

My Thoughts, and What I Learned

When I first started considering what I wanted to do for my final journal report, I really wanted to make a small website about some of the things that I had learned over the course of the semester. As I had started on the project, I realized that it was distracting me from what it was that I really wanted to accomplish in this report. My goal is to talk about what I learned, and how that has affected me and how I learn. I want this to be real, and I feel that this format is the best way for me to say what I need to say, without the constant distraction of attempting to make it look perfect.

I was not entirely excited for this class. I like programming, but I don't excel when it comes to learning things mostly on my own, which happened a lot in this class. I like being led to an answer, being shown how to solve a problem, and then taking what I was shown and applying it in my own problems. Which, to be fair, can happen in this class, you just have to look for someone or something that can show you. I found that search to be difficult. Most of the online resources I found just weren't helpful. I struggled with that a lot. I was awful at using Brother Tuckett as a resource for this learning, I guess that is partly due to the online format, and the mindset that I was doing this on my own.

Looking back on some of the things I wrote during the course of the class I found my first post to be interesting. I talked about how coding was the easy part of the class. I guess I was right, but I forgot that coding was supposed to be the easy part so many times over the semester. I never really struggled with writing the code, but I became so focused on writing

code that I forgot to solve the problems. Learning to solve the problem, I feel, was the goal of the class. It is one thing to learn the basics of how to create a List, but an entirely different thing to know how a List can solve one of my problems. I feel like this is where I missed the mark for so much of this class. I learned how everything generally worked, that was important to me. I even learned to know exactly when I can use a few of these technologies to solve problems I run into, but for so much of the class, learning how to learn was one of the least of my concerns, and because of that I did myself a disservice.

Don't get me wrong. I learned plenty in this class, and I feel I am a better programmer for having actively participated in the class, but I didn't learn one of the most important lessons I could have gotten out of the class. I shouldn't say I didn't learn it. I know now what I should have gotten out of the class. I should have taught myself and sought out lessons on how to actively learn new tools to solve problems. I didn't practice that lesson like I should have.

I like analogies and I feel like sharing my thoughts with an analogy. I like to build things and I often view different technologies as tools, used to make certain tasks easier. There is one tool in particular, a froe, that I found interesting. (Feel free to take this moment to search what a froe is, they are actually pretty neat). Simply, a froe is used to cut wood shingles from a log, a simple, but important task. At one point in time, you wouldn't have been a successful carpenter without an extensive knowledge of how to use a froe and other tools similar to it, but nowadays, knowing how to use a froe would be considered an outdated skill, not much more than a hobby. There are simply better ways to get wood shingles than cutting them one at a time out of a log by hand. To again say how I feel, I believe this class' goal was to teach us how to create wood shingles, how to solve a problem. They did this by offering a froe as one of

many methods and pointed us in the right direction of how to use it and maybe hoped we would find numerous ways to solve our problem. Knowing how to use a froe is great, I will always be able to create shingles with it, but this knowledge will not do me any good when I walk into an industrial mill and they want me to make shingles using a modern machine. I became so obsessed with learning how to use a froe that I forgot that it was just one of many tools and it was more important to learn how to make shingles.

Analogy time is over, thanks for bearing with me.

I feel like I have learned more about learning in the past few weeks, contemplating how this class went, than I have in my entire schooling career. And for that, I am grateful. At one point I thought to myself, "I wish I could start over knowing what I know now." As nice as that would be, to never have had to make mistakes, I don't need to start over in order to apply what I have learned. There were plenty of things that I did wrong, from time management, to fully using available resources, but I learned plenty from these mistakes.

I now know that I need to work harder when presented a challenge, to find a tool that is right for the job. I know now how important it is to plan ahead, and not come up with solutions mid problem. At some points over the semester I felt like I had tried to climb a mountain believing that I would be able to conjure up a safety harness mid fall. I didn't have a plan of how to accomplish this task and thought that I could just muscle my way through any problems. But, you can't muscle your way out of a free fall.

It may or may not be important that I know how to implement and use Hibernate. It most likely won't be the most efficient tool for the job forever. What is important is that I learn how to find the best tool and learn how to use it.

Looking over some of the thoughts I wrote during the semester, I had some good weeks, I had plenty of weeks I was in way over my head and felt lost and confused, I learned some technologies super well, and struggled through others. Overall, coming out of this class, more than anything I feel ready to learn what is out in the world, anxious to put more tools in my toolbox, and to be a problem solver. That is something I learned, that I hope to always have with me.