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writing samples

WRITING SAMPLE 01

Boston College, ENGL 4445

pages 2-6

Literary and cultural analysis piece for my course 19th-Century American Literature and the National Imagination that looks at Frederick Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" speech as it establishes Douglass as the "Man Thinking" of Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The American Scholar"

WRITING SAMPLE 02

[sic] Studios, working whitepaper

pages 7-10

Whitepaper draft for a project that I am working on that is still in semi-stealth mode where I attempt to articulate the current state of international affairs and present a shift in perspective from focus on the great powers to an examination of the smaller players and their role in creating sustainable peace among all

WRITING SAMPLE 03

Boston College, ACCT 1021

pages 11-15

Case Study assignment for Financial Accounting course that presented a scenario wherein we are tasked with analyzing a company's (Acme Co.) financial statement and assess their financial health and provide any recommendations

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ENGL 4445
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“New Vigor” for a Continuing American Revolution

When Fredrick Douglass made his Fourth of July speech, he was speaking as former slave, a black man, a fellow-citizen, and an American Scholar. As such a speaker, Douglass embodies a new age of literature, of literary school, for Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerging from the backdrop of the Classics and the Romantics, Emerson envisions an American literature that reflects reality at all levels, depicting the everyday of the wealthy and the poor alike. While Realism was not Emerson’s desired destination, necessarily, he saw that when literature—when art—reflects the extremities of society, it has then matured from the exclusive poetics of the sublime and romantic. As a manifestation of society’s lowest extremity in America, Douglass clashes with Emerson’s outlook on progressive literature, proving himself, not only an American Scholar, but a “new vigor” necessary to uphold America’s stake on true and complete freedom.

Emerson defines the education of a scholar by the combination of the three influences of nature, books, and action. This trident generates the scholar, the “delegated intellect,” in the whole man—the “One Man” (Emerson, 2). The first, nature, reflects the circularity and continuity within the universe, that of time and its actors. For Emerson, there is neither beginning, nor end, but “Polarity,” defined as an “Undulation in nature” (Emerson, 8). Douglass is a proven figure mending the poles of thinking and acting, as it will later be determined through the second and third influences.

The second influence for the American Scholar is the past. The past is preserved and then manifested through various mediums, of art, literature, institutions, et cetera. The most influential, according to Emerson, is books, which are used to inspire an active soul to create. “We hear that we may speak,” and as such, Douglass, in his speech condemning the current state of American society, resurrects the Declaration of Independence, refreshing the memories of the American public of the causes of the inception of this country (Emerson, 5). “To say now that America was right, and England wrong, is exceedingly easy,” but Douglass is re-evaluating just how right, or

wrong, America is now (Douglass, 3). Juxtaposing the Declaration of Independence, and its claim that “all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,” to American slavery, Douglass highlights an incongruity, an imbalance, in the American value system as it stands now (Douglass, 17). What Douglass is able to do with his quoting of the Declaration of Independence is bring forth this foundational document and, in preserving its purpose and meaning, labeling Thomas Jefferson, its primary author, as an American Scholar through Emerson’s claim that “it came to him, short-lived actions; it went out from him, immortal thoughts” (Emerson, 3). That is, in the simple act of drafting the letter to declaring independence and thereby starting a revolution, Jefferson has immortalized its claims and rhetoric, those mentioned above, the Declaration’s preamble. In the very same sentence, Douglass continues, invoking Jefferson once more with a different quote, with the combined purpose of using their—the slave-owning whites—own words against themselves.

Douglass has read the past and sees it still relevant in his contemporary time. “But genius looks forward,” Emerson says of scholars (Emerson, 5). In Douglass’ speech, however, he defiantly states that his “business [...] is with the present” (Douglass, 7). Rather than evolving from the past, Douglass is reinstating a claim made in the past—the American past—to shed light on the inequities of the present. This is not evidence against Douglass as a scholar, but in fact, evidence in proving his genius. The American people have forgotten, or perhaps ignored, their values, selectively applying them to whites, but not blacks. The oppression of the slaves is an action of the past that should have been eliminated with the signing of the Declaration of Independence. But, the liberties of the American Revolution were not extended to slaves and blacks, and the oppression remains. Douglass responds, “you have no right to wear out and waste the hard-earned fame of your fathers to cover your indolence” (Douglass, 7). America is going back in time, to the pre-Revolution state, reversing the actions of the nation’s Founding Fathers. If genius looks forward, Douglass is genius, because he has warped time, not just to his liking, but in interpreting reality. While time may have passed since the Declaration and the Revolution, its liberties have remained only on paper and have never been enacted. America, therefore, is still living in their past, looking forward alongside Jefferson and the revolutionaries.

And like Jefferson and the Founding Fathers then, Douglass, now, is taking action.

Citing action as his final influence over scholars, Emerson states that, “without [action], thought can never ripen into truth” (Emerson, 6). The Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War should have sufficiently immortalized its objective liberties, however, by evidence of the remaining practice of slavery and oppression of blacks, it has not. “America is false to the past, false to the present, and [...] false to the future,” because of the incompleteness of equality (Douglass, 9). This speech, among his other acts, is action, Emerson’s final criterion. Frederick Douglass is an American Scholar.

As an American Scholar, Douglass, however, fills but a single role in the greater “One Man” Emerson describes. Douglass, along with other scholars, is the intellectual center, the personification of and impetus for “Man Thinking,” Speaking in front of a crowd gathered for the celebration of the Fourth of July, Douglass harnesses a unity by repeatedly referring to his audience as “fellow-citizens.” However, his pronouns shift to represent a difference between his audience and himself. “Fellow-citizens! I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies,” Douglass says, removing himself, and with him all blacks and slaves, from the greater mass of the American population (Douglass, 18). There is harmony in his use of “fellow-citizens,” which he is quick to dismantle, reflecting the inconsistency between the Declaration’s preamble and the still remaining institution of slavery. If Emerson poetically says, “one is leaf, and one is flower,” Douglass says one is tree, one is the soil on which the tree grows (Emerson, 3). That is, oppressors are growing on the backs of the slaves, living as two different entities. However, the case has already been made for Douglass as an American Scholar, thereby being a part of “One Man.” Then, harmony is recreated, as it is then proven that slaves are as much man as their owners, sharing in the liberties of the Declaration.

Emerson speaks of the progressive nature innate to scholars and the potential of any era. In literature, he sees the progressive, liberal movement in the direction of the ordinary, wherein literature is no longer of the Romantics, but of Realism, depicting the everyday and the every person, not just the privileged. “New vigor, when the extremities are made active,” is seen in the people and with Douglass, not only is the literature of the times depicting the slavery and the slave’s outlook, the literature itself is being produced by slaves and former slaves (Emerson, 12). This, perhaps, is the most

“common,” the most “low,” it can get, which gives “insight into to- day” (Emerson, 12-13). The American Revolution was not yet over, but a “new vigor” was necessary to push it over the edge, to fully embrace the freedom and liberties it called for. Douglass is that necessary new vigor.

That Frederick Douglass is an Emersonian American Scholar is now an almost indisputable fact. He checks all the boxes of Emerson’s requirements, in the end accomplishing his duty as “Man Thinking” by guiding men to “facts amidst appearances” (Emerson, 8). The greatest fallacy in history may have been the American Revolution with regard to slavery and the blacks. The oppression that the colonists so nobly fought was never destroyed, only relegated to a smaller portion of the population. As the American people celebrate their independence, Douglass sees this fallacy ever clearly standing before them as an invited speaker. As former slave, American Scholar, and perhaps most importantly, fellow-citizen, Douglass continues the fight of the revolution that called for liberties and unalienable rights. Douglass “is the world’s heart,” and he is resuscitating the “One Man” through the new vigor necessary to complete the American Revolution (Emerson, 9).

Work Cited

Douglass, Frederick. "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" 5 July 1852. *Teaching American History*. Web.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The American Scholar." Cambridge. 31 Aug. 1837. *Emerson Central*. Web.

[sic] Studios Whitepaper

—*draft*—

If one were to say that society has grown lethargic, an incredulous mob may well point to the growth of cumulative global GDP, the leaps in technological innovations, and the overall quality of life increases globally. However, the metrics we use seem to be the very thing preventing any significant advancement.

Economic growth may not be the ultimate goal of a rural village in South East Asia. In fact, many of the Karen minority ethnic group in Burma, describe their ideal state of living as the "simple life" in the mountainous Burmese jungles. It's not a massively productive economy they desire, but an economy that can serve their basic needs and sustain their way of life. Silicon Valley—the beating heart of modernity and productivity culture—has stalled in real innovations, only repackaging what already exists. And finance seems to exist for the sake of finance itself. In short, this may be a matter of redefining 'value' as we know it.

What we value seems to be relegated to money matters. 'Value' has almost become synonymous with monetary value. This is easily seen in the wage gap between investment bankers and public school teachers. 'Essential workers' has become a popular phrase, yet 'essential' does not, in our current economy (or perhaps society), equate to 'value'. The value creation that Silicon Valley touts and claims is currently being measured by the wrong metric and subsequently rewarding the wrong actors.

This lethargy has led to global affairs of the same mindset. Development initiatives and humanitarian aid programs are evaluated on growth as we know it and resolutions as we see fit. And with not enough political capital to go around, only select programs, crises, or conflicts are dealt with—the ones most urgent are the ones that fit our current definition of 'value'.

The change need not be a global overhaul, especially given the infeasibility of that. Localized actions, however, can yield great impacts. The small communities, localized societies that make up the larger arena, should be seen as equal, distinct players, albeit with many overlaps. With this acknowledgment comes a shift in perspective,

one that is not hell-bent on preaching and prescribing, but guiding and empowering.

Let's first look at the US. Its capabilities are tremendous and (even with its many shortcomings) it has a certain authority that enables us to share and lead. Our democratic values are humane and inclusive. Yet, we've focused more on spreading democracy than spreading those values. There is no evangelical doctrine to American democracy, yet we find ourselves fervent evangelists.

The values underlying the democratic structure are more universal and harder to deny. Armed with this doctrine should we approach our policies, our international interventions, and our measure of success. Our society's obsession with economic growth has led to see bi-polarity from only the lens of the two large powers. The others—bandwagoners—merely cling to survive. But, the tides of the world are less shaped by the larger powers, at least less than we have given them credence, and more by an amalgam that equally involves third parties. A study in the movements of these third parties (the bandwagoners), their manners of tethering themselves to the great powers, the moments that bring them to specific selections, can uncover what then is truly urgent, to where our attention and resources must be given. If third parties are consistently the spark of great wars, what's to say that their activities can't be the impetus for sustained peace?

While of course self-interest and self-preservation may be at the core of any decision made by a state, it's the types of threats or the timing of allegiances that would be interesting to see. Their definition of 'growth' would be a good place to start. By understanding their motivations and the historical movements that led to great wars, larger powers and players can intervene when necessary, where necessary, and know in what manner to do so. The approach is completely different.

The content must also change. Cooperation and alliances should be made with concrete plans for realistic, measurable goals. Mission-driven policies and alliances should take the place of coalitions around vague ideas and concepts. Underlying these mission-driven initiatives will, of course, be certain values, but we must make efforts to extrapolate from them specific objectives around solving problems and bettering society or the planet.

Burma opened the doors to their market and efforts were made to enter. However, lingering uncertainty regarding the regime and political stability led to hesitation on the part of international businesses and other states. NGO's, however, flooded the country with specific projects to accomplish, typically around human rights and conflict resolution. Burma's desire to find stability was overshadowed by political uncertainty, becoming an almost self-fulfilling prophecy to political instability and now an illegal junta in power.

If instead, the US approached with clear goals, say to create x number of jobs across all the states within Burma by 2020 while increasing ethnic diversity within the federal government, Burma might look a little bit different today. The NGO's that entered Burma had the right idea: a clear, enumerated purpose for entering.

Informed by historical evidence of third party movements and motivations leading up to great wars, the US, in fact any actor, be it NGO, corporation, or growing state, can identify where to intervene today in those third parties.

[sic] Studios aims to uncover those local ideas, motivations, and visions for their futures. Then, to push these ideas forward, the Studio will help establish entities (e.g., non-profits, startups) in the local community with locals at the helm. The hope is that this empowerment gives the local perspective more than just a voice, but a say in the discourse around their future and in the end a more peaceful world.

Reading List

- Allison, G. (2018). *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* Mariner Books.
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- Mazzucato, M. (2019). *The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy* (2nd ed.). Penguin.
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The Acme Co. Case Study on Ratio Analysis

The financial state of The Acme Company (“Acme Co.”) has been outlined and analyzed in the pages following. To summarize the findings, Acme Co. is financially stable in the short run, but in no way poised for growth. In a comparison between Acme Co. and the greater widget industry (“Industry”), Acme Co. outperforms the Industry in most areas. However, Acme Co. must be careful when approaching these figures, because the difference could be less a reflection of success and more a warning for restructuring. Below is a detailed report on the analyses of the financial statements of both Acme Co. and Industry, after which, a few recommendations for Acme Co.’s growth is laid out.

Cash Management

Evidence of high liquidity is pervasive throughout the financial statements of Acme Co. and clearly visible when the numbers are put into perspective through some of the financial ratios. Fundamentally, the current ratio of Acme Co. is 2.08 in year 19X5. While in itself this figure may appear to represent positivity (given that a current ratio greater than 1 is usually the goal), when viewed along side Industry’s current ratio of 1.49, Acme Co.’s 2.08 becomes slightly more concerning.

Because this ratio alone can provide only so much information, the numbers were put through a more rigorous test of liquidity through the quick and cash ratios. The pattern remains the same when the ratios of Acme Co. are placed side-by-side with that of Industry's.

With the information presented so far, of significantly higher current, quick, and cash ratios, the conclusion is that Acme Co. is too liquid. That is, for the widget industry, Acme Co. holds too many of their assets in one form or another, possibly meaning that Acme Co. does not re-invest in their own company enough.

When looking at these same ratios over time, between 19X3 and 19X4, Acme Co.'s asset to liability ratio rose significantly while Industry's remained steady. The reasons for this transition should be analyzed, linking trends in the industry or the culture in which it operates to the rise in these ratios. There is a possibility of a multitude of influences on this change, some innocuous and even irrelevant, but others potentially vital to the operations of the industry and Acme Co. specifically.

Returning to the issue of low re-investment into Acme Co., the Net Profit Margin paints a similar picture, only supporting that which was presented by the current, quick, and cash ratios. At 5.17% to Industry's 2.01% in 19X5, there is a difference of 3.16%, a gap that must be noted. That Acme Co. is profiting 3% more than Industry on every dollar of sale is seemingly figures to flaunt; however, this ostensible efficiency could prove to be deceptive to the public eye, and, more importantly, to the eyes of investors, devastating.

To say that Acme Co. is profiting more from every sale means that somewhere in the Income Statement, Acme Co. must be out performing Industry in one way or another. However, in Net Sales and Gross Profit, Industry is doing noticeably better; in Operating Expenses, Industry is still more

efficient; but in Income Before Taxes, Acme Co.'s figure rises above Industry's. This disparity can be traced back to Other Expenses, wherein Industry's 145.9 thousand overwhelms Acme Co.'s 26.7. This, none more clearly, supports the aforementioned lack of investments back into Acme Co. itself—a disconcerting notion.

Industry Turnover

In continued examination of the highly dichotomous current and quick ratios of Acme Co. and Industry, the trail leads all the way back to the assets of both. Simply put, Acme Co. holds more than double Industry in cash or cash equivalents while holding only a fraction of Industry's levels of inventory. Acme Co., therefore, is holding far too much in cash while holding oddly little in inventory.

The most obvious next step is to look at the Inventory Turnover ratios of both Acme Co. and Industry. Predictably, Acme Co. has a higher turnover ratio. Put in days, Industry takes almost twice as long as it does Acme Co. to supply. This, then, contradicts the findings of the consultants only insofar as their recommendation for inventory control and inventory reduction. The stock of Acme Co., in fact, may not be enough if the turnover is so quick. However, there is no pattern of increasing speed with the information at hand, which simply means that insufficient inventory is not imminent, although it also cannot be ruled out.

Acme Co.'s low inventory, however, does skew some of the data with regard to returns on assets. The ROA for Acme Co. more than doubles Industry's, producing a picture of an unprecedented ability to produce profit and with insane efficiency. This, however, is simply due to the significantly lower figures for assets, not a robust method of efficiency that Acme Co. has and Industry

does not.

Going forward, Acme Co. should carefully balance their cash reserves and inventory. Too much cash on hand—sans intentions of acquisitions or other investments—is a dangerous misrepresentation of the company. This liquidity either shows a lack of confidence in one's own company or a disregard of the flows of the widget industry; neither a good reflection onto the management, however untrue both may be.

Reengineer for Growth

The consultants are correct to point out the strength of Acme Co.'s Balance Sheet, especially the potential of the company's working capital. This can, in small part, be attributed to the company's A/P Turnover ratio, which is slightly higher than Industry's. That is, Acme Co. is quicker to pay payables than Industry is. While not a major deficiency, Acme Co. has given itself a little leeway and buffer to hold out paying its payables. This is especially significant when viewed in light of its A/R ratio, which is lower than Industry's. Acme Co., while diligent and quick to pay off payables, is lenient, possibly too lenient, when it comes to its receivables.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Rapid growth is possible for Acme Co. The financial statements reflect a positively operating company that has more potential than it does flaws—and more importantly, than industry competitors. Most important of changes is in investments, specifically back into itself. A focused restructuring for growth should revolve around increasing sales. This is where Acme Co. falls behind Industry the most. Operating expenses, labeled as General and Administrative,

from 19X4-19X5 has grown at a higher rate than prior years, all the while, Industry's has remained steady. The allocation of this expense must be intentional and astute. Acme Co. is in a good place with potential for enormous growth, but it stands on a precipice where faltering the wrong way could be devastating to the company. Use the above assessment to position this company to remain committed to the upward trajectory and fully harness the potential it has.