
Did I Create the Process? Or Did the Process Create Me?

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I'm at my desk in my dorm finishing breakfast and I don't really know where to start. It is a beautiful Friday morning, and navigating my thoughts as to the best way to proceed with this essay proves much more difficult than I anticipated. I never gave much thought to the habits and factors that influenced my writing process, and now I've been challenged to do so. My approach needs to be specific, different to what I've already been taught. As I get lost in my thoughts and explore the patterns of my earliest pieces of literary work from the earliest parts of my childhood, slowly, each piece falls into place. I surprise myself as to the memories that I uncover, the emotions I felt and the breakthroughs I've made. What is happening, I soon realize, is the beginning of a beautiful story that culminates at this stage in my life and reveals the factors of which make me the writer I am today.

At this moment I have the entire dorm to myself. This is the ideal setting for me. Over the years I have definitely been able to produce most of my best work this way, in seclusion. I raise my hands to type, and a truck pulls up rumbling loudly outside for what seems like forever. I could *never* focus in uproar, especially when I remember how my process started as a child and the role my mother had in that process.

I believe my mom is the primary catalyst as to the affinity I've developed when it comes to both reading and writing. At that point in time, she worked at our local library, which was very close to our school. Once classes ended, I'd make my way straight to the library to wait on her to finish work so we could go home.

In the earlier stages, she would sit me down in a room at the back, give me a book to make my company until she was ready, and close the door. It was always just me in that room, and reading without any distraction was amazing. I was my own company; I could concentrate and disappear into my own little world of wild imagination until 4 o'clock. I really enjoyed that space she created for me, and it definitely stayed with me more than I thought throughout my life as well.

As I got older, I chose my books while I waited in that same room and my imagination slowly broadened. You would think it stopped there, but it didn't. Most of my gifts as a young boy growing up included toys, but it mainly consisted of books. A book then became my favorite gift. I preferred it above all else (well, not counting the occasional twenty-dollar bill that would fall out of my birthday and Christmas cards). As time progressed, it was books like *Goosebumps*, *Robin Hood*, *Frankenstein*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Time Machine* and countless others that inspired me to become a storyteller of my own one day. Those books had me writing all sorts of idle short stories whenever I could as a result.

The Profound Effect of My Facebook Story

It was a warm Thursday morning in May 2014, and I was on the computer in our study room at home. Our study room was very cozy. A dark green carpet that lined the floor, a thick,

sturdy mahogany desk near the window, as well as a huge shelf on the left that climbed upwards of four levels, housing books, board games and VHS cassettes of my early childhood.

I literally had nothing to do on the computer that day: I opened and closed browsers, googled all sorts of nonsense that came to mind, found nothing interesting on YouTube. And so I made my way to Facebook. Well that was initially an effort in futility as well; there was nothing fascinating happening there either. Generally, it was just people complaining about life and asking questions to engage comments, such as, “Who’d you rather, Rihanna or Beyoncé?” and a couple of interesting pictures sprinkled in between the timeline to break up the monotony.

That was all it took. I closed the study door to rid myself of distractions, opened up the note portion of my Facebook page, and started writing the ideas that came to my mind.

I remember hearing cheesy music playing, looking around at the TV, and saw that it was a rerun on one of our local channels of the soap opera, *The Young & the Restless*. I watched for a bit, intrigued as this lady was crying hysterically begging this old guy not to leave her and him telling her rather directly that he couldn’t do *this* anymore (whatever *this* was). After snapping myself out of watching that tragedy, I was gazing at our airport out of the study window at the lone British Airways flight that remained the night prior, and my mind ran on my family in England.

Turning around at the TV once more, there was an advertisement now of a new *Beauty & the Beast* DVD in HD or something like that. I told myself that women always needed saving, that they were always perceived as “damsels in distress” and someone needs to do something about that. Men are not always the bad guys, or the “beasts” they’re most times made out to be.

That was all it took. I closed the study door to rid myself of distractions, opened up the note portion of my Facebook page, and started writing the ideas that came to my mind. This consisted of a prince and a princess, dancing at a ball after their marriage ceremony in their English palace. This story would be different, the woman would be the bad guy and no one would be the wiser. I set it all up so that it all it appeared to be her dream come true after growing up poor and marrying into royalty, but included a mass murder at said ball with her trying to escape for her life, only to reveal that she orchestrated the entire thing. It took me a while to really get it all together. I knew what I wanted to do, but I had never done a written piece in that format and especially on a forum like Facebook.

I would usually try to isolate myself away from any distraction, give myself a time frame to work with, draft my thoughts via pen and paper, proofread, type out my final product, review and do whatever necessary after. This was different, and a new turning point happened that would slightly alter how I approached writing. I just typed as the words came, paused occasionally, read it over and made slight changes. What eventually continued happening in that moment was I tried to type so fast as the ideas came. It was like I didn’t want to stop for fear of losing the ideas through the momentum.

Inevitably I stopped, and stopped a lot, because I ran out of ideas. I found myself stretching, staring at my screen, playing with our dog or going outside, and walking around idly and finding stuff to do in the kitchen that I wouldn’t normally do. I was trying to find some sort of inspiration, or unconsciously giving myself a break. The longer I stayed away, the more I heard my secondary school English teacher, Ms. Patrick, in my head saying, “Paint their minds with your creativity, Jaydelle. Be descriptive, reel them in.”

Ms. Patrick is always in my head now, anytime I write something, always coaching and constantly criticizing. I always try to live up to her expectations because she always believed and fed my potential. However, I would then head back to the computer and find myself googling stuff again, trying to listen to music (which helped, but later on in life would just become a distraction),

and then heading back in an attempt to finish the piece. I did finish. I started around 9 am and was able to post it a little before noon. That has always affected me in my writing going forward, as that ritualistic fashion of starting and then straying or procrastinating has stayed with me to this day, a process that was nowhere near the habits I had in secondary school.

After all was said and done, I was able to hit the post button of my short story, and received much more feedback than I anticipated. People actually read it and I felt pretty good. They didn't just hit the "like" button, but some commented too, on my seven-paragraph story born out of idleness. Ms. Patrick would be proud. It felt much longer after having read the finished product, but the feedback encouraged me to do a second piece in July of that same year. All because of my imagination from those damn books as a child, with a little nudge from a soap opera, a *Beauty & the Beast* commercial, and some time on my hands. It made me continue writing more short stories after that, but what was even stranger was that whereas before I would have written drafts down with pen and paper, I now begun typing it via Microsoft Word. My primary and secondary school processes were somewhat abandoned and this new one now formed. It still remains a huge part of who I am in my writing, to this day.

The Woman Who Changed the Process

Here enters this professionally clad lady on a sunny morning in January of 2001. She was about 5'7", walking slowly but proudly, holding the edges of her black jacket. She wore a hairstyle reminiscent of Scary Spice from the Spice Girls, and had way too much makeup on. She chewed her gum vigorously as though anxiously awaiting something to happen and wore a smile that accentuated how badly she had lined her lips. Her mouth opened and surprised everyone with a deep and boisterous, "Good Morning, boys!" and received the echoes of us all in the room as we stood and greeted her back. "I am Angela Patrick, your English A Teacher. Please have your seats."

Ms. Patrick was both the *worst* and the *best* English teacher I've ever had. She pushed you to your limit, especially as far as being creative was concerned. Not only did she love a good piece of writing, she spoke and breathed it as well. Anyone from the class of '06 could tell you that she could beat a metaphor to death. She encouraged us differently than any other teacher I had up until that point: write a draft, read and make corrections, produce the final piece, but verify one last time. Having to do all that and be timed in 40-minute class sessions helped make us some of the most efficient writers of the 2006 graduating class. It became so natural after the initial stress of it passed, and a lot of us had her to thank as it helped us in time management as well. Her grading scheme was particularly rigid, even for the simplest of assignments. If any student got as much as an 18/25, it was cause for mass celebration. Her main gripe was never punctuation; rather, it was pulling out of us the potential she knew was there. She emphasized content, helping the audience live vicariously through our work. She expected nothing less.

There was one instance I remember her coming to class in her usual mid-morning slot and spontaneously giving us one of her infamous "Short Story" assignments. However, this experience was different, because generally what accompanied those assignments were at least five topics to choose from. This time, we were on our own to choose whatever we wanted, and have it completed by the end of our 40-minute class session. Knowing what Ms. Patrick expected, the pressure was on. Everything had to be perfect, from introduction through the body and wrapping it up at the end.

This was a bit difficult to do. As a 15- or 16-year-old student, you were already accustomed to having been spoon-fed your creative direction, and now you felt like a fish out of water when it was left up to you. I had no topic and no idea what I wanted to write about. Plus, attending an all boy school was the worst as far as distraction was concerned; it made it so difficult to focus at times. I always wanted to escape and gather my thoughts as I usually do, but I couldn't. Here it was

again, this pesky noise issue following me, and I had no control over it. I couldn't come up with anything.

Before we knew it, the bell rung and students started fussing about who wasn't finished, who had nothing and if we could complete it for homework. Unknown to everyone, the joke was on us and Ms. Patrick was going to have the last laugh. She told us that this wasn't a graded assignment, and we all stared in shock. Her response in turn was this: "You boys have to learn that there would be times when you're asked to pull from you, not have someone pull from yourselves, for you." In hindsight it made sense, but back then it felt like the worst thing ever. She asked something very simple of us, yet none of could do it effectively (and, at 16, that's a bit embarrassing. I bet it made for a good staffroom joke though). We had to learn to expect the unexpected and be prepared for anything, and that didn't apply only for her class, but for life in general.

Putting the Pieces Together

I've realized while typing this that what it means for me to produce an effective written piece has changed over time and has been heavily tied in part to my environment, which in turn affects my writing habits. From writing short stories as a child in a primary school of over three hundred, that lacked partitions between classes and having no sense of strict time for the assignments. To essays and assessments of varying degrees in a more organized secondary school, but with three times the students, a stricter time rule and set revision pattern. To now, an actually structured research essay, rigid citation guidelines and projects while at the mammoth of a school that is UCF, but where you as the student have more control as to what your environment is and how it affects your output. I honestly don't know the exact reason why those habits changed, but I'm sure it has something to do with what each of my teachers required at those various stages of my life. However, back then, each stage would have served me as some sort of guide as to how I should go about writing each required piece of text, thus culminating into what my writing habits and preferred environment are at this point in my life.

In primary school we didn't know better, but we had more freedom to express ourselves with just a tad bit of guidance into associating with the norm. I was never as productive as I could be surrounded by distraction, though, as I remember my mom clearly telling me that my teachers back then said. I would rip my paper up and put my hand over my ears when I wrote something; noise and I just weren't the best of friends. My teachers would, however (with the best of intentions I'm sure), tell me how it's supposed to be done and make sure I did so accordingly.

In secondary school, a defined structure was given, and we had to navigate how to produce our best piece of work within a more firm time frame and very formal setting. That period of time in particular was annoying because there wasn't only chaos to worry about in an all boy school; you had to satisfy what your teacher wanted and still inject a part of you into that work.

My two years at the T.A. Marrayshow Community College were also very revealing to me; the game changed drastically. No teacher paid you the time of day, like they did back in secondary school. Nobody had time to run after students begging them to turn in work, or give them pep talks. You were in charge of you, and the environment was much different now as you returned to a mix of co-ed students, who were free to skip class at their choosing and a host of other unproductive

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choices to choose from. As spacious as the campus was, noise was still everywhere. By now you would think I'd be able to navigate through the distraction of others given I've been prepped for it all of my life, but I still wasn't. You would also think that being from a culture whereby the people naturally talk at more elevated levels, I could deal with that too, but it proved challenging.

As a culture in the Caribbean, we tend to be loud, dramatic and very descriptive with how we communicate, and it rolled over into teachings at home and in the classroom. To give you a better idea, we don't just say, "Take a left and around the corner there's a red building, that's your destination." We might say, "Take a left and look for a tall tree that's bent slightly as though it has scoliosis, then around the corner you would find a bright red building, made completely of bricks, and you usually have to enter where there's an exit sign." Both ways are effective, but one more memorable than the other. This innate trait of who we are as a people, coupled with my imagination and love of film, always resulted in me writing short stories.

How My Culture Impacted the Process

My island itself—Grenada—is rather small. We're about 133 square miles and our population is approximately 106,000. We have sparkling blue waters, clear skies, sunny days and friendly people. We are but one of the many gems the Caribbean has to offer. Coming from a small island, you tend to either run the risk of (1) not being heard of, (2) mistaken for somewhere else, or (3) having to find some trait that stands out so you can inject yourself into a conversation to let people know that they may in fact know who you are.

Our families and communities are tight-knit. Everyone knows everyone (both a gift and a curse) and in the rare instances you don't know someone, they know you (generally by parentage). Coming from a smaller island in the Caribbean also affords a loose version of the "Napoleon Complex." We feel the need to overcompensate, as we aren't recognized on the same level as everyone else. Growing up in this environment instilled a sense of pride whenever an islander received positive international recognition, and reinforced that no matter how small we might be that we should always be especially proud of our heritage.

My life changed when I got accepted to one of the largest universities in Florida, for the fall semester of 2016. The University of Central Florida boasts a student population of approximately 60,000. This in itself was overwhelming. On my first official day of school, I saw so many different people of all shapes and sizes, colors and creeds from various walks of life that it left me in awe. I've been to New York and I've traveled to many other Caribbean islands, but obviously nothing compares to the institution that is UCF. As Dorothy would tell me, I was definitely not in Kansas anymore.

Walking through the Student Union was the best feeling for me; I saw the flags of countries that represented the nationalities of UCF's student population. Anxiously looking for mine (I couldn't be the only Grenadian here); I was left with the disappointment that my flag wasn't there. I probably looked like a madman pacing back and forth looking through each row just to be certain, and taking pictures on top of that too. After confirming what was inevitably true, I walked away and decided I would fix that. But how would I? I would fix it through one of my most favorite mediums: writing.

In January 2017, I spoke to a polite young lady at the Guest Services Desk at the Student Union, and asked her who the best person was to speak to regarding the issue of my flag. She pointed me in the direction of Jamie Morales (the Associate Director in charge of Maintenance and Operations for the Student Union). So, in transit to my next class, I crafted a formal inquiry that praised the diversity of UCF, how happy I was to be there, and its efficiency that was displayed to me in any aspect when I needed it. Ms. Patrick taught me back home that to be successful in conveying an effective message one must know how to appeal to the senses of whom they are

speaking to. This allowed me through my email, to further confirm the good work that UCF has been doing over the years by touching on its efficiency, as well as acknowledging how large and diverse a school it indeed is and the people that continue to make it that way by how helpful they are. However, I also conveyed the absence I felt from that diversity when I noticed my flag wasn't there, and that I felt my culture wasn't recognized on the level it should be with everyone else. Being able to speak up helped serve as a catalyst to effect this change I wanted, through a written piece.

Maybe if I wasn't literate enough, or didn't have the experience of writing so many essays in the past, I would not have known what was alright to say or not in this circumstance, but my experience taught me better. Mr. Morales messaged me back within minutes, thanking me for my email and explaining why I may not have seen it there, as well as a link of the flag to ensure that had the correct one for when they had to place the order. He assured me my flag would be there very soon, and I felt that he understood my message and was going to do his best to address it.

Now here is my flag, proudly hanging with the others, a part of that international community that makes up the bulk of UCF. This is simply amazing!

Imagine my surprise and the happiness I felt a week or two later, when, while walking through the Student Union, I found my country's flag. I immediately felt a sense of accomplishment. I did that. I texted my mom and then my best friends back home, and I posted it on my social media to overwhelmingly positive, private and public feedback. This was a writing success for me, one that I would never forget; I automatically look up every time I pass through the Student Union at my flag, smiling every time. Had it not been for the way I was taught to write growing up, or the pride I

grew up with, I may have been less likely to care and make a difference. Now here is my flag, proudly hanging with the others, a part of that international community that makes up the bulk of UCF. This is simply amazing!

The process of that experience, however, was different than what I was used to. When I wrote about my country's flag being missing from the display of flags in the Student Union, that wasn't in a formal environment. I was actually typing that email in transit to my next class, timing myself as I typed and I still produced an effective piece that got me what I wanted. Before, I needed absolute quiet to focus and produce my best work. Now that didn't even apply for me to effectively get what I wanted. I was surrounded by students and chatter, but what made that situation different than the rest? Maybe this was Ms. Patrick at work again, taking lessons learned from her class about time management and efficiency. At this university, most correspondence is sent via email during the day. One may not have the time to get to a library or a controlled environment, sit, and gather their thoughts and type. One has to be flexible enough to do it on the go sometimes, maximizing both time and efficiency, especially to effectively attain the result they want.

I don't know why I prefer being in complete solitude when it isn't needed to necessarily produce my best work. In university, being in total quiet is a huge challenge and distractions are everywhere. It still seems unfortunate that I can't read textbooks or accomplish anything that requires real thought in the main campus library (so if you ever see me there with a book open, you know it's a ruse of some sort). People, chatter, and movement distract me. At the Rosen campus, the library on the right day is all mine, but I would always prefer my dorm room's privacy.

However, if not in isolation, just like the day I created my short story on Facebook, I find myself easily sidetracked, getting up ever so often and looking for excuses to procrastinate. Does that help? Sometimes it does and I focus much better, but other times I can't and I don't really know why. Now I understand it to a degree. Presently, I am adjusting to working in varied noise levels and am making progress. I won't always find absolute seclusion as experienced in the past, so that

habit may not be the best for maximizing efficiency. I don't like the fact that I completely abandon whatever I'm doing whenever I get stuck creatively in general either, but I've been doing it for so long that it's become part of who I am. It just feels like I waste so much time when I do so, and I must improve that before it consumes me.

Why am I so easily distracted? I still can't give a concrete answer for that no matter how many times I ask it, and you know what? That's okay. I've come to the realization that, regardless of how I went about the many writing experiences I've had over the years and how I've been taught, that I can efficiently produce content that is meant to be understood though my desired mode of communication. Typing this now, I know that back then I was trying to please someone specific at that point in time regarding my content. It was about what *they* wanted, how *they* thought they could get the best out of me, and not how *I* could get the best out of *me* but still satisfy them. There is an ideal situation for my writing processes, but I've found that I adapt to suit. Do I have a preference? Of course I do, and as I'm learning right now as there are people chatting in the living room and listening to music, I modify, but won't forsake the quality of my work because of it.

It's phenomenal coming to the realization that the seed for me preferring the silence of my environment may have been planted from the days of when I visited my mom after primary school. That helped cultivate my reading, thinking, and writing habits. It has apparently been a common denominator throughout various aspects of my writing life as well. It played a huge part in my Facebook short story's success, but it made me struggle in my secondary school life because the environment wasn't in my control. When I wrote my short story, it also helped add another layer to my habit, which was typing my thoughts instead of jotting by pen, and allowing me to free my thought process by abandoning the desk whenever I chose.

What secondary school helped incorporate in my process, to some extent, was time management and efficiency. It has helped me at every point from then until now. That has allowed me to hone my own methods even further by doing things on my own time and knowing how to take breaks. As I've matured, I've learned how long those breaks should be, and allow myself to be rejuvenated creatively; so, I am in control.

In primary school and college, I was still constrained by my environment. I was even more frustrated with the latter, because here I was in a situation where I should be able to change it, but couldn't. In a funny way, it's as though I was trying to rebel. I've been doing things by the standard of others for too long, even if it has helped me to some extent create my own process and become a better writer.

At UCF, I've discovered I can be effective without being tied to a chair, or with what I identified as a distraction for the majority of my life: noise. I can write effectively on the go and not in the ideal surroundings, because I choose to. Where I am also influences how I write and my thought process. With my Facebook story I had no one in authority judging me. I did it according to my own standards and was successful at it because in part my audience was different. I may still hear Ms. Patrick from time to time, but that's alright. Her influence will forever be etched in my life. She is a big part of the reason that I am who I am today.

Learning how to bring both my environment as well as how I've been taught together works better for me than against me. I am at that stage in life where responsibility sneaks itself into almost anything I do. Writing and my environment is no exception. It's interesting looking back at my growth process to see what it means in the grander scheme of things for me as a young adult. As much as the demands of my process can hold me back, it has made me better, and as much as it frustrates me, it relieves me. I am a bit more conscious of it now than I was then. It will never stay stagnant. I know that as I continue to grow, it will continue to change. It is undoubtedly part of who

I am as a writer today, and now instead of fearing the journey, I embrace it and what it's done for me.

I have many more questions than answers right now. When will I see new writing habits form? Have they already started and I don't know? Will it be more challenging now than before? How much of it will affect what I've learned up until now? Is my environment going to help me or hold me back as a result? Not knowing what the answers are for these questions puts the fear of God in me, yet excites me at the same time. It makes me more cognizant of my current habits and behavioral patterns every time I'm about to engage in a piece of writing. What fascinates me even more is that I may have started to form new habits and probably don't even know. This has birthed one of the most important lessons I've probably taken away from any composition class: understanding the process is just as important as anything else when it comes to crafting an effective written piece. I need to understand who I am as a writer and what influences me during that process, and then use that to my advantage to take my work to the next level.

Jaydelle Celestine



Jaydelle Celestine was born in the Caribbean on an island called Grenada. Jaydelle is in the process of obtaining his Bachelor's Degree in Event Management at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Jaydelle also spent the past seven years as a Member Service Representative at the Grenada Public Service Co-operative Credit Union Ltd. Jaydelle is a member of the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality and the Rosen College Leadership Council. Jaydelle enjoys giving back to the community and spent seven years of his life in the Rotaract Club of Grenada, where he served as Club Service Director for the year 2012-2013 and captured Director of the Year for that year and his committee secured Committee of the Year as well. Jaydelle is very passionate about the arts; he does commercial modeling and acting when he can and is currently represented by Manikin Talent Agency, in Jacksonville, Florida. One day, it is Jaydelle's dream to own his personal

Event Planning Agency and be an independent Event Planning Consultant after acquiring the relevant experience and certifications necessary to make a name for himself in the field.