
Writer's Statement about "Don't Panic: A Hitchhiker's Guide to My Literacy"

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A favorite quote of mine by Ernest Hemingway says, "There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed." Anyone who's ever spilled liquid on a laptop would tell you that Hemingway is a little outdated, but—all malconstructed metaphors and cheesy jokes aside—I poured my heart out in writing "Don't Panic: A Hitchhiker's Guide to My Literacy." This paper was more a method of discovery for me than a statement to someone else. It was the product of me taking the ideas I had learned in class, using them to inspect my past, and putting down what I found in words.

For example, one of the biggest things I came to realize in my Composition I class was that literacy was not restricted solely to reading and writing. As I came to understand literacy simply as the various communications that takes place between people in communities, I also came to understand the value of the literacies I had picked up through the years. At that point, my greatest struggle was choosing what I had to leave out. Alongside debate and work, in the manner of a true geek, I could also have included video games, comic books, or even computer programming as additional literacies. It was as I wrote about these rediscovered methods of communication that I began to label them as literacies and see the value they had added to my life.

Similarly, the introduction of Brant's concept of literacy sponsors—which, to put simply, are people or things which have sponsored your writing—lead me to analyze things in my past that I had not thought about in years. Reminiscing about the games I played with my mother ultimately led me to the conclusion that perhaps she is the reason I have always had such a love for reading. This idea came as a really big shock to me. I mean it had literally never occurred to me before, and I never thought writing would teach me something new about myself. This realization led me to have greater respect and appreciation for my literacy sponsors.

Getting published was never something I thought would happen to me—especially as a freshman starting his first summer term. When I first received notice that my paper had been selected for *Stylus*, I had already assumed my work was not going to be used, and I was in the process of writing an email thanking Mrs. Calkins for her effort. Instead, I ended up thanking her for believing in me. It was her incessant compliments, suggestions, and challenges that ultimately lead to my growth as a writer, and the production of this paper. And while I'm at it, there really is a host of people I should be thanking for helping mold my literacy (or better yet literacies). But I've done enough of that in "Don't Panic"; that was kind of the point.