

Please tell me about a writing project of which you are particularly proud. Why? What obstacles, if any, did you overcome? What inputs were provided as a start to the project? What was the writing process like? How much time did you spend? What lessons did you learn?

In October 2019, I decided to apply to an internship at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Was I qualified for this position? Absolutely not, but my curiosity got the better of me. Shortly after sending in my application, I was notified that my resume passed the first round, and they needed two writing samples about global politics by the following morning. At this point I was early in my college career and had no writing samples that I was proud of, so I chose to accept the challenge of writing two CIA worthy papers in under fifteen hours. Equipped with an energy drink, headphones, and a borrowed computer, I began this daunting task.

To begin, I wrote down every topic that came to mind, and cross-referenced with scholarly articles to find which two topics would be most supported. I settled on Yemen and the Medellin Cartel. I immediately began writing everything down that I knew about these topics, which admittedly was a very little. As I began to draft an outline, I lacked sufficient knowledge to even fill out the basic essay format my university had taught me. I shifted my focus of learning the basic knowledge on the topic through non-scholarly sources to find out what people deemed the more important aspects of these topics. I used this information to identify what I was missing to make these essays cohesive. I worked on one section at a time, researching that immediately relevant information before moving on to the next section. This resulted in me shifting the focus on my paper to reflect more narrow topics than I initially planned.

With only half an hour to spare, I finally submitted my papers titled “Modern Day Yemen” and “The History of Pablo Escobar and the Medellin Cartel, and their Effect in Colombia and the United States”. Prior to that long night, I knew little to nothing about either of these topics, but could proudly call myself proficient afterwards. I was notified a few days following that I had advanced to the next round of the interview process, thanks to my papers.

While to many this night may not have seemed enjoyable, it was one of my favorite nights in college. I learned that writing is so much more than a chore. There is no feeling quite like getting lost in research and writing. Since completing this challenging assignment, I’ve continuously improved my ability to immerse myself in topics I’m unfamiliar with, producing progressively higher quality work than I could have imagined when starting college.