

### Dance of the Pen

My head teems with ideas as I anxiously step on the bare dance floor. In the quiet of the moment I, the choreographer, begin to turn the thoughts stirring in my head into movement conveying emotion. What began as nothing but ideas slowly transform into a beautiful work of art. Layering of steps, music, lighting, and costumes all go into creating a dance. Choreographing requires patience, perseverance, and infinite years of practice. As long as I strive for perfection, writing in freshman english calls for the same traits as composing a piece of choreography. Where in dance simple ideas become extraordinary motions, in writing the same uncomplicated thoughts morph into intellectual words on paper. If done properly, both choreography and writing express emotions that move and affect the audience. However, similar to my first time creating a dance, my first paper in freshman english did not connect with the reader at all. Thankfully, with much guidance and practice, I greatly improved my writing techniques. To create a memorable paper I need to take my time, trust my instincts and persevere. With nearly a year of practice under my belt and a much greater degree of patience, my thoughts on paper went from incomplete and difficult to understand, to developed and cohesive. Along with gaining patience, I learned the significance of perseverance, and not giving up after one failed draft, or in a dancers case, one failed routine. By finally understanding those three simple concepts, my writing improved tremendously. Specifically, The *Martian Chronicles* theme paper, The *Odyssey* final, and the Alternate *Odyssey* ending effectively demonstrate my growth as a writer.

Just like my early papers this year, my first attempt at choreography failed miserably. When performed, it received a mere golf clap and no one congratulated me on my work. Sadness took over me, because I loved my dance. It said something to me, but the audience clearly did not connect to it. When I asked a friend what went wrong, she claimed that it repeated itself constantly, and that she knew I could do better.

I vividly remember the day I turned in the *Martian Chronicles* theme paper. I walked into english with full confidence that I would receive an “A” on my second paper of the year. I took pride in my work, so I found it nearly impossible to contain my excitement when my english teacher returned the papers. To my surprise and disappointment, I received a “C.” Anger and the naivety that comes with the start of freshman year got the best of me, so instead of reading over the corrections and deciphering what went wrong, I immediately blamed my teacher for grading too harshly. Now, after reading my paper with the knowledge gained over the course of the year, I realize the fairness of my teacher’s grading; my writing on the other hand, needed serious work. When remarking on my paper, my english teacher correctly stated, “Needs work. You don’t find your topic at all, and you over-write and rely too much on awkward sentences...” (2). In the introduction paragraph I wrote, “Reading *The Martian Chronicles* allows the reader to learn from the past, examine the present, and influence the future. War is an issue that is occurring today, has occurred in the past, and will inevitably occur in the future” (*Martian Chronicles* theme paper, 3). In those two sentences, I proved my english teacher 100 percent right. Despite my small word rearrangement, I said the exact same thing twice. Although at the time I probably sensed the repetition, I felt intelligent with my word choice, provoking me to add a completely

pointless sentence. After learning what I know now, I would cut the entire first sentence, and change the order of the second. As opposed to talking about present, past, then future, I would go in chronological order in hope that the sentence would flow and make more sense to the reader. If I received the chance to redo this paper, I would take the time to write as many drafts as necessary until I come up with something I am proud of. As my english teacher always says, “good writing is rewriting.”

One of the first crucial steps in choreographing a dance must be determining where a dancers stands on the stage. Dancers receive their placement based on performance ability and skill level. But because spots are given out quite early in the process of choreographing, they often change as people improve or worsen. When I choreograph, I like to think of organizing my dancers, not just placing them. Organizing refers to putting my dancers in interesting formations that make sense. Arranging dancers in a dance relates closely to organizing ideas in a paper.

In the *Martian Chronicles* theme paper, I did not organize my thoughts well. But in the *Odyssey* final, I arranged my ideas in a more efficient manner that in the end helped me earn a “B.” At the beginning of the year, my english teacher told my class to write our papers based on the following three questions: What do you think? Why do you think it? Why do you think what you think? These questions that puzzled me greatly in the start of freshman year, enormously helped my *Odyssey* final. I successfully answered those three questions in my final, based on which character in the *Odyssey* I believed to be most loyal to Odysseus. By doing so, I set up a simple and easy to understand blue print for my essay. Learning how to properly organize my ideas assisted me in improving my writing; however, my *Odyssey* final could still use tweaking. In a paper

about loyalty, it completely makes sense to use the word “loyal.” Be that as it may, “loyal” should not be repeated in my short paper eight times. In the final I wrote, “Penelope remains loyal to Odysseus by not sleeping with any of the wealthy, and most likely handsome men living out of her house. While Penelope is being loyal...” (*Odyssey* final, 11). If I rewrote this now, I would extend my vocabulary to synonyms such as faithful, devoted, and true. I would also remove the words “is being” and replace them with “stays.” Although the *Odyssey* final definitely stepped it up from the *Martian Chronicles* theme paper, my writing continued to develop as the year progressed.

Now that the dancers know their choreography and placement, the fun part begins. An experienced choreographer knows how to allow his or her dancers creative freedom, while still keeping the movement clean. As a choreographer, I give my dancers time to let their emotions carry them away in freestyle. The dancers may move however they wish, as long as they incorporate basic technique and stay in the framework of their choreography. In choreographing and writing alike, my strong suit lies in creativity.

Without a doubt, I took the most pride in my Alternate *Odyssey* paper, titled “Diva Devine.” I felt even more confident turning it in than I felt about my *Martian Chronicles* paper, except in this paper, my ideas reached my teacher in the exact ways I hoped they would. For one, I succeeded in making him laugh. Despite my comedic success, I still had room for improvement. I used unnecessary taboo words throughout the paper that knowing what I do now, I could remove easily. In one sentence I wrote, “That [the arrival of Odysseus] was the beginning of seven long, laborious years of trying to make an ape into Tarzan” (Alternate *Odyssey* ending, 16). I could easily replace the word “was” with “initiated” to erase the taboo word and use better vocabulary. So even

though I definitely consider the alternate *Odyssey* ending paper my strongest, I can still improve.

The house lights dim. The dancers enter the stage feeling confident and nervous as I sit vulnerably in the audience. As a choreographer, my vulnerability comes from putting a little piece of myself in my dance for all to judge. Sitting with thousands of people in the crowd, I can only hope that my art will move them the way it did me.

When I write, the same feelings of vulnerability rush through my body. I want to incorporate myself in my work, yet I am hesitant because I fear that people will not like what I give them. In my first paper, my fear that my work would not turn out well outweighed my desire to include parts of me in it, earning me a disappointing grade. Although I received a higher grade on my second paper, it still did not meet my set standards, and I knew I could do better. Not until my third paper, the alternate *Odyssey* ending, did I finally take the risk and put myself into my work. The words and creativity reflected my personality and I took pride in the outcome. “The choreographer cannot deliberately make a ballet to appeal to an audience, he has to start from personal inspirations. He has to trust the ballet, to let it stand on its own strengths or fall on its weaknesses. If it reaches the audience, then he is lucky that round!” (Gerald Arpino).

As the dancers hit their final pose, the lights go out, and I am engulfed in a roaring applause. My ecstasy is reflected by the smile on my face as thousands of people approach me in order to congratulate me on a job well done. I would never call my dance perfect, for true perfection does not exist. However, I could not be happier with how it turned out, because it ideally demonstrated my improvement over the years. I love to choreograph, as I love to write, and it will never cease to amaze me that ideas so simple

can turn into actions so powerful. The art of choreography like the art of writing requires an openness to evaluate, change, and grow. Whether trying to achieve the perfect battement or find the quintessential word, I will continue to stretch my limbs, my mind, and my imagination. Without a doubt, this dance met my expectations, but my next one will exceed them.

