Deconstructing the Myth of the "Good" Writer
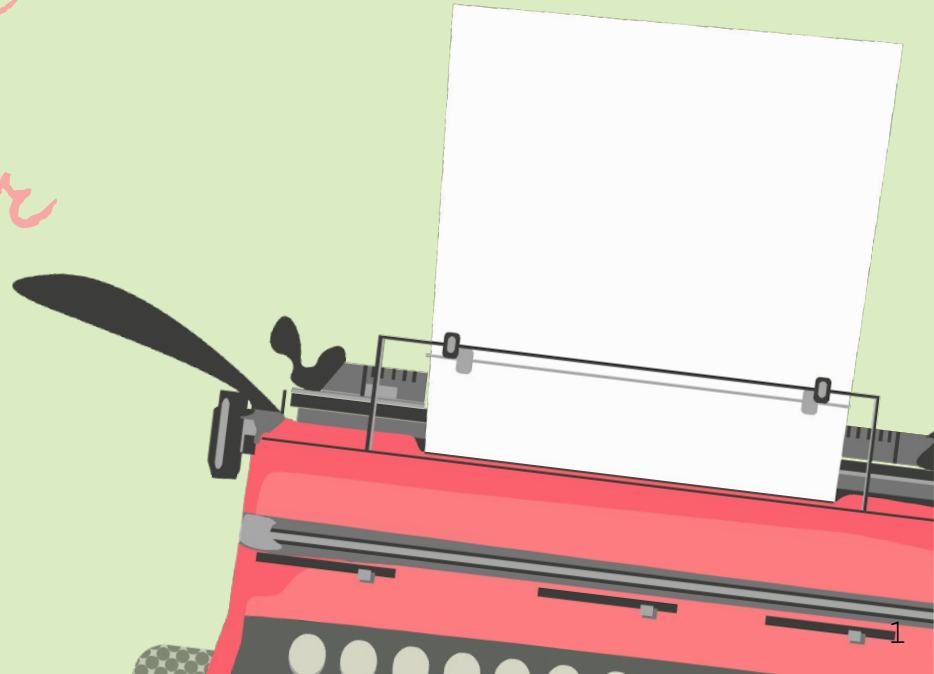
Introductions

Nicco Bartone (he/him, C/O '24) Cog. Sci. major
Fun fact: I am able to make lobsters fall asleep!

Codey Carr (he/him, C/O '23) Politics major
Fun fact: I write essays to Dreamworks movie soundtracks

Rees Walker (she/her, C/O '23) CTSJ Major
Fun fact: My cats have thumbs, they can open doors!

Grace Meschery-McCormack (she/her, C/O '22) CSLC Major
Fun Fact: Welch's Concord Grape Juice Cocktail is a delicacy

The Myth of Infinite Inspiration

"Good" writers **never struggle** to start a piece of writing. For a "good" writer, all parts of their writing process are **straightforward** and **easy**.

The Reality of "Writer's Block"

- **Struggles** at all stages of the writing process are **common to writers of all levels,** and is not related to skill or ability.

- **Writer's block** develops from an individual's **inability to accept a product that does not match their expectations.** (Armstrong 2)
  - The vicious cycle of writer's block: "worse than nothing is the *fear* of there being nothing," (1) leading to more hardship

- Letting go of **preconceived expectations** allows a writer to "write something they did not, more accurately, could not, expect to write." (2)

- Procrastination: a contributor to writer's block **or...**an **alternative method of drafting**?

Armstrong, Cherryl. "There's No Such Thing as Writer's Block; (Or If There Is, Some Suggestions for Dissolving It)." *The Quarterly* vol. 5, no. 1 (January 1983).

Suggestions

You can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page. — Jodi Picoult

- ❖ Write what you have in you to write. Even if isn't the same subject, **just write something**!
- ❖ **Make all initial writing freewriting**, it can be refined later.
- ❖ **Try writing for a different audience** or in a different genre.
- ❖ **Don't keep rereading** what you have already written.
- ❖ **Try changing the technical aspects of the writing.** Try handwriting, change the font size or type, find a different location, or limit how long you can write for.
- ❖ Remember that **all writing is a work in progress and can be refined at any time!**

Questions to Think About

Think about a piece of writing that you had no trouble completing and reflect on the strategies or techniques you utilized.

If nothing comes to mind, think about which of the suggestions seem like they could be effective for you!

The Myth of The Correct Writing Process

The idea that there is a correct and **only one writing process** that produces a "good" writer.

The Benefits of Using Different Writing Techniques

- There is **no correct and linear way to write.**

- Everyone's writing style is different, **finding personal writing techniques** can **improve your writing and make the writing process easier.**
  - "Strategic writing is the ability to monitor and adjust writing during writing process. Writers who are not strategic often encounter difficulties in their writing…" (Okasha and Hamid).

- Finding the writing techniques that work best for you can help make you a more confident writer.

- Using **different methods** to writing can also work to **prevent writer's block** (Oliver).

Okasha, Mohamed A., and Sami A. Hamdi. "Using strategic writing techniques for promoting EFL writing skills and attitudes." *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 5.3 (2014): 674.
Oliver, Lawrence J. "Helping Students Overcome Writer's Block." *Journal of Reading*, vol. 26, no. 2, [Wiley, International Reading Association], 1982, pp. 162–68, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40029248.

Suggestions

❖ Come to terms with your own writing process.
❖ Try different strategies to see what works best for your writing process.
❖ Techniques to try:
➢ Write your introduction and/or thesis last.
➢ Go on a walk and bring a notepad to write down your thoughts.
➢ Create a detailed outline.
■ Identify the audience and the objective of the prompt.
➢ Collect your quotes first.
➢ Record yourself speaking.
➢ Don't be afraid to rearrange your paper.

Questions to Think About

What types of writing strategies do you use? Are they helpful? If so, why?

What writing strategies don't work for you?

Do you feel not confident in your writing? If so, what makes you feel like a less confident writer?

The Myth of Isolated Writing

Writing is an individual and isolationary experience that **doesn't** require collaboration with others.

Collaboration and Writing Innovation

- **Writing is a form of discourse**, you are always working in tandem with the author, others that you present your writing to, or even yourself
  - **Discourse:** to exchange thoughts or ideas (Merriam-Webster)
  - We've all engaged in discourse, either formally or informally
- Writing allows for **innovation** of voice
  - "The **communal growth of knowledge**, reason, and action develops out of the creative actions of individuals participating in and contributing to communal resources" (Bazerman, 2012)
  - **writing is not good or bad, but continually developing**

Suggestions/Strategies

❖ engage with your evidence
  ➢ use **response charts**!
  ➢ put authors "in conversation" with each other
❖ figure out what **spaces/people** you work best in or with
  ➢ work with your friends/peers
  ➢ work alone
  ➢ work in different spaces (e.g. outside, common room, etc.)
❖ **talk to people** about your writing (**office hours!**)
❖ come to the writing center to hash out any ideas!

What spaces do you personally find most conducive to an "effective" writing environment?

How much brainstorming/idea formulating do you do before you start writing? What techniques do you find work best for you?

Questions to Think About

The Myth of Writing as a Purely "Serious" Process

Writing, especially Academic, is strictly a **serious and official** process. The goofy, fun, and comedic only obscure learning.

Laughing and Having Fun with Writing

"Humor and laughter have a way of **relieving stress,** resulting in tremendous calm and relaxation. When you are relaxed and **free from anxiety, your self-confidence rides at a high level.**"

"Thank you for sending us your manuscript,' she exclaimed. 'You're welcome,' I retorted. 'Unfortunately, it's not what we are looking for,' she opined. 'How disappointing,' I remarked."

Walker, Jacqueline, and Author and Executive Coach. "Why Being Silly Allows You to Enhance Your Confidence." *Everyday Power*, 9 Dec. 2020, https://everydaypower.com/being-silly-enhance-your-confidence/.

Suggestions

❖ Try writing a **"silly" version** of a preliminary draft to **lessen stress** around creating an "official version."

❖ Write a **funny dialogue between opposing arguments** you might be examining in your work.

❖ Enjoy the **thesaurus**!

❖ When you find yourself feeling down about feedback or criticism, try to talk to your friends or family about it **as if you are telling a funny story**!

Do you ever feel like you have change your personality to be more "serious" when you want to write something "good"?

Is there a time when you had fun writing?

What do you feel when you encounter humor in academic writing?

Questions to Think About

Questions?
&
Discussion!

Main Questions:

Do you procrastinate? If so, how could those habits be repurposed to be drafting techniques?

How much brainstorming do you do before you start writing? What brainstorming techniques do you find work best for you?

What spaces do y'all find most conducive to an "effective" writing environment?

What is the most fun you have had writing? What about it was enjoyable? Why?

What types of writing strategies do you use? Do they help build your confidence? If so, how?

Writing Center Hours

Nicco: Monday, 6:00-8:00 and Thursday, 6:00-8:00

Codey: Monday, 6:00-8:00 and Tuesday, 8:00-10:00

Rees: Sunday, 8:00-10:00 and Thursday, 4:00-6:00

Grace: Sunday, 6:00-8:00 and Monday, 8:00-10:00

References

Armstrong, Cherryl. "There's No Such Thing as Writer's Block; (Or If There Is, Some Suggestions for Dissolving It)." *The Quarterly* vol. 5, no. 1 (January 1983).

Bazerman, Charles. "Writing with Concepts: Communal, Internalized, and Externalized, Mind, Culture, and Activity." 19:3, 259-272

Okasha, Mohamed A., and Sami A. Hamdi. "Using strategic writing techniques for promoting EFL writing skills and attitudes." Journal of Language Teaching and Research 5.3 (2014): 674.

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