

Excellent use of figurative language, Darshan! Not only did you use it to great effect, but your detailed and well developed descriptions do an excellent job explaining your intended purpose and effect. The story itself is well developed and you took many of the suggestions I made in the earlier draft and applied them. Well done! Your writing is detailed and descriptive. The reflection that you added at the end seems to fit better with your topic and story. In terms of spelling and grammar--your main area to work on is sentence structure. You have great sentence variety with many complex sentences. Move towards using commas with more accuracy and avoiding fragments. I pointed out quite a few so you can get a sense of where you are using them. I can proofread the first two paragraphs of your next essay and help you more with this!

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ENG 4U1

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How to Be a Man 101

Be a man. What does that mean? Be a man. How can I be a man? Be a man. I am a man. Be a man. Stop! Be a man¹.

Be a man. Be-Be-Beep-Beep-Beep². I smacked my alarm clock with enough force to propel me into the sky as I jolted up³. A nightmare? No, a distant memory. I was stuck in that cheery, flooded room, with a silence so loud it could put the anechoic chamber to shame, and a disoriented feeling even the greatest of drunks couldn't prescribe. I wobbled to the exit, but that was a mistake, the silence was shattered and voices erupted out of the ground like the dead. It was a zombie apocalypse and I was the last survivor. They tried everything to stop me, but I was

¹ Anaphora/Motif

² Onomatopoeia

³ Hyperbole

a train on a rail with only one destination in mind⁴. I made my way inside the room and cried. I cried like I always do. I cried like the baby I am.

It started back in grade five. No scratch that; it has always been. Ever since I was born, ever since I was a baby, ever since I was a kid. Unlike my sneakers, it seemed the only thing I couldn't grow out of. It was this weakness which plagued me; this bodily action I couldn't control; this bucket in my heart that would continuously fill and empty. I saw my brother, a face of stone that doesn't crack; he's a man who's strong, a leader, and lives freely. I saw my father, hardship written all over, yet he remains stoic, a kind, careful and experienced man. I see my mother, a warrior who's fought for us, a caretaker who listens, and the best hugger in the world. Then there's me, a boy who crumbles at every bit of adversity, a boy who can't speak up without getting a lump in his throat, and a boy who is not a man. Crying has been the recurring theme of my life.

I get up out of my bed and make my way to the washroom. The Mexican food the night prior was not sitting right. My stomach hurting told me something was up⁵. I had the strongest stomach in my family, the stomach that could handle the spiciest of spices. This was not a good sign, and I was in for a treat. It was going to be a long day.

Emotions. What are emotions exactly? Like a spectrum of feelings that control how I live. I've been told to overcome these trivial things. "How will you have success if you break down against adversity? Be tough!" They say. I grew up. I did as they said. Though it seemed the manual wasn't universal, because not only could I not control my feral, fluctuating emotions, but it pained me to do so.

⁴ Metaphor

⁵ Foreshadowing

After completing the usual morning routine, I put on some jeans with a tight belt, a black T-shirt and a vintage red sweater that belonged to my brother's closet. My stomach was screaming but time was moving faster than me so I chugged a glass of milk and left for the station. The city bus stop is a decent walk away, so I look around and really take in the beautiful scenery. "Nothing will stop me today" I repeat in my head. Lately, I've been thinking about how grateful I am and how I have everything I could ever need. Thinking this allows me to participate more proactively in my life rather than reclining into a chair and watching it go by me from the sidelines. I meet my two best friends there and the bus comes about seven minutes later. We quickly climb aboard and watch cars pile up behind us as if this bus was the Tsar of the roads. The trip to school takes exactly eight minutes and I rush into the doors with an aim set towards my philosophy class when the morning bell startles me. I hate that bell; it gets me every time.

What is a meaningful life? I pondered this question throughout the class as we watched a documentary on happiness and meaning. It touched on key principles from Buddhism and I was totally engrossed. It had to be the most interesting thing that week, though there was never a shortage of unique topics in that class. As 9:30 hit, something was bugging me, I felt uneasy and was definitely forgetting something, and then it struck me like a truck⁶. I stood up and ran out of the class, with hopes of rewinding time to reach the office at 9:25. Everyone was waiting, but luckily I wasn't the only one missing. Once the other slacker came, the co-presidents began explaining what was needed from everyone. Today was homecoming for our seniors girls basketball team and we were going to be here all night.

The pep rally came first and I had lots to do, starting with setting up the gym. I put up about eleven posters, walked about ten thousand steps back and forth from the gym to the second floor, and blew up about twenty-three balloons. I got lights set up, made sure the co-presidents

⁶ Simile

were not too stressed and covered where others couldn't. I don't know where this unknown drive came from, but it might have been my own selfish hopes to make school normal again. When lunch finally ended, we got to our positions and waited for the classes to come rolling in. It went perfectly, from the speech, to the lights, to the team's runout, and to the dance. After that finished in the third period, it was repeated again in the fourth for the other two grades. Once again, it worked out great, maybe a tad sloppier, but nonetheless great. School ended, and the majority of the council went home to wind down and reconvene at 4. Sadly, I didn't have that liberty as I had to tutor a fellow peer and there was more to be done. As I dragged each exhausted leg down the hall towards the library, I noticed a grumbling that seemed to stem from my neglected stomach. I had just realized that in my rush today I had not eaten anything. As I tutored, I ate my small peanut butter sandwich and a banana. Not nearly enough. Oh well. At this point, I was long done with this day. I had a pretty rough semester and had been missing classes left and right; I was failing to care for my academics. There was only a little more to be done, then I could enjoy the game alongside my peers. After two more gruelling hours of work, lifting tables, and admitting entry to students, I was finally done with my obligations and enjoying the game was all that was left. I felt a sense of relief and pride as I reflected back on this long and eventful day.

The gymnasium was packed to the brim. There were hundreds of people represented in shades of red, black, or white. The Viking special. I realize it was a mistake not to save a seat beforehand. This was okay for me; it meant my work was valuable. I was running a shooting competition at half, but until then I could turn my thoughts off. The tip-off was just about to happen, but the ref gave a little wave to those of us on the sideline. As a basketball player myself, I knew this wasn't a friendly hello, but a message to get clear of the sideline near the net. It seemed it was only me who really needed to move, so I did. I began walking closer to the door

and just stood where there was space. The whistle blew and the game began. “Buddy you can’t stand there!” I turned to find a woman, though it wasn’t her voice I heard. “She can’t see”, said one of the two men beside her. “Sorry”, I apologized and shifted where there was room. “Not there either”. Entitled adults thinking they own the place. No worries.

I moved another step over. “Get out of my way!” This man yells. Is he blind? Can he not see there is clearly no space anywhere? Whatever I’ll ignore him. “Your long ass hair is in my face!” That pisses me off, I turn around with a sharp gleam in my eye, “Are you going to complain about everything?” This was a mistake. I feel something pressed against my ear. Before I can react, the crowd goes silent; my voice goes silent. I lose balance, placing a measly 150 lbs on the shoulders of the person beside me. Something catches in my throat, oh no, I know this feeling. I am teleported back to my old self like all that change I had made was for nothing. Thoughts were not forming, I was silent, and tears began welling up where anger should’ve been. I didn’t know how to react.

I catch Mr. Jeffrey in the corner of my eye. I push through the crowd, hunched over, embarrassed to let others into my feelings. Reaching him, I opened my mouth but speaking had left my vocabulary, yet he understood me. I questioned if he was secretly J’onn J’onnz, telepathically reading me and taking me on a walk. He sat me down and the tears had no end like the Niagara Falls. I did manage to get the word “airhorn” out and I motioned to my ear. He left me, attempting to uncover more like a detective in action. I couldn’t stand these loud hallways and directed myself towards the library, the silent haven of our school. I cried the most I had ever cried before, like all the water in me had a personal vendetta against my body and wanted to leave. I don’t know why it happened, but I just couldn’t stop it.

I had to explain the events to the principal, my parents, a police officer, my friends and my teachers. “Why didn’t you hit him” they would say. “I would’ve fought him back” others would laugh. “And you didn’t even say anything back to him?” some would ask. Man up. I couldn’t. I am weak. I am no man. I am not my brother. I am not my father. I am Darshan.

I had lost myself. Not from wandering into an unknown area, but slowly, over time, eroding. I neglected myself. Each day, I told myself I was better than that and moved forward. Is it fair to say I moved forward, but in the wrong direction?⁷ Each day I decided to not cry, to not show my quirky, odd side, I rid myself of enjoyment. The things I stored within the deepest confines of myself grew. It was hard to tell at first, but this creature seemed to feed off time. It grew and grew and grew until I felt it pushing against my stomach. Then, my liver, my heart, my lungs. I couldn’t breathe. And finally, it reached my throat. It peaked its head out of my mouth and showed itself to the world. I cried and cried and cried. Each second I cried some of it left me, until, I felt free. I promised myself to never let that creature grow again. To be true to my emotions and to be true to me, whoever that may be.

The coming weeks were difficult. I couldn’t do any work as I felt it wasn’t valued or appreciated in my community. I struggled with whether I wanted to continue grinding homework and extracurriculars or just sit back and watch TV. Every time I reminisce about my birthday, I recall the event that took place the night before. I stopped attending all meetings, I sat in my room more, and I was disassociated with the world. Until one day, I stood up, looked outside at the sunrise, and took a deep breath.

I seriously reevaluated who I was. Who Darshan is. Finally uncovering him after years of hide and seek. I realized it wasn’t I who needed to become a man, but the definition itself that required changing. I needed to gain acceptance of myself and transform social norms so that I

⁷ Rhetorical Question

never have to hide my feelings again. Understanding that how I felt at that moment was valid and having a system that validates those emotions is crucial. I shall act the way I desire, maintain my health the way I deserve, and strive for that balance everyone needs. Darshan is a man who cries, a man that leads, and a man who grows. I will continue to stay close to my emotions, never letting them be buried or run rampant ever again. I am now comfortable in my masculinity. I am now, and will always, be a man.

1. Anaphora/Motif: “Be a man. What does that mean? Be a man. How can I be a man? Be a man. I am a man. Be a man. Stop! Be a man”.

I start off with repetition because this sets the stage for my emotions. I felt everyone would continuously tell me what it is to be a man. How I wasn’t the conventional one who could be strong, display toxic masculinity, and not show emotion. I wanted the reader to feel what I had to deal with and show that it wasn’t just once but continuously, over time, that it actually broke me. Repeating this phrase shows the emphasis on breaking the stereotype of what being a man is as it has negatively affected my life and others trying to fit that “mold”. When I first envisioned

writing this essay I wanted to start with something that really had a sense of flow. Hoping to make the title of this piece to be memorable. I found this is also a motif because the piece is riddled with the phrase and in itself is focused on validating men's emotions and changing the definition of what being a man is.

2. Onomatopoeia: “Be-Be-Beep-Beep-Beep”.

This is the sound of the alarm clock waking me from a nightmare. I add emphasis to a trivial thing like this because it shows how I was struggling in my sleep and how the alarm clock in a way saved me (kind of like falling in a dream and awaking before hitting the ground), being relieved that it wasn't true, yet having that feeling of missed out sleep. The use of this allows the reader to be more engaged in the piece and feel as if they are part of the story. Since everyone hears a similar alarm whenever they think about one and the frustration of hearing it makes it more relatable.

3. Hyperbole: “I smacked my alarm clock with enough force to propel me into the sky as I jolted up”.

Using this hyperbole in succession with the sounds of the alarm clock lets the reader have a sense of relation with the writing as everyone knows the ugly sound of the alarm clock and the urgency to turn it off before it's etched into the head. This is a hyperbole because I didn't actually hit it hard enough to launch me, but it emphasizes the urgency I was in after waking up from that nightmare. Still being annoyed at the sound of the clock and missing out on sleep.

4. Metaphor: “I was a train on a rail with only one destination in mind”.

This is a metaphor because I compare myself to a train that is on a track because they have one route and one route only. They can't turn on command but follow the preplanned tracks that they are bound to. This represented how I felt making my way through the halls of our school after the incident, head down, restricted by the hallways and its turns on my way to the one silent place in the entire school, the library. Utilizing this metaphor lets the reader know how chained I feel despite being in a large school with my own free will. It shows how I am bound to the tracks, the rules, and the confines of the school.

5. Foreshadowing: "My stomach hurting told me something was up".

This is foreshadowing because rather than giving a direct clue as to what is going to happen, it lets the reader know something is going to happen, as it isn't any ordinary day. From the beginning, the narrator is preparing himself for a long day as it isn't the "usual". It lets the reader know they are in for special since "something was up". I utilized this because I didn't think me having an absolutely normal day would prepare the reader for the events that take place later that evening. I was already nervous for the long day ahead of me and when that happens my stomach tends to get uneasy. It gets the reader to question "What is up? What is going to happen? Is he just crazy?" Inciting all these subconscious thoughts and inquiries.

6. Simile: "Then it struck me like a truck".

I decided to incorporate a simile here because it allows the reader to feel that gut-wrenching feeling of forgetting something important and a moment of realization which is comparable to that of being stricken by a large vehicle. Of course, this is also emphasized to a very high extent as actually being hit by a truck would typically result in death. I use this specifically here

because I wanted to let the reader relate and laugh at the same time as it is something that can happen at random times. Especially since I am clearly enjoying myself in which it totally slips my mind, unlike if I was bored, I'd be counting the minutes until I could leave.

7. Rhetorical Question: "Is it fair to say I moved forward, but in the wrong direction?"

I used a rhetorical question here because it adds effect to the fact I am working on myself and reevaluating my actions, thoughts, and emotions. It allows the reader to understand that I am trying to improve myself and understand where things went wrong. I use these specific words because it shows that nothing was bad about how I handled things before and I'm not constructive on myself to the point where all the thoughts are negative. But, rather, it shows that I still did great moving forward and improving myself, but sometimes the destination changes mid-trip, and you now have to trek back, but it's not all for nothing since the actual growth is the moving itself. I wanted to show the reader that it is okay to ask yourself questions and rewire your thinking and reasoning for certain things.