated to continue.

When people say life is hard for a lady I know it's a fact. Having a baby twenty four seven and having to work and school is a challenge. My schedule is very difficult and I don't have a day in my schedule that I can be with my baby, JaBrea, for a full day. I have about thirty five hours a week with JaBrea. Anybody who has a child should know how hard that is to just spend only very little time with them. Sometimes I feel like an unfit parent, even though I know I'm really doing the right thing for us to live a good life. When I'm getting ready to leave and my baby sees me she starts to cry. That makes me very sad. I also at time try to make time for my friends and try to enjoy life which is also very difficult. I try to spend time with my friends to let them know I still love them. I very seldom have time to take care of my own important things in life.

One of the biggest challenges of a busy schedule is finding time to do homework. The only time I have to do my homework is on my forty-five minute break at work. If I have

a test to study for I stay up all night not getting enough sleep and having to wake up early in the morning the next day. When it's time for me to go to work I am very exhausted. I have to drink a lot of coffee to perk up for the eight hour shift.

I live a hard life trying to take care of my baby and still keep my goals. It is important for me to be very strong for my little girl. JaBrea isn't at fault for my actions, but I am blaming myself. I am trying to be motivated and doing my best at working in order to give my daughter the best life possible. Although my life is now more difficult, I know that in the long run, the hard work will pay off.

A Woman With Support in and out of Labor

Well, everyone knows the saying, “Women get pain and men get the pleasure.” I asked a couple of girls in my class about there before and after labor and getting adjusted to motherhood. So I decided to just describe to you what Tia and Tiffany told me about them and compare them to me.

Tia said her husband had her to act like she was hurting real bad so they can take her and admit her in labor. When she went to the hospital she was already to 5cm dilated. Her doctor then broke her water and put her on potassium (which makes the pains come through the IV) which made her start having unbelievable pains. Tia husband wasn’t there any more because he had to go overseas so she didn’t have anyone by her bedside. She then asked for an Epiderm she couldn’t get because her pains was coming to quick then they finally slowed up the she got it. She was in labor for seven hours with no one there to help her ease the pain. The next two days after she had her little girl she went home didn’t have any help there which she was depressed and cried everyday wishing she had some one there to help her. She only had a phone to talk everyday which didn’t help her none.

Tiffany went to labor at three twenty five in the morning because she was having small pains that she usually have but she take a warm shower and they go away but this time they didn’t so she went to the hospital. When she got admitted and sent to the labor room thirty minutes later her water broke. Tiffany was ready to bring a baby to this world with plenty of support and help with rubbing her back when the pains came. She had her mom, baby daddy, mother in law, and her father in the room with her which help her ease her pain a lot. When she took her baby home she was able to get some rest and help with her baby her mom was always coming to get him when he cried.

Now come the time when I tell you guys about my labor. Well, I went to the hospital at five in the morning. I went to the hospital that early because I was getting induced then I got admitted at six am went into the labor at eight when Dr. Wool broke my water. Dr. Wool then put me on potassium and then kept turning my IV up so I can get the labor over. I had unbelievable pains, which I couldn’t describe. I was in labor for four hours and I had plenty of support. My support was my mom, my aunts, and boyfriend were in the room with me

and I wouldn't let them go the whole four hours I was in labor. After I had my baby and went home and everything five days later I had to have emergency surgery on my anus which I had a sis when I went back home I was going through postpartum which made me so depressed like I didn't belong in this world.

Some have a good labor while some go through pain and difficult during their labor. Tia and I had a hard labor with unbelievable pains and Tiffany had an easy labor. People always said anyone who in labor need some support as you can see Tiffany and I had support and Tia had no support. If anyone went through this only know that all ladies need support regardless of the situation. It's very hard to go through this along.

Two Portfolios that Scored 96

Sample Portfolio #1

Dear Writing Committee

I believe I became a better writer with the help my professor. My professor gave good points and showed me different ways of becoming a writer. From the help of my professor this will help me move on to more challenging things. I learned about brainstorming, outlining, rough drafts. What I think about writing overall is that, it is all in the mind everything is something like free writing to write about. I was not always a writer but since I use the free writing strategies I can always find something to talk about. I also learned in this class so far is rhetorical image, details on essay. What I really like is the rhetorical image because it's ftIn figure what the picture is about. What writing techniques do I find useful is writing it on a piece of paper or free write? When you done go back to what you made a mistake on. I start with my attention grabber so I can get the audience attention. I think my writing strengths are getting the audience attention, in the beginning of the paragraphs and my strengths are giving details in the paragraph. I believe I need improvement on my thesis and putting my paragraphs in the right other to make it sound better. Even though writing was not my thing, I thank my professor for keeping me going on the essays and never give up, and also my classmates for giving me feed backs on my paper to make it even better, Sincerely

A soon to be 101 student

We are not Customers

Who wants to spend their life paying loans back for school? Not me! I completely agree with this image. My teacher image said, "We are students, not customers." I know for a fact that most people would agree with this. In my opinion, community college should be free. I also think that you should only have to pay to go to a university if they are staying on campus, Financial aid should give students more to work with when it comes to grants and loans, because no one wants to be stuck paying off school all their life.



Community college should be free to the public. If South Western Illinois College was free, not only would it benefit the immediate community, but also all of the surrounding areas including; Belleville, East St Louis, Granite City, etc. I say this because people in the community could save more money, which would ultimately provide more taxes to the city. It also would help businesses in the city, because if people have more money to spend then they will spend that money mostly within the community that they live in, or more specifically the businesses within the community. Saving more money could go to bettering the communities, For example, it could add more jobs and centers, which will make the community a more inviting, friendly, and helpful place. Another major reason I believe that community college should be free is because so many more people would get the opportunity to go to school and better their lives, not only for themselves, but also for the families that they may have. Also, having a well-educated population would make the state look good and create a better image for being not living there, or for people that may want to move there, it could also persuade the state to donate more money to the city.

Some people are not even eligible for financial aid, which is unfortunate for people that wish to better themselves, and their lives. If students can keep a decent GPA, and do what they need to do to keep their grades up, they should be able to go to community college for free. Obama once said, "Community colleges should be free for those willing to work for it." Did you know that there are many students that start college, but cannot finish it because they cannot afford the cost of it? Everyone want

to experience the university life, but not everyone can afford to go there. I feel that the government should give some type of slack on the cost to go to a university because tuition is extremely high, and because of this it hinders people from getting the college degree that could make their life better. This is a very personal subject to me because I would give anything to attend a University, and be able to get that "college experience" everyone talks about. Due to the high costs, I cannot afford to experience this. I believe universities tuition should be reduced to a more affordable cost. My friend pays 32,000 dollars a year for his schooling. Without a scholarship, grant, or loan from financial aid that is a number that only higher-class people can afford.

Lack of financial resources is one of the major reasons for such low graduation rates. After reading an article from collegian.psu. I agree more than ever. If people want to work for a degree, they should be given the opportunity to do so. Financial aid bases how much money you receive off how many people stay in your household, or what your parents salaries are, and even if you are married. This is not fair treatment, Just because a household makes 100,000 a year combined does not always mean that they can afford to send a child to college. There are other things that come into play such as; house, car, and phone payments, and many other bills. College is an experience that everyone should get the chance to have. Not only to better their life, but also to gain that experience you need to live in the real world, and make a good life for you and your family that you may have one day.

Single Mothers

According to thesinglemommovement.com there are almost 11 million single moms in the U. S. In accordance to this, 45% of the children that are raised without a father, live in poverty. Single moms in the U.S. are five times more likely to live in poverty compared to married mothers. Being a Single mother will be hard on children growing up. No child should have to grow up without the other parent, yet this has been happening forever due to marriage, jail, poverty, etc, feel every child needs both parents growing up.

Why do you think single mother increase? The number of single mothers began increasing in the 1940s. The main reason for this was because younger women were being, for lack of a better term, forced to marry older men, Of course, marriage leads to a family, but some of the older men were not taking their relationship seriously and would leave the young woman without a blink of the eye. In today's world, the trend continues. Every year the age for young women having children gets younger. This also usually means that the father is younger. The fathers of these children have not yet reached the level of maturity needed to understand that they must take responsibility for their actions, and deal with the consequences. Therefore, he leaves the mother to raise the child by herself. Not everyone is ready to have babies, and because of this some people become afraid and run away from the problem. Another major reason mothers must raise their children on their own is because the fathers are in jail. A child growing up without a father because he is in jail, can be extremely abusive emotionally to the child. This is because children are taught from a very young age that going to jail is bad, and only people that have done bad things go to jail. So, when they get old enough to start understanding concepts, they start wondering why their father is in jail. What did he do? Is he a

bad person? This can create an extremely negative outlook on fathers, and indirectly cause behavioral issues because the child is acting out.

Many single mothers live in poverty because their income is extremely low, and they do not have someone co-parenting to help with the bills. A major reason for this issue is that many teenagers are having children while they are still in high school. Some of these teenagers decide to drop out because they cannot handle the stress, or are embarrassed that they are pregnant, or simply because they feel that they need to put their full attention on their child. Without a high school diploma, jobs are more limited, and the ones that are available do not pay enough to raise a family.

Growing up with both parents is something that every child should be able to have. Although there are many single mothers that have made it and raised wonderful children, there are obvious facts that show that growing up with just one parent can greatly affect the child or children's life. Personally, I had the privilege of growing up with both of my parents, but many of my friends were not so lucky. Some of them grew up in poverty, struggling every day, and the worst part about it is that they child did not choose this life. Before you bring a child into this world you should stop and think about if you are ready, because you are in charge of your

Sample Portfolio #2

As I think back from the first day of class I remember how anxious I felt. I was told how many essays I would have to complete, this was the only thing on my mind. This worried me because I would procrastinate a lot and felt I wasn't good at writing essays. I would ponder for days just to think about how to start it off and what I would say.

This class made me feel more comfortable about writing. Instead of waiting to the last minute to do it, I would start collecting my ideas when the teacher first goes over it. I personally feel this way is better for me because the information is fresh in my mind. There are two methods I have when I collect my ideas. The first is just to free write; by this I can tell what will fit better in the essay. The second is to put my ideas into sections based on how well they sound together so the essay will flow.

When using my first method I wrote "The Power of Reading". This is about how I came to enjoy reading and how it impacted my life. It all started when I went to book store, that day I didn't think that I would like reading so much because as a child I wasn't a big fan of it. There would be plenty of other things I would rather do then just read. After that day I would read no stop and start to collect book series. I would always ask my parents to go back because of the friends I made there. We would all go find books together and head back and read them.

For my second essay I used my second method and I wrote "Clean with Style". I analyzed a picture and explained how business attracts their customers into buying the product. I chose to write about an O-Cel-O ad. I decided that this would be a good ad to write about because the girl in the ad did not fit the product they were trying to sell. O•Cel-O is a cleaning product and the lady looked like she was going to go out and have a good time. She was wearing nice jewelry and clothing. Basically she doesn't look like someone who has been cleaning because she's full of energy and happy to be doing it. Just thinking about it, who has that much energy when cleaning and is happy to be doing it. Nobody is like that,

they don't want to clean but yeah they have to and I'm sure they don't look that excited about it.

I would just like to say thank you for taking the time out of your day to read my essays. I know now I don't have to struggle as much as I had in the past just to write one single essay, it's been a real privilege to be able to get taught all this useful information on how to make my essay better and presentable.

The Power of Reading

My friend turned to me and said "Sparkle you're out!" Not being the best person at spelling, this game really not on my nerves. So I had to compensate by utilizing other methods.

That's when I started to read more.

Being told reading more will help you become a better reader, writer and expand your vocabulary plus help you with your spelling. That's when I went to Borders the first time to start my reading journey. Making my way up to the front desk with a wary look on my face.

"Excuse me... where's the kids' books?" I asked.

She turned to me with a pleasant smile on her face.

"Why yes, the kids' books, they're in the back. Follow me and I'll show you."

She asked me "What kind of books do you like?"

"I'm not really sure." I said

Not having exposure to books. That's when she started showing all the different kinds of books they had. As I looked around at all the varieties and was overwhelmed. Book shelves filled with all sizes. There was big, small, thick, thin and rainbow colors. She introduced the genres they

had, Looking around I saw kids picking out books and heading over to the space theme stairs to read, so I decided to do the same.

Heading over to a book that caught my eye, the title yelled out Junie Jones and the Stupid Smelly Bus. Remembering that I had like that book so much I went back over and over again to pick out another Junie B. Jones book. Over time making my parents buy me every single Junie B.

Jones book. I was safe to say that I was obsessed.

About every couple weeks my father and I would go to borders and get books. He would drop me off the kid's section and he would go off and find some books for himself. One day when he dropped me off, I was a new book they had got in, There was a yellow golden retriever and a small little yellow duck by his feet. Reading the title "Biscuit Finds a Friend". Looking at it more a little girl came up next to me looking at the same kind of book.

I asked her "Have you read it before?"

Sadly looking at me "No..." She said.

Then automatically her face started to lighten up. "But I really want to though I" she said enthusiastically.

"Me too!" I said. "I really like dogs so I think I'm probably going to like this book."

She smiled and asked "Wanna go to the stairs and read it?"

"Yes I do!!" I said.

As we sat on the stairs we started reading the book together. We laughed at the same things as if we had been friends for a long time. Our dad's finally came to pick us up and as we departed we said bye. Never knew if I was ever going to see her again but it was fun meeting and hanging with someone that liked the same things as me.

Looking back now I am glad that I made the choice to go to Borders and start reading more. I ended up finding a lot of books I like and even making new friends. After keeping the Junie B. Jones books that my parents had got me. I started reading them to my nieces. They ended up loving them as much as I did. I made a decision and gave them the books to share.

Hopefully one day they'll pass it down to one of their relatives. It'll be a great story to tell.

Clean with Style



How would you like to clean and not have to put in a lot of energy, time, and not get dirty? You can be stylish just like me and get the sponge. That's not how it is; you're not full of energy and happy when cleaning like the lady in the picture. Also you definitely don't have on nice clothing on either because you will get dirty, A lot of companies try and manipulate you by doing this kind of thing. They make you believe that it's easy; fun, and you will get a lot done.

When was cleaning ever fun and easy?

It starts out by having a happy, beautiful woman in a bright clean white kitchen. She's leaning against the sink with bubbles in it. She is holding up one of the O-Cel-O sponges that has pink, purple and white decorative squares on it. The woman has one a nice clean teal shirt on with a diamond necklace around her neck that brings out the ring on her hand. The shine from the jewelry brings out her joyful white smite. She has shiny brunette hair that comes down little past her shoulders. The white bubble over filling the sink brings your attention to

the white letters across the woman's body: "Clean with style" This seems to say you can be just like her if you buy the sponge. You don't have to put on the old clothes anymore to clean; you can do it with your good clothes on and with your expensive jewelry and even your expensive Jewelry. sponge is stylish; its light pink with colored designees on it. Why go boring when you can go bold. The pink of the sponge brings your eye to the pink O-Cel-O logo at the bottom left hand corner. By that is the pink breast cancer sign if the words "Team up for the cause!" It tells you all about how if you buy this time you will help raise money for breast cancer.

Now if you take a step back and exam all if it, this ad is manipulating you. Sure the sponge may be cute and tiny but will it hold up to the job? When cleaning you usually just put on your house clothes so you won't ruin them. Also you take your jewelry off so the chemicals you are dealing with won't hurt the material or so you will not lose and or break it. You will most likely have your hair pulled back and off your shoulders because you sure don't want to get your hair into anything and it will help cool you off so you won't be hot. Usually when cleaning you are working hard so you sweat and get over heated. You just want to sit down and rest and drink some water. In the ad the lady looks like she has enough energy to do a 5k. So how in any way is this ad believable? Just looking at the sink you see the all the bubbles overfilling it. If she was doing dishes or messing with the water all of that would overflow all over the counter and who knows even the floor, so that would lead to even more cleaning you would have to do.

This ad tells you that you can be stylish while cleaning with this sponge just like that lady in the picture. You can be happy and be more energetic like her also. If you just take a minute and really look at it and analyze it, you can see they are only trying to get our money from you. So watch out because if a company only for sponges are doing it, imagine who else is too.

Three Portfolios that Score “Proficiency”

Sample Portfolio 1

Dear Writing Committee,

Wow! Taking two writing classes in one semester really made me appreciate college on a new level. However, writing in general has always been a subject that's needed improvements and as the years progressed it seemed to get worse and harder. But as I began to read many famous author's work I realized the best don't follow rules and they tackle each challenge differently but with their own unique way. When the steps were broken down it became clear I had to develop my own writing process and style. Throughout school even high school I had no way to tackle writing assignments; I always just wrote what was on my mind and then went back adding ideas and fixing it up until it was time to turn it in. But in high school it was a completely different way of writing from college. They had strict guidelines and ways of writing that personally made me stress and rush my thoughts causing me to do poorly.

Now my first year of college is wrapping up I have had a completely different experience than I thought I would. College is completely laid back compared to high school and it has really let me excel. I have learned things I would've never thought I needed to know, such as how to perfect my primary learning style. Without learning your style it's a tossup on how you will perceive information, and it also really helps me provoke my ideas. My personal learning style is being active. If I work out or do any physical activity I feel calmer and it's easier to focus. Even taking a longer way to class outside will help clear my mind, which is crazy how something so simple can change everything you do for the better. As I worked on my learning style I began to really excel in all the short assignments we had and even in class discussion because it seemed so easy to produce information. While I began to perfect my style I moved onto really making my information understandable and really connectable to the subject or topic. This was the most crucial step in all this because i could have the best word choice and information but if it doesn't make sense then it's useless. And in college writing, it's more about being able to connect and flow ideas more than anything.

For me, my instructor was a huge part of my success. She was completely understanding when it came to my struggles and really guided me so I would find the answer and fix it myself. She also understood that for beginning writers it takes time to make a presentable piece. And time was my friend in this class; it really let me focus on more than the proper flow and connections. I could detail my paper to sentence fragments, smarter word choice, and even changing a whole paragraph to make more sense. She really opened my mind up and made me believe, maybe I was a writer all along. Perhaps you will think the same after reading the two essays for my portfolio.

One of these essays is about my best friend David. I attempted to tell his heroic lifestyle and how that played a role into what I choose to do instead. I also tried to show a depressive and effective profile, that highlighted his accomplishments. I tried to add dialogue to make it feel more of an interview than a paper. I also went into detail when it came to his reactions from telling war stories, as well as talked about the more interesting topics of his life so it wasn't so boring to read. I have done a ton of brainstorming on this essay. It took me hours to come up with key questions to ask David so I could get the important questions that had the most information. Brainstorming was a key to this essay because I put myself in the shoes of both people and got the best of both worlds.

Another essay that really was a challenge to me mentally was the first one we did in the class. It was a debate on whether or not Albert Bliss's essay titled, "Homeless Man Interviews Himself." on his interview of a homeless man, was really an essay or an interview. It has been an age long question because he has the paper in essay form but it has many interview attributes. In my stance I took a unique approach. I used multiple sources like the Purdue writing lab and even using his own words to classify it. It took a long time to search for the exact case for this essay because it could go either way. But as we conducted peer review, some of my classmates were not a fan of some of the examples I used and how I used them. So I changed what the central idea was about and some examples and personally think that they saved me from being one dimensional.

If you don't know me then this reflection could seem as just a gig to get by. But the progress I've made from one year ago sitting in high school is amazing. I would blow away my

teachers with the experience and maturity in my writing now. I really am able to connect to what the readers want and easily understood as well. Not every word I put on paper is perfect, but i know if i use the steps and knowledge I've been shown, it can be pretty close to perfect.

OORAH!

My buddy David always told me "Follow your heart little man" even though he was older but not bigger by any means. He's not much taller than six foot three inches but I easily had a advantage on weight. He's a very unique man when it comes to his personal life and a rare person we see nowadays. As he progresses in his life he turns out to be the ideal role model to the world and most importantly his kids.

Being the youngest child among three boys and two girls, David was always getting the blame for almost anything. On top of family fights and a pretty chaotic household, David's family did not earn enough to really meet all the kids needs and wants. At a young age he started working to help support his family and to not have to ask them for anything. His intent was to ease the struggle. He honestly felt like he wasn't living a normal life and that he only felt like a normal kid when we were hanging with our friends at school with no extra work put on him. He never experienced a vacation or traveled anywhere outside of the state. This can bring anyone down but in his case, motivation made him work much harder for that goal and that's an example of how hard he had to work just to get something a lot of people take for granted.

David use to always talk to me about joining a branch of the armed forces but he wasn't sure which one would fit his life and personality best. After we graduated high school David finally decided that he needed a strict structured life; so, he joined the marines. I never really got into the whole following orders and being a hardass thing. But he was extremely happy with this decision. When he decided to join, the U.S was just engaging in the Iraq war, so his whole purpose was trying to be involved in that because fighting in battle has always been a dream of his. He also wanted to have a purpose and his was to protect this country. Davis always use to tell me "man, wait until i can fight, ill be leading our army to kill the terrorists!" He made the right decision because it gave him a different responsibility instead of cleaning the house and watching kids. He instead would be commanding through enemy territory with five of his buddies that went through hell just like he did to serve our country. For him it was more of being honored by people instead of being overlooked as he was in our childhood just because of money. He would always tell me about everything it took for him to become a war hero and it really made me see what his passion was. My most memorable is

every time we would do good in games, he would scream "OORAH!" like the marines do in real life.

Over the years we lost touch for a while but recently began talking again and I can tell he is not the same person. Before he went in the marines, we would always talking about war and what he would do, but now he never mentions anything to do with the aspect of war. But as a ground soldier I can understand he has seen some very gruesome attacks on his own team and on enemies. Unfortunately the first story he ever told me quickly became the last. We were hanging outside his house and he started off talking about his team arriving on a helicopter on the outskirts of an Iraqi village and progressed into his team landing after a rough 6 hours on the helicopter. The landing zone seemed clear, and at this point his face started to get a weird panic look. In a matter of seconds gunfire lit up the sky and his best friends were just dying left and right of him. He was sweating like crazy at this point. It seemed that he was stuck in a bad dream. Somehow he managed to put his helmet on in the midst of bullets and screams, and right after that he got hit, but because it hit his helmet it just knocked him out. He never got to finish the story because he was beginning to yell his words and really got wide eyed like someone was after him. and you could tell memories of that extent brought a form of PTSD onto him which was both mentally and physically traumatic. So I quickly switched the topic and never have asked since in respect to him.

can say that he has been taught a very valuable life lessons going through the marines. He has to be on time, you can't have any facial hair, no cell phones until you prove yourself, and most importantly he was taught amazing morals and ethics. He told me the main reasons that he joined that the marines out of all of the other branches was how they got your life on track, so he plans on teaching his kids and family the same ethics and how to properly carry yourself because that's what he was taught for most of his life. His exact words were "Be the best father you can' because his dad wasn't ever there for him, and he feels like something was always missing. He plans on being the father he never really had. He wants his kids to look up to him as more than a role model and a hero to this country. Its pretty stunning how someone can be so dramatically affected but benefit so much from war. He asks me every time i see him how school going and if i 'm following good morals with my family

and on my own time, and he always seems to have another quote or saying every single time we see each other.

David recently got out of the marines just last year. However he was still hungry to save people lives and just help people because he's already been through so much. Just about a month ago he became a corrections officer to help people beat the system and give some people a second chance. He's not only working to save people's lives, he is also working on Scott Air Force Base at a air control center to help stop threats from going out or into the base. He loves what he has done, is doing, and is going to do in the future.

This man has been one of my biggest supports to lean on throughout my teen life and when it comes to handling stress and overcoming people doubting you, he is the strongest I know. His work ethic is outstanding and he will continue to provide for his family no matter what. Now he constantly tells me "To succeed you must do what others won't, and can't do." I try to use every bit of his advice in my daily life as much as possible because he's been through almost everything a person can be. Maybe one day I can give him some life changing advice.

Who Wants to Be Homeless?

The interviews that Albert Bliss undertakes on himself seem to be interestingly creating a two character interview though it's the same person. On one side is the imaginative character Mister Bliss and on the other we have AL who are one and the same person but posing as different characters feigning the roles of interviewer and interviewee. It becomes interesting because it shows two different lives and shows that moments in our life define us and our future. AL wants to know about the motive and reasoning behind but quitting society and becoming homeless, but also doesn't see anything wrong with living as he does.

Of course the article that Albret Bliss wrote is an odd piece of writing but serves as a good challenge to English when it needs to be classified. Personally after reading about the purpose and the organization of his writing, I favor calling it an essay only because I found more evidence to call it such, including the "Understanding the Essay" PowerPoint we watched in class. This presentation shows that an essay establishes a framework for writers to experience and connect to their readers which Albert does by asking himself questions about his life in an order from his childhood to adulthood and what made him want to live homeless as he grows up. Therefore this piece written by Bliss is classified as a narrative essay because it's in chronological order and is informative to the readers.

As shown in the Purdue writing lab a narrative essay is thought of as someone telling a story as Albert Bliss does, it is also anecdotal, experiential and allows the writer to express themselves. Bliss's writing is experimental because the whole writing is about his past life which signify his experiences. He also expresses himself in a way that he thinks outlines his live and shows the best of it, even though he's homeless and lonely, he doesn't see it that way. The entire paper's theme is to show people to stop flying around and appreciate the little things because as one person works every day, all day, there are people such as albert that are just as content living on the streets with no responsibility. Which this interview tries to figure out the main reason for such thinking. Even though the interview is written with many spaces throughout and seems to be sloppy free write, its structure and format are defined by the Purdue writing lab and multiply outside sources as a narrative essay more than anything else.

One of the biggest outliers when it comes to ending the argument is how he chose to express his work. He used an essay and made it feel as a real interview. As the Purdue online article states for a narrative essay, "These essays are often anecdotal, experiential, and personal—allowing students to express themselves in a creative and, quite often, moving ways." He expressed himself in a way most people would never think of, which just adds to the uniqueness of this writing. Almost every attribute of a narrative essay has been met, which right there shows my point. The biggest way to tell, as told from the online article, "for the work to be an essay you must include an introduction, plot, characters, setting, climax, and conclusion." After reading Bliss's work, you cannot help but call it a unique approach to writing an essay.

On the next page are copies of the comment sheets given back to the student writer. Do you agree with the comments and advice?

Reader Code #: _____ I'm reader 1 2 3 (circle)

Instructor #: _____

Student ID #: _____

Placement:

_____ 095

_____ 096

 X Proficiency**Expectations for the work in your portfolio****Purposeful Development** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Rhetorical Context** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Thought/Quality of Ideas** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Order** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Language** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Self-Assessment** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Comment:**

Excellent content in cover letter! Good audience awareness too. (Proofread for lower case errors). Your letter talked about the maturity in your work. After reading the first essay, I concur. The second essay threw me off a little. I didn't know it was an analysis at first. Good use of terminology. Wish there was a little more length.

Reader Code #: _____ I'm reader 1 2 3 (circle)

Instructor #: _____

Student ID #: _____

Placement:

_____ 095

_____ 096

 X Proficiency**Expectations for the work in your portfolio****Purposeful Development** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Rhetorical Context** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Thought/Quality of Ideas** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Order** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Language** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Self-Assessment** STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK**Comment:**

Overall, your writing is clear and contains a strong voice. Try to dig deeper for support and development, though, with every writing assignment.

Sample Portfolio 2

The portfolio for Sample Two comes from a student in ALP, a student taking both English 96 and English 101 concurrently (for more information see chapter 9). Some writing courses, whether ALP, developmental, or 101 have a theme. This student took a course themed around superheroes, but although the papers may be connected by a similar theme, you will see that they employ different strategies and techniques.

Dear Writing Assessment Committee,

I thought writing was going to come easy to me when I first started this class. I was wrong. Considering the fact that this is my first semester in college, I knew it would be a little challenging but it was rough at first. I couldn't even remember how to double space and I learned it in middle school. At the beginning of the semester, I was confident because all throughout high school I did well on essays. Here the process is different and you cannot get by with just a couple of paragraphs. I started to struggle because I had to make sure I did everything that the instructor asked for and at first, I thought it was a lot.

The first paper I got a c and I really started to see that was going to have to put a lot more effort in to my papers. I saw that I was going to have to put myself in the reader's shoes and try my best to get my point across as clearly as I could. My writing process at first was terrible because I would write my paper at the last minute, and I think we all know that is not a good idea. Also, I wouldn't even re-read over my papers before I turn them in and that is probably why I got low scores on the first ones. The good thing is that I could see the mistakes I was making and I began to change them immediately.

I remembered the professor saying that we have to pass both classes in order to move on, so I began taking the class more seriously. I decided to change my writing process since the one I had obviously was not working. I began taking apart the assignment piece by piece because when you do that it gives you much more to write about. When I would get the assignment, at first, I would wait until the last minute to do it and wouldn't even start on it when I had the time. I didn't manage my time well enough and I thought it was because I was working all the time. In reality, I still could have gotten things done in my spare time instead of going home and watching TV.

I encountered many of my weaknesses during this class because all we did was write. Procrastination is one of them and I had to discipline myself to make sure I got stuff done on time. There would be times where I would have the time to at least start on a paper but then I would think to myself, "It's early so I still have time" and would put it off to the side. This was really my biggest problem and I am happy that I was able to stray away from this bad habit during on in the semester. Another weakness had was time management because I feel like I was always busy so I could never fit in the time to work on my assignments.

During my first draft on the paper, Syndromes Obsession with Mr. Incredible and Wanting Everyone to be the same, I just wrote down what I thought sounded good enough to get me a good grade. That was an epic fail because I didn't put my all into it. I thought, "Hey, this is just the beginning and I will get better with time," and I did. On the second draft, I took all the notes my classmates gave me during peer review and put them into my paper the best I could. With the feedback I got from the professor I tried to incorporate that as well because she gave me specific details that I needed to add to the paper. These two things helped me the most because I really didn't know where to start and I knew that if I kept doing the same things I was not going to pass the class.

I decided to revise the layout of my paper and try to include as much backup information as I could so that I would not be lacking support. I changed the paragraphs by introducing new sentences with transitions so the paper could flow better. When I conferenced with my instructor it helped and she gave me a lot of positive feedback that made me feel more confident. Like she could tell I was improving some and that I only needed to change a few things in the paper. For my final draft, I was more confident in going in and making changes because I knew I was on the right path and that it was a start to a good semester.

For my visual analysis paper it was a little rough at first because I had no idea what character I was going to choose. We had to choose a picture from a superhero movie or show that gave a lot of detail in one scene and analyze it. I had never done anything like this before so I knew it wasn't going to be easy to do. Once I chose Captain America I just had to find the best scene I could to analyze. This was hard because there were a lot of good ones but I wanted

the most detailed one so I could get a lot of things to analyze from it and I got it.

It was easy for me to start because the instructor gave us a list of all the things we could use while analyzing our picture like lighting, mood, and other things. When I got done with the first draft we peer reviewed it and I got a lot of good feedback which made me happy because I only had to change a couple of things in it. Then I conferenced with my second draft and the instructor liked it and told me to put this one in the portfolio and that's exactly why it is in here.

Overall, I feel like I have really progressed into a decent writer and that even though I started out rough I am going to end well. I have overcome most of my weaknesses, have improved even more on my strengths, and have the ability to succeed in my next English courses. I was given all the tools I needed and when I started to take advantage of them, I started to exceed.

Visual Analysis of a Superhero

In the movie *Captain America: the First Avenger*, during the war, all of the eligible men were going to enlist to be in the war and Steve Rogers wanted to as well but he did not have all of the qualifications to do so. Steve took the exams many times, sometimes even under a fake name, but he was too small in stature and he had too many health problems. He had a friend named Bucky who had already joined so that made him even more anxious because he saw how Bucky was trying to help to make a change. Steve was more of a behind the scenes type of person and not equipped enough to be a soldier at first. He decided to try one more time just to see what would happen but he didn't know someone was watching him because once he tried a man who was in charge of things actually gave him a chance. The man, Dr. Abraham Erskine, was on the hunt to find someone suitable for the experiment. Dr. Erskine let him join to see if he had what it took to be a soldier and he did by passing every test the man gave him.

One test was when Dr. Erskine asked Steve if he wanted to kill Nazis and he replied, "I don't want to kill anyone. I don't like bullies." Another test was when he was doing basic training, they threw a grenade towards the soldiers to see what their reaction would be, Steve jumped on top of it so it wouldn't explode on anyone else. This made the doctor feel like Steve was more deserving of the serum than the other contenders were because he showed how much he really cared. This let him know that Steve was the right one to do the experiment with.

In this scene, it shows when Steve Rogers became Captain America and it shows the complete transformation from what he was before. He's grown so much from where before he was super short and scrawny with no muscles. At first, he was so small he couldn't even put his head in a display in a museum he visited when he was first trying to become a soldier. Steve would get beat up and bullied all the time by bigger boys but now after they gave him the serum he has muscles and has gotten a lot taller. He has huge muscles probably the size of a person's head and could probably lift an entire truck if he really wanted to. He's gotten much taller than he was before at first he was probably 5'4 which means he's probably six feet or taller. His physical features has changed dramatically and you can see that he's even in awe about what has just happened to him. The man standing next to him is Dr. Abraham Erskine and you can tell

that he is also amazed at what had just happened because he did not know if the serum was actually going to work or not so he's happy it did. You can tell that something has changed in his features because Agent Peggy Carter is about to touch him to feel his big strong chest. She seems to be amazed so much that she probably isn't even realizing what she's doing.

The focal point is on Captain America because everyone is around him kind of staring at him in awe because of his transformation. In the background everyone is smiling and excited that they were able to be a part of history. They are in some type of laboratory because of the big lights and the machine Captain America had just gotten out of. They had just done a live experiment and there were many people there. They are all standing around congratulating each other on the success of the experiment and are happy it all worked out. He's the main one in the photo that seems to be the reason they're all there in the first place. If it weren't for him there would be no experiment at all because he was special and no one else has what he did to do the experiment.

The lighting of this scene shows that this was a serious situation because if something went wrong Steve could have died or been seriously injured. It is somewhat dark but not so much that you cannot tell what is going on in the scene. The light seems to be shining on Captain /America, which also says that they needed some of the attention to mainly be on him and Agent Carter. Steve Rogers is shirtless and very shiny like they rubbed baby oil all over his new body to show off his muscles. The mood of this scene is somewhat happy because the people are laughing in the background and showing happiness. The mood is also amazed because the girl is like, "Wow cannot believe what just happened" and the man is thinking the same thing. They are all overjoyed with the fact that they have just created someone who can lead them into winning the war.

The director probably chose to focus mainly on the physical aspect of Steve because he wanted to show the dramatic change. He wanted to tell the audience that this is how a superhero is supposed to look and that Steve is now getting ready to become Captain America. He wanted to show that this is just the beginning and that Steve had just changed to become something greater than what he was before. He's now be able to help in the war like he wanted to in the first place and he's able to do more in regular society as well.

Everyone is happy and are thinking they have just made history with this experiment. This picture to me sums up the entire first half of the movie because it shows us that this is the beginning of Captain America. In this image it tells that there is no more Steve Rogers and that they've created someone even better. They've created someone who can do all the things everyone wishes they could do but they can't because it's just not realistic. He's transformed into this heroic figure that people can look up to and that can save the lives of normal citizens.

Their reactions to Steve now is totally different from when they first saw him in basic training. They laughed at him at first and didn't understand why the doctor thought he was a good candidate for the experiment. But now that he has transformed and is better than them they're all eating their words. They see how he's physically transformed and is in total shock and now they're going to begin to respect him way more. This is just the beginning of the journey of Steve Rogers becoming Captain America because he hasn't explored all of his new abilities as a superhero. He will now be able to do great things he probably always dreamed of.

He just wanted to help make a change in the world and that's probably why he was so deserving of becoming a superhero because of his selflessness and his kindness.

Syndrome's Obsession with Mr. Incredible and Wanting Everyone to be the Same

We have all had people we might have looked up to as a child or maybe even now, but that person might have let us down by doing something we might not have agreed with. However, this does not stop us from liking that person or wanting to destroy them; we just learn to agree to disagree or might back off from that person a little. This was not the case in the movie *The Incredibles* when a boy named Buddy is obsessed with wanting to be like a superhero named Mr. Incredible. Buddy was rejected and decided to get revenge on Mr. Incredible even if it meant destroying other innocent people to do it. He wanted to show Mr. Incredible that the world would be better if everyone had the same abilities.

Buddy was just an average kid who saw someone he wanted to be like and wanted to help Mr. Incredible. Mr. Incredible told him he was too young and that he worked alone. Buddy tried to be Mr. Incredible's partner numerous times ;for example, when Mr. Incredible was trying to stop Bomb Voyage, Buddy interfered by coming in with rocket shoes on trying to fly around and it distracted Mr. Incredible and the Bomb Voyage almost got away. Buddy made these gadgets so he could be just as fast and just as strong as Mr. Incredible but when it came time to show him he didn't want to see them. Mr. Incredible scolded him and told the police to tell his mother what he was doing. Another time he showed he was obsessed was when Mr. Incredible was just sitting in his car listening to the police scanner and Buddy showed up out of nowhere and tried to interfere again. Mr. Incredible even went as far as telling him "Go home Buddy, I work alone." That really hurt Buddy because he only wanted to help him. Mr. Incredible really hurt him all the times he rejected him and it made him feel like he was not

good enough because he did not have any superpowers. Don't get me wrong I love Chris Brown but you don't see me at one of his concerts trying to get on stage and sing and dance like him.

Once he turned him down, I think something clicked in Buddy's head that he can't depend on anyone he would have to do things himself. Buddy wanted to show that he could be just as great as Mr. Incredible by becoming a better superhero and doing it all on his own. This is just like Mr. Incredible because he always depended on himself he never called for backup during a fight or anything. Buddy thought that if he became a superhero Mr. Incredible would respect him more.

Even though Buddy did not want any ties with Mr. Incredible, he still used some of the same things that would remind you of him. Like the floor leading up to the door in his lair was the same symbol Mr. Incredible used. This is where he changed his name to Syndrome because he did not want to relate to him so changed it from "Incrediboy" to "Syndrome". He also decided to do something that was still involving his obsession with being a superhero because he began making weapons for people. Weapons bring power so it made him feel more powerful than Mr. Incredible when he was making them. He sold them and decided to make some for himself as well like the bomb he threw down to kill Mr. Incredible and the giant robot he used on Mr. Incredible. He made all these developments to make sure he would become one of the best superheroes out there even better than Mr. Incredible did.

This is also where he began to think of an elaborate plan on how to get his revenge on Mr. Incredible. He spent fifteen years trying to come up with a plan on how he can change the way things were and he went as far as buying an island to get superheroes there so he can see how they fought. He would study their every move and learn from them so he could defeat

them in the end. He even hired someone to track them down, lure them in, and show them all the good stuff then at the right time he will destroy them. This shows us that he was really eager to fry and become the best superhero ever because he went through so many superheroes before he got to Mr. Incredible meaning he saved the best for last.

This reveals that their dynamic was really the same because they both wanted to be super when they couldn't and they both did things to try to be. Syndrome waited fifteen years to make sure everything was perfect for him to come and show the world how super he was. This shows us how desperate he was to be just like Mr. Incredible if you ask me. Mr. Incredible was an actual superhero he didn't have to use any gadgets or anything his power was within him and that's why Syndrome was mad. He thought that if he made everyone the same then no one would feel less than and it would make the world a better place. He still has many things that mimics Mr. Incredible like the bomb he made was shaped just like Mr. Incredibles symbol and so was the platform in his secret lair. He tried so hard not to be like Mr. Incredible that he failed and ended up hurting even more in the end of the movie.

I really don't think his attempt would have even worked because no one is the same. We may have some things in common with someone but we all have our own individual personalities and they make us who we are. Trying to get everyone to be the same would be This is also where he began to think of an elaborate plan on how to get his revenge on Mr. Incredible. He spent fifteen years frying to come up with a plan on how he can change the way things were and he went as far as buying an island to get superheroes there so he can see how they fought. He would study their every move and learn from them so he could defeat them in the end. He even hired someone to track them down, lure them in, and show them all the

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I really don't think his attempt would have even worked because no one is the same. We may have some things in common with someone but we all have our own individual personalities and they make us who we are. Trying to get everyone to be the same would be boring and no one will be able to be who they truly are and there will be rebels who will fry to go outside the box and that is when the problems will start. We were all born different, that's exactly how we should be because no one functions the same, and we need people to be who they are so we can all do great in life.

On the next page are copies of the placement sheets given back to the student writer. Do you agree with the comments and advice?

Reader Code #: _____ I'm reader 1 2 3 (circle)

Instructor #: _____

Student ID #: _____

Placement:

____ 095

____ 096

X Proficiency

Expectations for the work in your portfolio

Purposeful Development	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Rhetorical Context	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Thought/Quality of Ideas	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Order	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Language	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Self-Assessment	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK

Comment:

-Letter: Super Strong and lots of supporting details that we like to see. "Syndrome"- Really nice analysis & critical reasoning on display towards the end. Nicely crafted sentences and paragraphs. "Visual"- Equally strong analysis, this time couched in the, well, visual vs. the story in #1. Well done in not straying into story too much!

Reader Code #: _____ I'm reader 1 2 3 (circle)

Instructor #: _____

Student ID #: _____

Placement:

____ 095

____ 096

X Proficiency

Expectations for the work in your portfolio

Purposeful Development	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Rhetorical Context	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Thought/Quality of Ideas	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Order	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Language	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK
Self-Assessment	STRONG	SATISFACTORY	WEAK

Comment:

Well versed drafts in meeting the objectives of the above expectations – in audience awareness and thought. Good work in encountering other topics in life.

Sample Portfolio #3

Breakdown Breakthrough

First, I would like to say thank you for taking time out to read my paper. This semester, to say the least has been challenging for me, but overwhelmingly rewarding. I love to write, I write during my free time. I love to express myself through poetry, lyrics and short stories. I transcend into a new world when I have a pen and paper at hand. It has always been my go-to when I can't express my thoughts verbally. Writing is a form of therapy to me, and when I journal it helps me to see what I believe in and stand for. I also love to read other people's words; I am always looking for a new perspective and writing techniques. For reasons, uncertain to me, I had a hard time with writing this semester. Writing usually comes naturally and the words flow so effortlessly. It is possible that the writer's blocks and doubts I experienced this semester was because I have been out of school for twelve years and have to juggle classes and a special needs child, or because I feared my writing did not make sense; that it was not what my teacher was looking to read. Even amidst the struggle, I still persevered and studied so I could get the most out of this class because I want to move into English 101 confidently.

As I started this portfolio, I can see how much I have improved as a writer when I did the revision process for my two essays that I have chosen for you to read. I have learned over the course of this semester about who I am as a writer and what I need to work on to improve my writing skills. During the course of English [omitted], we had a multitude of writing assignments and five essays this year. The mixture of the books we used and my classmates were important resources to me. We used the book *Composition of Everyday Life* by John Mauk and John Metz and the *Study Guide to Portfolio*. I found these books to be helpful in building quality essays. I resorted to these books frequently throughout the semester. At times, I convince myself I know what is best because I write a lot. Although, I came to realize throughout the course of this semester how beneficial feedback and constructive criticism from my classmates benefits my writing in the end; even if I do not like their suggestions. I ask my peers to review my work to see if there is any punctuation errors and if my writing has a

strong purpose. Coming together with my classmates while either free writing or revising my writing has been important and most importantly effective.

The common feedback I received from my teachers and the Success Center, such as alternating sentence lengths, choosing a tone and being aware of my audience has helped me tremendously when I am in the process of revising my writing. I have come to learn how prevalent grammatical errors are in my writing, and when I shift my point of view and use the wrong pronouns, that I bring about a distorted message. The technique I use when I am starting new writing is brainstorming and free writing. I move into another area and draw a triangle diagram to narrow what my message and general issue is. I try to avoid seemingly formulaic and try my best to have my writing flow together coherently.

The first essay I wrote is called "The Piece". We were supposed to write an essay on something that has changed our outlook on life. I wanted to give the reader insight on my life before and after I overcame Prenatal and Postpartum depression. I really enjoyed writing this paper. This essay was raw and real, and it helped me to touch on a subject of post-partum; a subject many young mother's do not speak of or even know they have. I have spent a lot of time revising this paper. I left many details out on my first draft. I cleaned up some sentences that were not needed and substituted sentences as well. I put more detail on what I was feeling at the time so the reader could feel what I was feeling. In my first draft, I left out the fact my son is mentally disabled and it was hard for me to admit I was using drugs for many years to cope. I know that people have a stigma or a preconceived idea on addiction, so I left it out. Then I added the part about drugs, because that is my story, and I hope that you do not judge by the chapter you walked in on.

My second essay I choose to have you read is called "Voice or Touch?" and it was an evaluation essay. I revised my essay because I realized how much I could relate to the movie. Theodore reminds me of my current boyfriend who is introverted and stuck on technology and video games. I could relate to what Catherine was going through in this movie. She explained to Theodore the main reason for divorce was that he could not connect with people. I feel the same way, which is why I feel my relationship is stagnant. Technology and computers has taken away the genuine physical emotion and been replaced by a screen or

voice recognition software. It made me think about the effects of technology and the effects it has on my relationship and what I have seen happen around me. I added some more detail and my thoughts towards physical verse technology interaction. The movie Her by Spike Jonze was different than any other movie I had seen, and makes you think. Will a voice or screen eventually replace the true feeling of touch?

The best part of this semester was getting in tune with who I am and learning new kind of writing styles. I am so glad that I took my insecurities, pushed them aside and persevered what I thought was the impossible. Even though I wanted to jump right into college level I know that English [omitted] has showed me how to with purpose and meaning, helped me to demonstrate awareness of who my audience is, and use the correct mechanics of sentence structure to better the quality of my work. Another bonus for the semester was how small my class was. We got to know each other and work with our teacher closely. I am excited to see where my writing heads me and what I will learn when I move into the English 101 and 102 courses. The English [omitted] course has helped my writing and wording in all my affairs, upped my self-esteem and was a good learning experience.

The Piece

Sometimes I miss the freedom I used to have, where there was not a care in the world but what I should wear tomorrow. I would have never guessed I would be dressing a little boy who I named Malcolm. I never wanted to be a mother; a special needs mother at that. Motherhood has been chaotic, emotional and full of tears. Through all my failings and doubts, over the last eight years I learned that faith overrides fear every time.

I was attracted to bad boys, ya know, the smooth talkers. I met his dad named Malcolm when I was 18, through a boy I was seeing at the time. I broke up with my boyfriend Mike that day to start a new relationship with him. When I first saw Malcolm, I just lusted everything about him but I never wanted to get hurt, so I usually loved my men and leaved them. It eventually turned out to be the complete opposite. SURPRISE! Six months into our "happy" relationship on June 28, 2008; I learned I was with child. I say "happy" ironically because that is what the drugs had me believing. I wish I could say that I was happy and ready to be responsible adult. I was afraid, nauseous and wondered can I stay abstinent from drugs? "Will I get stretch marks and not be as pretty as I used to be?" That question is one I asked my mother repeatedly. "Those are just battle marks Kristin, it doesn't make you any less than any other woman" was always her reply. Still, those were not words of comfort for me. As time grew, I still did not want to be a mother; I was still a baby at eighteen and so was Malcolm at the age of twenty-two.

I can distinctly remember the smell of the efficiency apartment's hallway. The smell bellowed into our place from the hole in our door. It was a hint of mold, incense, and spilled cans of Stag beer. During the first month of my pregnancy, our relationship was fine, because I faked it to make it through the day. We played house for a little bit and I had to become okay with my new reality, because of my grandiose amount of pride I used to have. This was not my parent's problem, even though they always welcomed me home. In my heart, I knew my parent's house was the next stop because the binge drinking happened more frequently with Malcolm. Many arguments, complex fights, his job losses to my mental breakdowns later, we moved into my Mom and Dads. My parents disliked him but for their grandchild's sake and mine, they let bygones be bygones. I was not over the moon about moving in there,

but I finally felt a safe with a sense of financial and physical security. It was nice to lay my head down and not wake up to parties and fistfights.

We finally settled in my parent's and three months into living there, The U.S. Marshall's booted in my parent's door the day before Thanksgiving of 2008. They picked Malcolm up on an arson charge I knew nothing about. As alone and fearful as I had already felt, it hit me hard, I am alone and I will have to do this alone. Not only was I feeling madly confused and scared, my parents were too. It made the situation way worse than I thought it could be. I was five months along now and had begun to question my decisions. "Who was he?" "What have I really gotten myself into?" He wrote, I wrote back, he called and I always answered. I would get heartbroken reading the letters, which quickly turned into resentments and isolation. I sunk into the worst depression and within weeks, the mental pain outweighed the number ten on the pain scale on Memorial Hospital's wall. I cannot explain what I was starting to feel, it really scared me. I had a whole lot of nothingness going on in my head. At the same time, I felt everything too much and I started having suicidal thoughts. I had no energy, ever. I could not deal with the smallest amount of human interaction. I knew I was depressed but I did not want to admit it; I had all the signs of prenatal depression, and eventually that was my diagnosis too. My days felt like three am nights. I could not find an ounce of sunlight, I was stuck in the dark and alone in my head; what a scary place to be.

I had a few early labor scares and many progesterone shots (medicine to prevent early labor) and was glad I didn't deliver, because I wanted that movie scene labor. I wanted that overwhelming happy and joyous labor (which didn't happen) I was due on March 14, 2009 and here am a month early on February 14, 2009 at 5:00 am signing papers and getting poked everywhere. I was getting buttered in iodine and getting ready to be sliced like a Valentine's day steak. "What if I can't make a bottle?" "What if the maternal instinct doesn't kick in?" These are a few of the fearful thoughts as I drifted under the anesthesia. At 7:58 am, Malcolm Immanuel Halwachs had arrived into this big world. He weighed seven pounds, two ounces and was eighteen inches long. I don't recall too much of what happened in the operating room but asking my oldest sister Alicia, "What does it look like"? I looked at him and "Bubby" came to mind, which is my favorite out of the 20 names I call him.

I woke up to the phone ringing and it was his dad Malcolm. One of the guards was nice enough to give him a secret phone call. I cried, yelled and was angry with him for not being there for me, as if he had a choice to leave and comfort me? The truth hurts and still does but, I did not hold my son the first day and a half he was alive. I felt so detached from my son, self and the universe. I cried myself in and out of sleep for two days straight. A couple days later, we went home around 9:30 am. I pulled him out of the car seat and just stared at him while I held him in my arms. His perfectly round face was puffy and had some discoloration from the jaundice. His hands...they were so little and he had a massive amount of blonde hair. Then he opened his eyes and I saw a mini me. At that moment, I felt that I had made a choice; a good choice at that, but I still did not feel all the things my mom said I would. I continued to feel desensitized, then angry and became more isolated. The more time I spent being a mother, I realized things were getting worse than I could ever have imagined.

There are certain milestones that doctors say your infant/toddler is supposed to hit at certain times while growing from infant to toddler. As I would randomly come out of these bouts of depression and drug induced comas, I started noticing things about my son. Little Malcolm was not hitting any of these milestones, so I had every therapist you could think of work with him. We did a lot of research with what we saw. At the age of two I found out my son, Malcolm had Fragile X Syndrome. Fragile X syndrome is a break in the X chromosome that causes mental disabilities or in lucky cases, mild like autistic behaviors. I spent many hours wondering what I did to deserve this. I blamed it on his dad not being there. I blamed it on my emotional state and my drug habit for a long time. One day, I found out through blood work I was a carrier of the gene. I still have a hard time accepting that I am a factor in why he has this disability.

Throughout the first years of his life, I did not ask for help for what I was going through. I ran on self-will, thinking I knew the answer or the next drug that could help me just get through the day. I went down the rabbit hole quickly and stayed stuck there for many years. I spent a few hours in psych units, doctors' offices, rehabilitation housing and outpatient therapy. I finally decided that drugs were playing a major part and I wanted him to have a better life than me. No kid deserves to be neglected; the way I had neglected him. Therefore,

I eventually got some help, and to this day, I still go to twelve step Narcotics Anonymous meetings to help me deal with the disease of addiction. They put me on psychotropic medicine, which has truly helped. I still go to individual counseling to move forward with the healing process.

It took me a long time to feel comfortable in my skin being a mom with a special needs child. The more I live without drugs to cope with his disabilities the better our relationship gets. The many years I lived with postpartum faded away as a bad dream does. I love being a mom and I found out I can do it without the help of a man or drugs. I have fears and I deal with them. I found out I have strengths that I never knew existed. I realize that I can function as a human being, not as a drug-induced heartless robot. I used to be the most selfish, self-centered, egotistical person. Today, I try to put my son first instead of me, his needs and wants are more important than mine are. The kid I thought I did not want, I could not visualize my life without. I took a leap of faith that everything would get better if I tried to get better. By the grace of my higher power, it exceeded what I envisioned "getting better" was. The god of my understanding was doing for me what I could not do for myself, as in; he gave me the first piece to my puzzled.

Voice or touch?

The way humans communicate has changed over the years. Personally, I think the way we communicate has technically transformed because I remember I used to write notes to my friends to keep in contact versus texting or emailing them. I used to call my friends on their house phone and gossip instead of texting or skyping. I would just show up to their house to see them instead of FaceTiming them or shooting a message by email or text. I no longer communicate in those ways; I am always using a text message, email, or direct message by Facebook to get in contact with people. Most of the relationships and interactions I have are through a screen, by voice and not by physical action anymore. Almost everything we do, can now be connected or converted through technology of some sort. I believe most of us are dependent on technology to build relationships, to feel accepted or to feel good. There is a hidden message in between the lines of the movie *Her* by Spike Jonze that conveys how technology can be damaging to your identity and relationships.

In the movie *Her*, Theodore Twombly portrayed by Joaquin Phoenix is the main character. He is a very conservative, lonely and apathetic man. Theodore is very unhappy due to the impending divorce from his wife Catherine. Catherine, portrayed by Rooney Mara, blames the divorce because of Theodore's disconnection with people and connection to the cyber world. He is refusing to sign the divorce papers because it is obvious he is not ready to accept the truth. This disconnection proves to be true, because he is constantly playing a virtual reality game on his computer and if he is not doing that, he is writing. In the movie, he has many flashbacks, which only show the good times they had. It is clear that he does not see how his actions plays a part in the divorce. I feel sympathy for Theodore because he does not seem to comprehend how his dismissive disconnected personality has damaged their relationship. I can relate to what Catherine feels because I have experienced that in many of my relationships too. Theodore works as a writer who composes letters and poems for people who cannot express what they feel towards their significant other. It is ironic that Theodore writes these beautiful, detailed and heartfelt letters for paying customers, but he could not do that with his wife Catherine, a marriage that you could not put a price on.

Theodore resorts to buying an OSI (Operating system). An OSI is a artificial intelligent system that is supposed to provide him with what he needs. Upon activating it; he is excited and intrigued by the seductive "Samantha," who is a bright, bold and eager female. She is sensitive and surprisingly funny, but she is just a voice. This voice is portrayed by Scarlett Johansson. As her needs and desires grow, their friendship grows, a friendship that is foreign to Theodore. While his feelings are growing for Samantha, he tries to date, and goes on a blind date and they have a great time. After the date, she asks him in a roundabout way if he can commit to seeing her and he ends it. A few more moments into the movie, it resorts to Samantha and he starts to realize he is falling in love with Samantha. It is almost as he already feels an obligation of loyalty towards her to stay faithful. As the days go by, he helps her grow to know feelings as his are growing for her as well.

Now days we do not have to do all the work, we can use voice type for emails and writing or have someone be our personal secretary. Those are the types of things Samantha is supposed to be used for. She sets up all Theodore's appointments; emails and other things such as proofread his writing work. However, while she does his work, they start to spend a lot of time together and build this deep intellectual relationship. Considering she does not have the components of a human, she is fulfilling things he has missed with his wife and trying new ways to feel more together. It is if they are together, they go on little adventures and make memories together as any couples do. Theodore goes as far as falling asleep with her on the phone and she listens and watches him sleep. Then they pursue into another level with a non-physical sexual encounter together, which leads to Theodore falling for Samantha; who is just a voice. All this time they spend together starts to open feelings because he is getting the psychological and emotional satisfaction that was missing in his relationship with Catherine. Everything is going great until one day she leaves for an "update" and she realizes that maybe he is holding her back from the full capacity she can have or can she be holding him back from his full potential for loving someone who can truly love him back? They eventually part when he realizes she cannot comfort him and provide him with the physical comfort he needs.

Just like in our world today, you can interact and build love and friendships by using your computer or your iPhone. Any form of communication is part of life and this day in age

the most commonly used form of communication is through technology. The ability to communicate is one of the skills we usually look for in lovers and friends. The use of technology can be a great help to people in communicating but it can have consequences of reducing person-to-person contact and the real feelings that come with the human touch. You can become intimate over a screen or voice, but does it compare to the human touch? How can you ever really know what it feels like if you cannot touch them; see them? I get it, it is human nature to love and paid attention to. In some ways, it seems like a perfect way to date someone.

This reminds us of how humans are. We go through things and rely on technology and computers to help us get through the day. We contact people and discuss the issues we have over FaceTime or Skype and we start to develop a personal relationship, start to feel a sense we are wanted, a sense of comfort and feel good about ourselves. There is good and bad that results from hiding behind a screen or voice. I believe almost all human beings now connect and get in touch by depending on electronics and social media because it is easier. It is a problem though, because we do not experience genuine emotion and that physical contact that we need. I think technology can promise good connection but it turn out to be the exact opposite; disconnected. From my experience, you really get to know someone when you spend quality time together.

After thinking it over for a while, I thought about what this movie really meant. I thought about the unspoken lines behind it, and it finally hit me. I think that Jonze's point of the movie was to show what the futuristic man would eventually become in future relationships from technology.

On the next page are copies of the placement sheets given back to the student writer. Do you agree with the comments and advice?

Reader Code #: _____ I'm reader 1 2 3 (circle)

Instructor #: _____

Student ID #: _____

Placement:

_____ 095

_____ 096

X Proficiency

Comment:

Expectations for the work in your portfolio

Purposeful Development STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Rhetorical Context STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Thought/Quality of Ideas STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Order STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Language STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Self-Assessment STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

-Very strong letter, full of supporting detail.

-Thoughtful "think piece" in "Voice or Touch" with nice blend of movie and critical insight!

-Beautiful writing in "Piece" and again, you blend story and insight in a superb way.

Reader Code #: _____ I'm reader 1 2 3 (circle)

Instructor #: _____

Student ID #: _____

Placement:

_____ 095

_____ 096

X Proficiency

Comment:

Expectations for the work in your portfolio

Purposeful Development STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Rhetorical Context STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Thought/Quality of Ideas STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Order STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Language STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Self-Assessment STRONG SATISFACTORY WEAK

Great Narrative! You had me every step of the way. "Voice or Touch" has some generalized language, but overall is another great essay. This student is a fantastic writer!