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Literacy Self-Study Reflection

If I'm being honest, I mostly read for school. I'm generally more interested in digital media like television, films, and Youtube videos. These platforms make ingesting information and appreciating artistry more relaxing. Having someone relay information to me verbally in a fast-paced manner takes less cognitive effort to enjoy while also offering more immediate satisfaction. That's not to say I don't love books. I've read plenty for my own entertainment and edification, and I'm well acquainted with the flow you experience when you can't put a book down. Digital media simply comes more naturally to me, and having to read a book for school is the best incentive to focus on a physical text instead. Because I don't read physical books all that often, I often feel I'm depriving myself of intellectual growth and stimulation. Thankfully, my literacy self-study has exposed that conclusion as short-sighted. I still receive plenty of stimulation through my personalized blend of media. I would even argue this spectrum of content has made me a better writer.

As mentioned, I still read for my classes. I examine syllabi that hint at my professors' teaching styles, lab manuals with fun displays of their personalities, interactive visual presentations, and other required texts. I particularly enjoyed reading Vershawn Ashanti Young's *Should Writers Use Their Own English?* and Melanie Gagich's *An Introduction to Strategies for Multimodal Composing*. They furthered my understanding of why I love certain content and highlighted how that taste affects my writing. *Should Writers Use Their Own English?* challenged

my preconceived notions of literacy and academia with novel information and expert argumentation. *An Introduction to Strategies for Multimodal Composing* introduced new terminology to practices I was familiar with but hadn't fully appreciated for the powerful tools they were.

Ironically, I partake of the fruits of multimodal composing everyday. They're a fundamental pillar of the videos I watch. For example, my favorite science communicator, Kyle Hill, used to use animated blackboard drawings to bring both science and fandom to life in his videos. I especially loved his video assessing the realism of the Darksaber, the only black lightsaber in *Star Wars*. PBS Digital Studios takes a similar approach in their hit show, *Space Time*, where they combine fun, easy-to-understand visuals with high level scientific concepts. Both channels also employ plenty of humor. At the end of a recent *Space Time* video, the host joked that Portkeys allow travel in and out of the supposedly apparition-proof Hogwarts because wizards are terrible at quantum mechanics. For decades, PBS has maintained its reputation as an intellectual hub, which lends weight to my point. Intellectualism looks different in the Information Age than it did in preceding eras. Audiences want to be entertained while they learn. Many desire thoughtful explanations and intuitive visuals to help them process novel concepts.

In many ways, I was born into the perfect period for my way of learning. My mind tends to drift, so it helps when a text goes the extra mile to keep me engaged through humor and visuals. It's clear that this has affected my own writing as well. I can clearly see how my writing improves when I apply a style I'm passionate about.

Most recently, I noticed this in an entry to my Introduction to Engineering journal. The assignment was to discuss the differences between high school and college. Since the assignment was asking me to relate my personal experiences to the reader, I felt a strong urge to use more

natural language. Specifically, I was really itching to employ contractions. My friends expressed to me that this was taboo in college writing, so I didn't use any. However, every time I broke an "I'm" into an "I am" it felt awkward. It felt like I wasn't relating to the reader the best I could, the way Vershawn Ashanti Young would want me to.

Contrast this with my personal writing. When I blog, I have free range to write as I please. I strive to employ a nice blend of brainy sophistication and casual humor. Personally, I feel it makes the writing more engaging and the information easier to retain. Those who've read my articles tend to agree. At times, I attempt to make my words poetic. I draw linguistic inspiration from the channel Kurzgesagt, which beautifully blends spoken word with animation to deliver informative videos.

There's also considerable visual influence from Space Time and Kyle Hill. This influence is evident across my articles in the form of embedded images, GIFs, videos, and links. I even regularly link to their videos in my articles as evidence or suggested further viewing. Selecting, placing, and sometimes crafting visuals may even be my favorite aspect of blogging.

The fact that all these excellent creators have emboldened me to write for fun and pursue new educational goals exemplifies how vital it is to embrace a variety of content. Watching videos to learn, reading books for pleasure, and studying texts for school are certainly different processes in how they stimulate the brain. Yet, it's the goal they all strive to achieve that unifies them. Each of them can excel at teaching you, and they're often at their best when employing tools like thought provocation, humor, and visual flair. A multitude of these methods is invaluable in crafting a well-developed intellect, and they can be combined in a plethora of impactful manners. I'd highly recommend a literacy self-study to anyone looking for further evidence to support this claim.