

English Comp 100

March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015

Professor Mangini

Dear Mrs. Harris,

It's been a long time since I was in your literature class, almost 6 years. A lot has happened since then, and I've read a lot more books too fast since then as well. Lately I even started taking an English Composition class at DCCC, and so far it has been amazing. It's a stark contrast from our 7 student class that took place in a cornered off section of Woodlyn's Fellowship Hall. For one, there are almost 20 students, ranging from my age to probably mid fifties. Our teacher is funny, like you were, but he curses quite often, something you never did, and drinks water as opposed to your multiple cups of black coffee. Also the reading and the class structure is just so different, and more relaxed, even though it's a college course and not 7<sup>th</sup> grade Literature and Composition. We've read a couple of small things so far, no books though, and I've liked almost all of them. The ones that stuck with me the most were some of the first reading we had to do. They were three little essays by Anne Lamot, Carolyn Chute, and Ray Bradbury, and they all talked about their different experience's and troubles as writers. All three authors had such different approaches to writing, but they all spoke to me because I've always wanted to write, but I procrastinate, or I can't find the right words, or I just don't think I'm good enough compared to other writers. But reading their essays made me think about my writing in a different light, and they made me want to try to be a better writer. On a similar note, we've had to watch some video's in class that sort of changed my view on writing. One of the most influential video's was the opening few scenes of Ferris Bueller's Day Off, which I have seen so many times that I have

it almost memorized. I think that having seen it so much was helpful because when our teacher pointed out the “telling scenes” and then the “showing scenes” I was able to think about the rest of the movie and figure out what was showing vs. telling. In my writing since then whenever I have had a problem with showing, I remind myself that I’m not trying to be Ferris breaking the fourth wall, and that helps me be able to focus on simply showing in my writing. The techniques of Telling and Showing, and Subtext, were the most difficult things for me to figure out. Aside from the Ferris Beuller clip, there were two readings we had to go through and use different colored highlighters to show the telling writing and the showing writing. That really made me sit down and focus on the difference, and it was hard at first, but once I started to see patterns in the writing it was easier to distinguish the different scenes/paragraphs. All of this learning to show in my writing instead of constantly telling really helped me when it came time to write our first big assignment, a Creative Non Fiction Essay. I procrastinated a little bit per usual, and when I finally sat down to start writing one night, I had major block. I did the usual, I turned on my music really loudly and started at the screen but nothing happened until I decided to actually Think On Paper and write stupid ideas down until something clicked. I started by copying and pasting a scene I had written earlier in the week into the document in order to start right in the middle of things, as you suggested. After editing that scene a bit, I wrote a telling section, added a new scene, one more telling, and then I got stuck. In a desperate attempt I put in another scene I had previously wrote, but it felt too forced. I got stressed out and angry as I kept re reading and trying to edit my paper, so I went online to vent. I sent out a mass message saying I needed someone to talk to, and this kid that I know but haven’t really spoken too a lot messaged me and said that he was free if I wanted to vent to him. We ended up talking for a really long time, and I told him all about my sister, our engagements, how I felt about it, and all of the stuff that was

bothering me about it, including how I was trying to write my paper but was blocked. Through talking things over with him, he was able to not only give me new insight and advice on my life and my relationship with my sister, but he was able to help unblock me. We sent several emails back and forth with several different really rough drafts, and he helped me nail down what I was trying to say, as well as helping me correct my grammar. When I decided that I liked the results, I saved it and then sent it off to my teacher, who had some really great feedback. He asked me question about my sister, my dad, and where I thought the story was going. When I sit down soon to revise my paper, I intend to start with his questions and my answers to them, because I might end up completely taking out a scene and adding another. I still have to make time to do this however, and really hope I don't end up procrastinating it as well.

I'm actually very happy about my progress in this class. I don't listen to as much music as I used to when I write, which was never a bad thing but I think to some level it distracted me. I also don't procrastinate as heavily as I used to. I mean during the first two or three weeks I don't think I did any of the assignments until the day off, which was seriously bad planning. Now I start them a few days before, and work on them off and on so that I don't get stressed out. I also think that my idea and view of writing has changed since the beginning of class. I think that I understand creative writing a bit more, and I know that you can't just sit down, write something out, and expect it to be awesome. I understand that it takes a whole lot of time, patience, and practice to get your work where you really want it to be. I also have a much better grasp of how to write, by focusing on the context and subtext, as well as the theme, and how to do all of this with writing showing scenes and telling scenes. This class has been a great learning experience, much like your class was for me when I was 12. I think that my 12 year old self, who was so proud of the fact that I could read a book and crank out an essay in like two days would be in awe of

everything that I've learned and how much I've progressed in my writing; and it's only been a few months! I miss you and I miss our old classes, so I'm glad I was able to share all about my English 100 course with you.

Thanks for reading,

Marissa.