
Writer's Statement about "Analysis of an Online Activity System"

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When I was first given the assignment to analyze an activity system, I did not have the slightest idea where I was headed. I figured that most people would instantly know what they would research, as many people have that "one thing" that they have been involved in for so long, whether it be a sport, a job, or some type of club they are passionate about. I have been committed to sports and things in the past, but I wanted to write about something out of the ordinary. I wanted my essay to be different, because I always like to try to make my writing stand out from that of my peers.

After pondering for a long time, I finally realized that my online music community would make for an interesting analysis, as it combined my passion with an element of uniqueness. Also, it would serve to educate people a little bit about how a lot of popular music is made. It is surprising to me how few people realize how much music production is done on computers these days. I wanted to debunk the myths that computers are only for lazy music producers and that computers do all of the work for you. In reality, computers add many layers of complexity to music production, and that is one of the reasons why so many people feel the need to join online communities to learn more about it.

Though I initially saw a nice, clean and organized paper in my head, the actual product of my writing was a bit of a mess. I had a lot of difficulty refraining from gushing about my interest in music production. Music is a topic that I could write about all day, but I knew at the time that I needed to focus my paper on the activity system and online community in general. By the time I finished an initial draft, I had actually deleted just as much of it as I had written, as I deemed it irrelevant to the assignment.

Extending my analysis deeper proved to be much harder than I had expected. Taking apart the mechanics of the website – the posts, comments, rules, and so on -- and deriving meaning from even the slightest of details was quite an excruciating process. I spent hours and hours just trying to make sense of this online community that I had never really put much thought into. I had always taken it for granted, and I had to see it from a totally new perspective.

I found myself getting into a cycle of writing a couple of paragraphs, then reading those paragraphs aloud, deleting one of them, adding more to the other paragraph, and splitting that one into two. I was forced to do things like this, despite usually just being comfortable the first time I write down my ideas. It made the paper frustrating, but it was necessary because I had a great deal of factors to consider with each and every sentence I wrote. Is this the right section to put this information? Would it look better in another section? Will I not have anything to talk about in that section? How does this relate back to what I learned in the textbook? With all of these things to consider, it was just not possible to deliver a good paper without extensive revision.

This process gave me a more mature outlook on writing. College writing, as I learned, was not as straightforward as my high school writing assignments, many of which required no revision at all. It was a bit humbling to know that not everything that I write is worthy of a good grade the moment I write it. Finishing up, I realized that revision is actually quite essential to being successful as a writer and not something to only consider for the difficult assignments. From that moment on, I have invited criticism and changes into my work much more frequently, and I see the benefits.

Overall, this was a really interesting assignment for me. I remember spending a lot of time getting distracted on the hip hop website, as I was researching something that I use during my leisure. I even found myself working on my own music projects, forgetting completely that I was in the middle of working on a research project. I love making music, and I love writing, and this assignment was a good opportunity for me to demonstrate that.