

Jonathan Schreiber

ENGL 387 Final Portfolio

## Go with the Flow

Jonathan Schreiber

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Like usual, Sam arrived at the bus stop exactly seven minutes early. The neglected wooden bench made its age know with a creak as he sat upon it, and took a moment to breath in the crisp morning air. He straightened his tie in the reflection of his cell phone and re-combed his hair with his fingers as he mentally prepared for the workday. Across the street a woman was reading the newspaper, waiting for her bus. \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ These two had developed a routine of sitting across the street from each other every weekday morning for months now, without ever speaking a word. He often fantasized that one day the winds of fate would bring them together. He would have a meeting on the north side of Boulder and would have to take the same bus as her, and the only remaining seat would be next to her. Though he still couldn't bring himself to talk to her in his fantasies. He would spend the entire time thinking of the perfect thing to say until they got to her stop and she would politely ask him to move aside and of course he would generously oblige even though on the inside he would be kicking himself over and over and over.

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Commented [JS2]: Added a specific setting of Boulder, Colorado so that the wilderness/urban being next to each other is believable

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Today, he gazed at her and marveled at how peaceful and attractive she looked. Her soft yellow dress stood out against the unwelcoming woods and jagged peaks of the flatirons that lay behind her. He marveled at the fact that she was reading the newspaper, instead of sitting on her phone. In his mind the only explanation for this was that she was above the fake fulfillment of social media and must be an authentic person. Although he couldn't consciously

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admit it, these moments waiting for the bus were the highlight of his days, free from the monotony and loneliness of his job and life. As he was watching a breeze take several strands of her long blonde hair and blow them across her face, a high-pitched voice interrupted his trance.

"You should go talk to her." A young boy, who couldn't have been older than 12, with a mischievous grin and ruffled brown hair had suddenly appeared next to him. He looked Sam in the eyes, then nodded across the street towards the woman.

"Uh, excuse me? What are you talking about?" Sam blushed as his eyes darted across the street and back towards the boy.

The boy laughed as he replied, "Don't be a creep. Go talk to her."

"That's not how this kind of thing works." Sam felt like this could be a good learning experience for the youngster. "You see kid, in life you can't force things. You just gotta go with the flow and let things come to you."

"Hmmm." The boy paused for a second, gazing up towards the sky with squinted eyes and his hand poised under his chin. He then looked up at Sam, shrugged, and starting walking across the street. Sam shot up in his seat, a look of terror in his eyes. His heart had not beat this fast in years. Petrified, he watched as the boy walked up to the woman, who greeted him with a warm smile. He couldn't make out their conversation, but watched as the boy spoke to her with extravagant hands gestures, eventually pointing back at Sam. His brain completely shut down for a second as she looked over at him, smiling.

Before he could smile or wave back, her bus had arrived, obstructing his view of her and the boy. He waited for the bus to depart, unsure of what to do with himself as he shifted uncomfortably in his seat. His foot furiously tapped the pavement and beads of sweat began to

**Commented [JS3]:** I added some setting in this paragraph so that the reader could see that we are indeed in Boulder, there are woods and mountains behind the woman so the nature part should seem more believable. Also I added some details as to Sam's thought process of having a "crush" on someone who he has never met, and so that it is more obvious how the boy knows he is into him when he interrupts. Also, added some more inner story for the character earlier on so the climax isn't as jolting

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**Commented [JS4]:** More show don't tell

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form on his forehead. The bus finally departed, leaving the boy standing there alone, grinning from ear to ear, and holding up a piece of paper. Sam gestured at him swiftly and sternly to come back to his side of the street, but the boy held his ground. He folded his arms over his chest and shook his head. Sam, now slightly annoyed, anxiously looked both ways and sped across the street.

Deleted: speed walked his way

"I got her number for you! See how easy that was?" The boy was ecstatic.

"Very nice, now hand it over. My bus will be here any minute." Sam tapped his foot in anticipation as his bus appeared on the horizon. "See, there it is. Now hand it over."

Deleted: anxiously

The boy raised his eyes, clearly surprised by the lack of the gratitude Sam was showing.

"No. Let me put it in your phone."

"What? No, just give it to me. I'm in a hurry!" The boy crossed his arms and looked away. Sam was in no position to argue. "Fine. Here", Sam said as he rolled his eyes and reluctantly handed the boy his phone. The boy chuckled to himself, delighted that Sam had fallen into his trap. He turned away slightly, holding the phone and piece of paper away from Sam's field of sight, and acted like he was typing. Without moving his head, he shifted his eyes to see Sam with his arms crossed, foot-tapping, watching the arriving bus.

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"Sucka" the boy chuckled. Sam turned his head towards the boy to see him booking it into the woods at full speed. The boy turned his head back, revealing a wide grin, as he approached the woods. Before Sam had a single thought, his animal instincts kicked in and he was filled with adrenaline, as he sprinted towards the boy and the woods. For a split second, before the weight of Sam's watered-down view on life could return to his consciousness, a feeling of freedom overtook him as glided towards the forest. The boy was much faster but

Commented [JS7]: Wanted to add some show not tell here, extend this scene as this is a very important transition moment of the story and felt rushed before. I also wanted to add some more character development for Sam near the end in regards to him beginning to actually enjoy this experience.

Deleted: Sam remembered how stubborn he was at this age. "Fine. Here." Sam handed the boy his phone. As soon as the boy had full possession of it, he bolted straight into the woods. It took Sam a second to process what was happening. Before he could put any rational thought into it, he was chasing after the boy.

kept waiting just at the edge of Sam's field of sight, almost like he wanted Sam to follow him.

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Finally, the boy came to a large clearing with a small lake and stopped at the shore.

"Stop, please", Sam panted, gasping for breath. "Just give me my phone back, please."

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The boy grinned at him. "Wanna go swimming?"

"What? No! I need my phone kid. I gotta get to work".

"Oh, look at me! I'm a very important businessman with a very important job and I'm too cool to have fun!" The boy jumped back and forth with his arms slightly outstretched as he mocked him in an accent that did not even remotely resemble Sam's or the boys. "You wanna get back to your awesome life so bad? Here!" The boy tossed Sam his phone, ripped off his shirt, and jumped into the lake in seemingly one swift motion.

Commented [JS8]: Trying to add more details to show not tell, help visualize kid

Deleted: mocked him

Sam stood there, dumbfounded. He pondered leaving to catch the next bus, but he felt oddly responsible for this boy and figured it would not be a good look to leave him out in the middle of the woods by himself. So, he sat up against a tree and gazed down into the dirt while the boy splashed around and laughed in the water. Who was this boy? And who was he to say anything about his life?

Commented [JS9]: Did some rearranging of this paragraph so that I could add some more inner dialogue and it would flow better

Deleted: And why the hell had he taken his phone, ran off into the woods, and then given it back to him without a fight?

The boy was right of course, Sam did not have an awesome life. As a matter of fact, Sam didn't even slightly enjoy his life or his job. The most conscious part of his mind believed that once he made enough money he would be fulfilled, but somewhere deep down he knew this to be false. He began to feel this realization before he could think it, and a wave of sadness washed over him. Eventually, the boy emerged from the lake.

Commented [JS10]: Adding some more character development and reflection for Sam, so that the upcoming conversation and ultimate climax of him quitting his job doesn't seem as sudden

Deleted: Sam pondered leaving to catch the next bus, but even though he was filled with resentment he felt oddly responsible for this boy and figured it would not be a good look to leave him out in the middle of the woods by himself. So, he sat up against a tree and gazed down into the dirt while the boy splashed around and laughed in the water.

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"Ahhhh the water feels great! You should get in."

Sam looked up with a glare and calmly said, "I am not getting in the water."

The boy kept pushing. "Oh come on, live a little! You know you want to," he teased as he playfully tried to push Sam into the water.

Deleted: was starting to pick up on Sam's growing anger

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Sam exploded as he swatted the boy's hands away. "No! For the last time I am not swimming!" Sam could have stopped there, but the emotions that were bubbling to the surface mixed with the boy pushing all of his buttons put Sam over the edge. "Who are you anyways? Why aren't you in school? Is this what you do? Just walk around and mess around with adults, stealing their phones and whatnot! That's a terrible recipe for life. You're in for a rude awakening if you think this kind of behavior is going to lead to a good future! If I were your parents I would be ashamed. Ashamed! When Sam said the last bit, the boy coiled back and looked away towards the ground, closing his eyes. Sam instantly felt bad and realized he had

Deleted: Is everything alright? Is everything alright!??

gone too far. He was not accustomed to dealing with the emotions that he was feeling. "Look, I'm sorry I lost my temper, but you ca-

Commented [JS11]: Changed up the dialogue in this part to make it more believable, and added a break so that the reader can understand how this explosion came to happen

Deleted: Everything is not alright! I am supposed to be on the bus right now, on my way to work! But along you come, acting like you know what's best for my life! Getting involved with my romantic affairs! And then you steal my phone and run off into the woods like some deranged maniac! What makes you think you know what's best for my life? You're just a kid! You should be in school! You know nothing about life! Nothing!"

"I'm not supposed to be here." The boy interrupted, now with his eyes wide open and his gaze directed deep into Sam's soul. "I got a weird heartbeat. The doctor told my parents I wouldn't make it to 10. I'm 12 now. That's why I'm not in school. I didn't feel like going today.

Commented [JS12]: I added this so that we can get some inner voice of Sam before he goes and apologizes

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Why would I spend a single moment doing something that doesn't bring me joy?"

\_\_\_\_\_ The words shook Sam to his very core. He took a step back, astonished, as the boy,

Deleted: shyly

looked away. "...". Sam wanted to say something but couldn't find any words. The epiphany

that Sam had begun to feel while the boy was swimming was beginning to reach his thoughts.

Commented [JS13]: Trying to work the earlier character development of Sam's pain and sadness into this moment of catharsis, where it all comes to the surface. Hopefully the reader can see how it built through the story and the events from the day influenced it

When was the last time he did something that genuinely brought him joy? When was the last time he had felt this much emotion? He fought back tears.

Deleted: Instead, all he could do was reflect on his own life.

The boy, aware of the silence, asked, “you good?” Sam couldn’t hold them in anymore. He felt a pressure in his chest and a throbbing in his head as he let his emotions run free. He wanted to tell the boy that he was hopelessly lonely, desperately waiting for someone to love him. He wanted to tell the boy that he hated his job. He wanted to tell the boy that he couldn’t remember the last time he had genuinely laughed. He wanted to tell the boy that he had probably lived more in his short 12 years than Sam had his entire life. But all he could muster were tears.

**Commented [JS14]:** More believable I think

**Deleted:** Are you okay

**Deleted:** He broke down, sobbing.

The boy patted him on the shoulder. “There, there, mister. It’s all gonna be okay. I think you need a moment, so I’m gonna leave you alone.” He placed the piece of paper with the woman’s phone number on the dirt next to Sam. “It was nice to meet you, mister.” He started to walk away, then paused and looked back. “I like your advice about going with the flow, but I think you could change it a bit. I like to go with the flow of what feels best, not what’s easiest.” And then he was gone, disappearing into the woods.

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**Deleted:** . I hope you find whatever you’re looking for.

**Commented [JS16]:** I know you wanted me to delete this line but I just can’t, this line holds the main message I wanna get across with this story and I can’t leave it to be implied

**Deleted:** . Had this random boy just enlightened him with the wisest thing he had ever heard? Sam

Sam pondered on the kid’s advice as he gazed at the water, thinking about how nice it would feel to take a swim. Before he knew it, he was completely naked, submerged in the ice-cold water. It was the most alive he had ever felt. His head shot up as he breathed in the sweet air, and he let out a yell of triumph. He felt like a kid again.

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→ “I feel so alive! Ahhhhhh!”

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\_\_\_\_\_ He finally emerged from the lake, and for the first time truly took in the natural beauty of his surroundings. The forest of oak and pine trees were dense, and their leaves were the perfect shade of green. The sunlight broke through the clouds in specific spots such that he could see the rays of light illuminating the lush forest floor, revealing sticks, grass, stones, and

pinecones softly hugging the tree trunks. He heard a bird singing as he put his boxers and undershirt back on. Sam had a new sense of calmness and purpose about him.

Deleted: humming

For the first time he looked down at the piece of paper that had led him on to this remote spot on the edge of Rocky Mountain Wilderness and couldn't help but smile at what he saw. Written in clearly a 12-year old's handwriting, were just the words "Gotcha" with a winky face. Sam chuckled to himself and silently thanked the boy for showing him the way. He then took a deep breath, grabbed his phone and the piece of paper, and walked back into the woods, leaving behind the pants of his suit, his button up shirt, and his tie.

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**Commented [JS17]:** I went back and forth about this part, but I ultimately wanted to add it because in the original version it was open ended as to what happens with the girl. In my mind it was clear (even though I intentionally left it open ended) that it wasn't going to work out because he needed a 12 year old boy to be his wingman and still had a lot of self-work to do to get to a spot where he could have a successful relationship. I included this bc it felt real based on the kids actions and it reiterates that the story really isn't about the girl, it's about Sam's change sparked by the wisdom of a child. I don't think it's very realistic for a woman to give her number to a 12 year wingman, but I do think that once Sam gets some momentum in his new life he would go back to the busstop and actually man up and talk to her, but that's up for interpretation

**Commented [JS18]:** I wanted him to still keep the piece of paper to show how he really values this kid, even though it was annoying to experience it prompted emotion and introspection that wouldn't have happened otherwise, and Sam wants a souvenir of this experience.

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## Weeds

Jonathan Schreiber

There was a rusty yellow sign along the trail that marked where we would turn off and start bushwhacking. There was overgrown grass that scratched our calves as we traversed the meadow. There were dandelions everywhere. There is beauty to a single dandelion, but that

beauty is lost in a sea of them, and there is always a sea of them, which is why I don't like them.

There were years that had passed since the last time we had visited the "tree fort".

There was a strong feeling of nostalgia as we entered through the secret spot in the bush snuggled perfectly between the two large oak trees. There were some things that were the same as we left them. There was a large clearing in the midst of trees and bushes, with the only exposed side opening up to about 100 yards of marshland followed by a lake. There was a large tree in the middle of the clearing, with a massive lopsided trunk which made it easy to climb.

There was a rope hanging from the branches of the tree, acting as a swing.

There was something different, though: someone had been here. There were empty boxes of Ritz crackers and Lays Potato Chips strewn about. There were empty beer cans

everywhere. There was a metal lunchbox hidden underneath some sticks and leaves with chipped paint, a bright red handle, and a stick figure holding up a peace sign painted on it.

There was a brief look of shock in my friend's eyes as he opened it, followed by a look of sly mischief as the smell of skunk hit my nostrils. There was a long white pipe with blue flowers painted on it, a lighter, and a baggy of some sort of green plant. There were several moments that passed before I realized what was going on, as my friend placed the plant into the pipe.

**Commented [JS1]:** Wanted to make this line less sciency feeling and more poetic, so I went with the there is structure

**Deleted:** – I thought to myself that a single dandelion can be a beautiful thing, but they feel the need to spread everywhere which is why I don't like them.

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**Commented [JS2]:** Decided to change this up a bit – if the main character is about to smoke weed he probably knows what beer is lol

**Deleted:** There were empty soda cans everywhere of some brand I had never heard of called "Lagunitas".

**Commented [JS3]:** Adds to the outdoors, rustic feel

**Commented [JS4]:** Seems more accurate for some hippie stoners

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**Deleted:** smiley face

lifted it to his mouth, and lit it on fire, inhaling slowly. There was a moment when I thought he was going to die, as he coughed uncontrollably.

There was a battle going on in my mind as he handed the pipe to me – I had never done anything like this - “I’m a good kid” echoed through my mind. There were doubts that filled my mind as I imagined how my mom would react if she saw what I was about to do. There was a look in his eyes that convinced me. There was a sweet taste to the smoke as I inhaled it, slowly.

There was no going back now.

There was a moment when I thought I was going to die, as I coughed uncontrollably. There was a moment of intense relaxation as the coughing faded, and we both looked at each other and started laughing uncontrollably. There was no word other than bliss that could describe how we felt the rest of the day. There were hundreds of times we had swung from the tree swing, but none as exciting as that day. There were countless hours that I had spent listening to music, but that was the first time I truly felt music with my soul.

There was no doubt that we really liked that green plant we had found. There was no way I could fathom how much that day would change my life; in that moment I was solely focused on the beauty of a single awesomely unbelievable dandelion. There were countless days that I wasted trying to find another dandelion as beautiful.

There were years that I dedicated to the search. There was excitement and curiosity in the beginning. There were dandelions that inspired new passions. There were dandelions that guided me to grand realizations about life and the universe. There were dandelions that sparked new friendships. There was a commitment to finding more and more dandelions as I saw the good things that came with them, but as I spent more time searching, I began to lose

Commented [JS5]: Adding some more detail here

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Commented [JS6]: Wanted to build up the internal struggle a bit more here- he is a “good kid” and at this age that means following the rules and not “getting in trouble” with parents. I thought this was a nice sentence to show that

Commented [JS7]: He has made his decision, about to go on a journey. Felt like a cool line to add

Commented [JS8]: Someone suggested this in workshop and I really liked it

Deleted: ecstasy

Commented [JS9]: Wanted to add these lines here to give some insight as to what they were feeling while they were high. Felt like this part was a bit rushed in the original, and I thought this was a cool way to do it.

touch with the rest of my life, and it became rare to find a dandelion that inspired me. There was a sense that spending all my time dandelion hunting was holding me back from pursuing the very passions and friendships that I had gained from it in the beginning – it now felt like a responsibility more than a freedom. There was a day when I took a step back and looked over my collection of well over a thousand dandelions and finally remembered why I don't like them. There is beauty to a single dandelion, but that beauty is lost in a sea of them, and there is always a sea of them. ↓

**Commented [JS10]:** So I kind of expanded the ending a ton. I still really like the old ending, but it was pretty vague and I wasn't really sure if people understood what I was getting at or not. I feel like this ending is way more in depth and is way more explicit about what I'm getting at, while really just taking the dandelion metaphor and running with it. It adds a bunch of tangible internal story for the main character on how this experience in the story really changed his life, and this was really what I wanted to get at with this story.

**Deleted:** , failing to remember that I don't like dandelions. There were years that passed before I remembered.

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What was I supposed to do?

A "Found" Piece from Song Lyrics

Jonathan Schreiber

Every fiber in me wants to shout and scream: Stop.

"I swear to god I wasn't born to fight," I say.

I have his blood on my hands for no reason. Pillowcase on his head and the blood stains dried up.

"It's only blood. I don't understand why you're freaking out," John says.

"It's only slaughter," I say. "Stop slaying."

"You're not obliged to swallow anything you despise. You must have lost your wits, yeah? The slight of my hand is now a quick pull trigger. You've got time to think it over," John says.

Maybe I don't really need to feel satisfied. I feel free when the world doesn't owe it to me.

"That's not what I meant to say at all," I say.

"Yeah?"

"I know what you want from me."

"I thought I couldn't do this without you. It's only fire."

As I poured the gasoline, I thought about my little niece. At the same time I planned my suicide.

"Take care in your dreaming and love when you can," I say.

"Thankyou, I'll say goodbye soon. Though it's the end of the world, don't blame yourself," he says.

I lit the match and watched his friend go up in flames. My hotel room is crackling. It was too late before I knew his name. But what was I supposed to do? How was I supposed to know how to drive a van? How was I supposed to know how to ride a bike without hurting myself? How was I supposed to know how to make dinner for myself? How was I supposed to know how to hold a job?

"Got my great car ready, got a new coupe," John says.

"I don't wanna be friends," I say.

"I won't crash your car if you don't crash mine," John says.

"I don't wanna be friends."

"I been running red lights."

"I don't wanna be friends."

"Even the devil needs time alone sometimes."

"Are you happy now? Can you just forget? Are you happy now that we've caught every threat? Burning holes right through all the things we saved..." I say.

"It's only slaughter. We're only liars. It's only blood. The only risk is that you'll go insane," John says.

"Fed me lies. You're a snake. All that negativity is bringing me down. You're so toxic, how do you live like this?"

"You're not obliged to swallow anything you despise. It was only yesterday, didn't even know you. Now I'm gonna miss you," John says.

He walks along the platforms into the dream. Every fiber in me wants to shout and scream: Stop. But instead I stand still. These little curls on the back of his head bouncing. As he steps out of my life, forever.

My hotel room from the 10th floor. My last dancefloor as I should tell. When death is here your dances end. When days are done all you can take is a deep breath and be decent. Maybe I am ready to leave? I have lived well for a loner.

Credit:

All "I say" tags from "Earthquake" by FKJ, "John says", from "This Velvet Glove" by Red Hot Chili Peppers, "He says", from "Murder, He Says" by Betty Hutton.

In order of first appearance (many songs used multiple times):

"Movie" by Tom Misch, "Bambi" by Hippo Campus, "The Ballad of the Costa Concordia" by Car Seat Headrest, "You Know" by Flume, "It's Only" by Odesza, "Musician" by Porter Robinson, "Earthquake" by FKJ, "Sleeping Lessons" by The Shins, "Pumped Up Kicks" by Foster The People, "Think It Over" by Hippo Campus, "Trying to Feel Alive" by Porter Robinson, "Luv (sic) pt 3." By Nujabes, "Body's" by Car Seat Headrest, "Mirror" by Porter Robinson, "Rome" by Phoenix, "Take Care In Your Dreaming" by The Avalanches, "Goodbye to a World" by Porter Robinson, "Blind" by The M Machine, "Pain Jam" by Dessert, "Friends" by Flume, "Rocky" by Still Woozy, "Running Red Lights" by The Avalanches, "It's Called: Freefall" by Rainbow Kitten Surprise, "Insane" by Flume, "Apocalypse Dreams" by Tame Impala

Jonathan Schreiber

ENGL 387 Reflection Essay

Dear Dr. Prow,

Thanks for a great course! I learned a ton about writing, and it was very fun to have an opportunity to be creative. It was a very refreshing break from my usual technical classes!

I feel like I am still discovering who I am as a writer, and it is hard to encapsulate it into one sentence or phrase. I guess one of the most important things for me in writing and other creative works is that it feels real to me. That doesn't necessarily mean it has to be of this world, but I found that all of the works that I wrote this quarter that I was proud of came from something in my own life that I was working through and tried to express through fiction. Some of the writing exercises with more specific prompts I found harder, even though they were fun to mess around with, because it was harder for me to express myself through them. It was no surprise to me that the writing I was most proud of this quarter were of themes and topics that I could express myself through, such as overcoming addiction, heartbreak, and finding a positive flow. I also found that my style is uplifting. Of course, life is messy, and pain and suffering are inherent to existence. But stories that are uplifting are just as real and are just as much a part of life, which is why I tend to stick to a style where characters struggle through their pain and work towards some sort of redemption.

I learned the most from 'Virgins' by Danielle Evans. There were several reasons why I like this story. Obviously, the dialogue is very strong throughout, but what I liked the most from the dialogue was how it developed the characters. There were two scenes in particular that

stood out to me. The first was when Jasmine wanted someone to buy her a singing teddy bear.

“No one ever bought me a singing teddy bear,” said Jasmine. “Probably no one ever will buy me a singing teddy bear.”

“I’ll buy you a singing teddy bear, stupid,” I said.

“Shut up,” she said. She’d been sucking on her bottom lip so hard she’d sucked the lipstick off it, and her lips were two different colors. “Don’t you ever want to matter to somebody?”

I thought this was a great moment of dialogue as it was very relatable and artistically showed a very natural part of being human. We yearn for someone to love us in a very specific way yet take those who do actually love us for granted, which is a very profound message masterfully portrayed through a piece of dialogue. The second quote that stood out to me was when the main character was describing her fake boyfriend. “He’s great,” I said. “He’s in college too, and he’s gonna be a doctor, but he also writes me love poems. And paints pictures of me. He’s a painter too.” This was a brilliant way to show how out of place she is at the club scene. Again, without explicitly stating it the author was able to add some great character development. The second reason why I liked this story was because of the moment of empowerment when the main character ran from the club guys and left Jasmine. It reminded me how much I love reading empowering stories and if they are done in a way that feels real, they can have a huge impact.

I included the setting, “there was/were” writing exercise. This was helpful to me as setting is something that I often forget about, as I get caught up in plot and character development and often drop the ball on setting. It was also really fun to come up with ways to be creative and work around the “there was/were” restrictions and still tell a story. I knew



going into this class that I wanted to write a piece about overcoming addiction, yet I had no idea how it was going to look, and I am very pleased with how it turned out, even though it isn't what I expected at all!

In workshop, I got some really great advice from a lot of people, but one piece that really resonated with me was from Shea. While I didn't end up changing the narrative like he suggested, he gave me a suggestion that there was this internal struggle in my main character which didn't really come to the surface until the end. One of my main points of revision was to work on developing the internal story of my main character (Sam) throughout the entire story, so that it wasn't as much of a shock when he breaks down and ultimately quits his job. I added some clues that he was not satisfied with his life and his job that continued to grow throughout and I am really happy with how it turned out. I probably would have overlooked that if he didn't point it out in workshop, so I am very grateful for that piece of advice. On paper, I got some really great feedback from Grace. She has a very strong sense of prose, so she was able to give me some great suggestions for sentences that weren't working as well as they could have and ideas to make them stronger, which was very helpful!

I felt like I was a very active participant this quarter. I made it a goal to say at least one positive thing about each person's piece, as I know how hard and scary it can be to share creative work and I wanted to be supportive of my peers! I also tried to add feedback to pieces when I felt I could add something valuable to the conversation. I felt like it was very rewarding to be an active participant, as it made me much more engaged than I would have been otherwise, and I hope that my peers appreciated my feedback. I would give myself an A for

participation, as I felt like I made a very strong effort to play an active role and added some useful insights to the discussions.

My revision process mostly consisted of me going on hikes and thinking about feedback I got, what I wanted to say with my story and how I wanted to achieve. Then, after a couple weeks without touching the piece I would go back to my computer and walk through my draft, adding/changing things where I saw fit. Then I would leave it be for a couple days and come back to it, going through the same process until I had something that I was proud of.

Admittedly, revision is something that I am not the best at and is probably the biggest point of improvement going forward for me as a writer and in my other creative projects. I usually put a lot of time and energy into my initial draft, and then end up getting attached to it and not wanting to change it. However, by forcing myself to revise and continually strive to make my writing better, I know that I achieved stronger pieces than my initial drafts. It also showed me that a creative work is never really “done”. As I continue to evolve and grow as a person, the things that I want to express probably will too and I will potentially be reinspired to keep improving my works.

I loved the workshop format of the class. My entire college career has mostly consisted of classes with lecture and then lab and most people just have their headphones on and don't really talk to each other. It was very cool to be involved in an active discussion for each class. Additionally, it was incredible to read the works of so many talented peers. I was blown away! It was also very cool to have a portion of a class period where everyone is talking about my work. I enjoyed the discussions and felt like I learned more about my peers than I have in any other class I've taken, even though it was through Zoom.

I was very inspired by the Literary Citizenship exercise. Part of the reason was that I read a very inspiring book called *The Strangest of Places* written by a close friend and role model of mine. It was a collection of short stories from his life, filled with lessons and insights into the human condition. I found myself laughing, crying, feeling nostalgic, and feeling inspired while reading. It got me thinking that it would be really cool to write a book at some point in my life, potentially of a similar structure, or something completely different. I have found writing to be a very therapeutic and inspiring use of time, and I have written stories that I did not expect to write in bursts of creativity. I am very excited to continue writing and to see where it takes me!!

This course was one of my favorites I have ever taken! First, as I stated in the previous paragraph it inspired me to get back into writing. I enjoyed writing a ton and some of my favorite moments this quarter were when I got a burst of creativity and got lost in my computer for hours following some idea. It was also very interesting to read other people's works and reiterated something that I feel like I already knew, which is that at the end of the day all of us are struggling with the same things. Being a human is not easy; there are inherent pains that come with being alive. But there is also a certain magic to being alive, to express ourselves through creativity, and then to come together to talk about it. It was extremely refreshing to take a course like this, and I am very grateful for it. This quarter was an especially challenging one for me, as I was completely fed up with online school and had some tough personal circumstances I had to work through. It was nice to know I had a place to talk about fiction for a couple hours every week and have a class where my only homework was to read fiction and write about whatever I want. Of course, I would have greatly preferred it to be in person. I feel like more people would have been engaged in discussions and it would have been a great class

to connect with peers outside of school. But I felt like it went as well as it possibly could have for Zoom.

Thank you again for teaching such a great class! I hope to see you at some point on campus, and I will definitely send you a copy of any books that I publish in my future! 😊

Regards,

Jonathan Schreiber