
Writer's Statement about "A Little Take on Authority"

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As I entered my second semester in college—after completing a very stressful summer term—I told myself to keep going on the track I had followed: staying focused. Entering ENC 1101, I was a bit intimidated by all the work. I was used to the high school mindset that I could pull a few facts together, follow my instructor's outline and sprinkle a few exaggerated thoughts throughout my essays. College was something completely different. Throughout the semester, I was handed a lot of work in ENC 1101. I had to be able to read scholarly articles and understand the meaning behind the text, rather than the literal words on the page. We soon carried into writing rhetorical analysis papers, getting a grasp on research, and then finally a synthesis paper. A synthesis paper was explained as a compilation of sources in order to get across a message—or claim—to an audience. After doing well on the prior assignments I was ready to tackle this one.

The assignment my professor, Melissa Ringfield, provided was to gather class articles and synthesize them to give advice to student readers of UCF's *Stylus* and incoming freshmen on how to write with authority in academic and professional discourse communities. She also added that this assignment, in particular, was flexible in how it was to be written. She suggested informal papers, blogs, question and answer papers, etc. This got me thinking. Ever since I was a young boy, I have had a love for film. I was always participating in filmmaking and grew up making my own movies, writing my own screenplays, and collaborating with friends. Since my research paper that semester had to do with screenwriters and how they communicate across their discourse communities, I thought to myself, "Why not write a screenplay and somehow integrate the elements I learned from the articles I read throughout the semester into a story that students can read, understand, and relate to?" I brought the topic up to my professor and she was on board with it. I specifically was motivated when she stated that sometimes the best papers are the riskier ones.

I immediately began to look up the art of screenwriting. I had done some in the past but I really wanted to format my paper well. I looked through the specific ways screenplays were written and actually viewed a few screenplays by Woody Allen, John Hughes, and Quentin Tarantino due to my fascination with their writing. Once I had the grasp, it was time to gather my information and write the synthesis paper. I tried my best to look through all the pieces of writing and pinpoint which ones related. I targeted mainly the articles that related to student writing, specifically on the topic of authoritative writing, discourse communities and rhetorical situation. In order to piece the sources together, I had to visualize what the story had to be. I woke up one morning, played some jazz, and began writing down ideas for the screenplay. The early morning jazz listening sessions would soon be a routine for me when writing papers. The "Reading and Writing without Authority" article by Professors Ann M. Penrose and Cheryl Geisler and "Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics: Introduction" by Professor James Paul Gee really spoke out to me. I liked the way Penrose and Geisler used two students—Roger, a senior in college, and Janet, a freshman—to showcase how students approach academic and professional writing. It stood out because it really told me that students go into college with this same high school mindset that I myself had where writing is just a bunch of random texts put together, and all articles are solid facts that can't be challenged. This

article made me realize that students need to come into college with the mindset that each and everyone one of us has a voice and we can use it to demonstrate to an audience a point or claim we want to share. We can also read texts and understand the underlying messages brought upon by any author. This is where Gee's article was important to my recipe. He pointed out in his article how "Discourse," a word he came to discover, can identify individuals within a discourse community by showing how they talk or what they believe in, where they got it from, and how it can fit within their group. These two elements, authority and Discourse, helped me shape the whole message I wanted to bring across to my audience. Immediately, I jotted all these connections down and finally tried to fit them within my story.

I don't know if it's because of my love for jazz or black and white films but as I sat there I soon pictured my two characters, Roger and Janet, at a bar or café. Originally, the story was supposed to be at a bar but I later changed it because I didn't think it was the right atmosphere for the characters. I began to think: Roger is a senior who had an authoritative voice in the Penrose and Geisler article, so I'm going to make him a very strongly voiced, suave, slightly narcissistic character. I decided to make Janet the person students should relate to: a newcomer in college in need of help who, after losing confidence in her work, has negatively changed her perception about college. Incorporating a highly respected, quirky James Paul Gee into the picture, I had Roger and Gee demonstrate to Janet how easy it is to care about writing and reading, and to grow to find a strong voice within. I really wanted to form a base first on what authority was and then answer the question as to how anybody can write with an authoritative voice. In the end, I was very happy with the finished product, incorporating other articles, some funny scenes, and a bit of symbolism. It is truly relatable and can definitely benefit anyone who wants to step up and find their own voices.