

Cover Memo

Writing this personal narrative was more like running a marathon rather than a sprint. Before one can complete a marathon, you must not only train your body, but prepare your mind for what is soon to come. While only taking about a month to complete, the journey was long and arduous. I struggled a lot finishing this final draft, battling my own doubts and criticisms until I finally felt satisfied with the final product. The peer reviews helped me see past a lot those insecurities in my head, validating what I can do well and open new avenues for improvement. Although some degree of ambivalence remains, I am happy with how it turned out.

Throughout this personal narrative, I felt that I wrote my own truth. When I first began drafting, I was more concerned with how others would perceive the message rather than if I were satisfied with it. But as I continued to write, at some point, I stopped caring about that. I wrote truthfully and unapologetically, speaking exactly what was on my mind. I felt that this was a distinguished strength throughout this essay, and I'm happy to say that my peer reviewers agreed. Both expressed their enjoyment of the unique voice and transparency of my drafts, which I was happy to hear. Finally, my peer reviewers complimented the introduction, which I felt was the most engrossing paragraph of the narrative. I was extremely content knowing that my peers enjoyed some of these aspects of my writing. I felt that a lot of the aforementioned points were strengths in my drafts, and it is reassuring to know they agree.

While overall content with my narrative, a persisting issue that I encountered was a lack of clarity and specificity. I often found it difficult to effectively define my literacy, and it showed throughout my drafts. When not having a concrete definition, it at times led to my writing to seem extremely broad. My peer reviewers touched on this, and suggested I really lock down my thesis on literacy. This advice made me strive to eliminate as much ambiguity and redundancy from previous drafts. Another point of improvement was my lack of confidence throughout. I know that this is essentially the point of the entire narrative, but I as continued to draft I hoped to taper down the amount of self-doubt. Instead of showing hesitance, I actively tried my best to write in a strong and direct manner. If I could do this again, I wish I went into the assignment with as much assurance and confidence as I do now. Rather than dwelling on my weaknesses, I wish I kept highlighting my strengths in writing. Obviously, hindsight is 20/20, but I hope to adopt this mindset and apply it to my works in the future.

Personal Literacy Narrative

I do not enjoy writing. Perhaps I should rephrase: I do not enjoy writing about *myself*, in any capacity. Whether it be job applications, prose narrative, or college admissions essays, I've always found writing them extremely difficult. I wholeheartedly believe that the absence of a unique identity has drastically hindered the development of my literacy. It's no one's fault, and honestly, it doesn't even bother me anymore- I accept that. The evolution of our unique personal literacies are a direct reflection of the environment and attitudes we are exposed to throughout life. As the eighth child in a strict Asian household, I often found it difficult to express myself and find my own identity. Not to mention, the constant pressure I felt to attain the conventional success that is incentivized in our society. This has culminated in my skewed interpretation of literacy, and why it remains such an abstract concept in my head. I believe this is why I do not enjoy writing about myself. A myriad of factors has contributed to this negative perception of my literacy, but the most impactful elements stem from my education, milieu, and societal pressures.

As the youngest child of 8 in a modern Asian American household, love can feel conditional at times. The best way to earn praise, recognition, and attention is to excel in your studies and extracurriculars. Consequently, my siblings took this to heart, and set an extremely high bar by the time I came around. We were pushed down a path where college and a lucrative profession were not debatable, so it was only natural I embraced this mindset at a very young age. I'm always reminded of this when my sister told my dad she wanted to grow up to be a baker one day, only to be met with laughter. "Don't be silly, bakeries are notorious for going bankrupt," he said. While she always insisted she was kidding, there's always a hint of truth in a joke, and I could tell she was hurt by those words. This memory served as a harsh reminder that

deviating from the established path of conventional success was not exactly acceptable in my family. I began shaping my literacy in a way that would promote conventional success, diving headfirst into my studies and extracurriculars. It was hard at times to not think of myself as just another version of my brothers and sisters. I found that the best way to cope with this nagging feeling was simply to ignore it, and instead focus on the “tangibles” of life: trophies, certificates, and awards. Even from a young age, I always prioritized receiving high marks in classes, playing a variety of sports, and volunteering for organizations to eventually attend a top tier university. Along the way, I guess I forgot to ask myself why I do this and if I really enjoy it. I saw school and learning as a linear path to success, neglecting the journey as a way to develop myself as a unique individual.

There’s a common saying that the level of an individual’s creativity is determined by the dominance of the left or right side of the brain. Although widely regarded as a myth, I always believed myself to be right side dominant, where logical and analytical thought was easier to comprehend. Am I simply wired that way? Or perhaps was it just a lack of exposure to this other “side of the brain.” I feel that in many ways, my upbringing was not conducive to the development of creative and expressive thinking. My family, along with the vast majority of the United States education system, has a propensity to reward those who can achieve success in the core subjects of math and science. It was rare I had the time let alone the desire to explore new avenues for creativity and expression. Rather than spending any free time casually reading or writing a story, I was expected to practice, get ahead in my core subjects, or work at a job. It was never a priority in my family to cultivate an interest in these creative facets of life, so it continued to become a blind spot throughout my upbringing.

After so much time spent neglecting my literacy, it feels like there's a hole in my mind. Not only is there no interest in these creative avenues, but I also feel lost when trying to explore them. Whenever creative thought or expression is asked of me, I can't help but feel insecure and unprepared. It's an indescribable feeling. Something that should be so fluid and natural just feels completely abstract in my mind, as if I'm missing a piece to a puzzle that everyone else has. Despite my desire to change, attempting to do so just feels artificial. When asked to create a creative story or unique interpretation of an art installation, there isn't some deluge of thoughts flowing in my mind. I might as well be staring at a blank wall. But when it comes to analyzing the trends of an economy, explaining the inner workings of a car's engine, or solving a calculus problem, it feels so much simpler. These concepts are something that I can back with science, theory, or formulas. But one's literacy has no rules or boundaries, which frankly scares me. While I feel that change is possible, the years spent neglecting my literacy will make this journey long and arduous.

Despite my desire to change and improve, I can't help but harbor these lingering feelings of insecurity. That doesn't mean I don't accept that this is who I am. I'm an individual who is a product of his environment yet remains content with the person they have become. My literacy is in a constant state of improvement, where I continue to explore the outlets of creativity and expression I have ignored throughout life. While I still dislike writing about myself, I will continue to do so if it means I can become a more well-rounded person. It's a common saying that discomfort is a catalyst for growth, and I hope that cultivating my creativity will make me grow as an individual. While I still do not like writing about myself, I hope to change that in the future.