

Why College is Important to Me

by Logan Chytraus

“Never begin an essay with a quote. Doing so will cause everyone to despise you, your paper to be a humiliating disgrace, and the world to be divided by zero,” my teacher told us. At least, that’s what I think she said, but my memory is a little blurry. I do remember I was sitting in the back corner of the classroom – teachers never call on kids in the back – and was staring down at my empty page. Something perturbed me about what she had told us. If I wanted to start an essay with another’s words, as mine wouldn’t prove satisfactory, who was she to tell me I shouldn’t? I decided to be rebellious. That night, when I got home, I would begin with the Mahatma Gandhi quote, “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” and it would be a darn good essay. That would show her.

My teacher stressed several other key points. She told us that N-T-S-S-W-T-S-W (no two sentences start with the same word). She told us our thesis should be stated in the last sentence of the first paragraph. She told us to revise in green and edit in red. She told us to use three supporting details enclosed within one intro and one closing sentence in each paragraph. She told us; she told us...that good?

As I began writing my essay, I broke every rule in the book. More than one sentence began with ‘I’, but I believed them to be excellent sentences that flowed well. I wrote my true opinion – not the side easiest to write about. However, about halfway through my best work, I began to ponder. Would my teacher appreciate this? What kind of grade was I expecting? I slowly erased all of my work. I quickly pulled out three easily defensible positions and followed the formula. Did I believe what I was writing? No. Would my teacher remember my essay? Probably not. Would my grade soar? Absolutely.

I was not proud of what I had done. The essay I *synthesized* hadn't been original, but my grade would be exemplary. But how many of my classmates, picking the same positions I did, would have identical papers? The instructions had given us the structure of the paper *sentence by sentence*.

This type of education – that which I received in the past – is why college is important to me. No longer will I be strung through the K-12's system of standards; college is a place where ideas are able to flow more freely, and the educational environment is not an oppressive pass/fail machine, but a mind-expanding landscape. Instructors who are able to truly speak their minds will teach me without toning down their lectures to align with every possible student's ideals. College will be a non-watered down education; a broadening of true mental horizons which have previously been left untapped.