Self-Discovery Journals in the College Composition Classroom

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“If speech is to be good, must not the mind of the speaker know the truth about the matters of which he is to speak?”

-- Socrates, in Plato’s *Phaedrus*

From the time I took my first composition class as a freshman in college, I was drawn to any discipline involving an abundance of writing. Upon the occasion to take essay exams, I was excited to express the knowledge I had gained (however limited) in my own words. Regardless of the fact that I was never allowed to write anything in first person form (which remained a challenge throughout my entire undergraduate degree program), I was pleased at having been granted this freedom to write. I quickly realized that not every student found these writing assignments so thrilling; in fact, most of my closest friends despised writing.

What is it that makes writing so enjoyable to some people, and such a troublesome task to others? What, if anything, can teachers of composition do to promote an enthusiasm for writing? As I have found examination of my past experiences a key to answering these questions, I am persuaded that the key to enthusiastic writing lies in the opportunities students have to explore themselves as individuals within their writing. As Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedrus* states above, we write well when we know the truth about that which we are writing. Providing students the occasion to write about themselves will not only increase their writing abilities but will also allow students the chance to look
deep within themselves to discover truths that may further their writing, truths that may otherwise remain hidden.

Before progressing to the “meat of the matter,” I would like to lay the groundwork for my thesis by defining “self-discovery writing.” James Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality* places what he calls “expressionistic rhetoric” under the umbrella of subjective rhetorical theory. Subjective theorists are those who would argue that truth lies within a subject and can only be discovered through “acts of internal apprehension” (5). Thus, the truths sought are identified through private acts, such as journal writing (11). Kinneavy’s text *A Theory of Discourse* describes expressive rhetoric as that which “involves a man with the world and his fellows to give him his unique brand of humanity” (396). This definition highlights the potential of expressive writing to enlighten the writer in those most significant areas of individuality: connection with others, as a means of connection with the self. Instructors of rhetoric who opt for the method entailed in Kinneavy’s definition may encourage students to revolve writing around their opinions of and experiences with their surroundings, while implementation of Berlin’s definition would involve a more “self-centered” approach, in which truths are uncovered through self-reflective writing. These two ideas can be combined in one to create a form of writing that involves self-reflection as well as the evaluation of any influences outside of the self.

*Self-discovery* writing is yet another commonly used term for subjective, expressionistic, or personal writing, and will remain the preferred term throughout this thesis. Emphasizing a meaningful *effect* of writing, this sort of terminology is ideal for any teacher who seeks to confirm a purpose for teaching college composition. With the composition instructor as a guide, the journal as a self-discovery tool, and the writing
student as the explorer, students have the chance to make great discoveries about themselves, with the possibility of finding within themselves a powerful written voice as the greatest discovery of all.
CHAPTER TWO

History of Personal Writing in American Colleges

“They [students] think they must enlighten the world on The Tariff, International Law, and the Progress of Thought, when perhaps there would be much more real profit in trying faithfully to describe the view from their window.”

-- John Franklin Genung

Self-discovery writing is no novel idea. Plato’s Phaedrus considers the root of expression to come from the truth within, thus attributing the appropriate writing process to an expressive form. Self-discovery writing has emerged as one of the preferred methods of teaching writing over many centuries. Out of a debate regarding the function of the composition program between members of the Modern Language Association (MLA) 1895 to 1915 came a growing respect for the discipline of rhetoric (Brereton, 132). Soon colleges around America began experimenting with various composition approaches, including the expressive form.

In the late 1800’s, the “Romantic rhetoric” emerged in American colleges based primarily on the influences of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, and other prominent figures of the era. Berlin’s Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges details the Romantic rhetoric as an approach that views expression based on the self and the encounters with its environment as the key to knowledge. Although Romantic rhetoric placed a greater emphasis on oral communication than on written, it is similar to the expressive rhetoric in that it relies greatly on the human
experience, and the expression of the self (10). In a later chapter, Berlin reveals a common argument against Romantic rhetoric, when he states the view that “Emerson’s rhetoric” does not ultimately meet the requirements of rhetoric since it focuses on the personal, the private, and rhetoric is, in and of itself, a “social construction,” or something that involves communication among individuals or groups of individuals (42). Emerson’s foes were concerned that the Romantic rhetoric did not address social and political issues. Berlin addresses this argument by analyzing Emerson’s “Eloquence” essay, ultimately proving that this essay indeed promotes a required “public discourse” in the involvement of matters of the “democratic process” (50). Emerson’s rhetoric therefore does not replace the idea of individual illumination of truth, but argues that even in personal communication social and political issues are many times involved.

John Brereton’s collection of documentation regarding The Origin of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925 contains several articles written by rhetoric professors during the late nineteenth century. One such article by minister and German Ph.D. John Franklin Genung in 1887 addresses the importance of rhetoric as a discipline, stating that its value extends well beyond the composition course. “When in meeting the real tasks of life the man has forever shelved his Latin and Greek and mathematics, he begins to inquire anew into the principles of expression” (136). Genung continues by describing the study of rhetoric ultimately as a means to expressing individuality. He argues that the instructor of rhetoric is actually put into a fortunate role, in that he has the opportunity of teaching students “at the starting point” of this most important, life-long influential discipline (143). The instructor should seek for ways to invoke truth in the students’ writing process. One such method is to show students
literary examples by some of the great writers in history, all the while reminding students
to rely on themselves in order to find success as writers (153). Gertrude Buck, the first
rhetoric Ph.D. at the University of Michigan, also emphasized the individual as key to
better writing, as evidenced by her article entitled “Recent Tendencies in the Teaching of
English Composition,” printed in Educational Review (241). Buck argues that the student
of writing is not simply writing to prove to the composition teacher that he has learned all
the conventions and rules of rhetoric, but “attempts to convey to the mind of a friend
something which that friend is for some reason interested to know” (245). This idea goes
back to Genung’s quote above, which points to the writer’s “window,” or, the writer’s
individual perspective as the essential element of successful, convincing and interesting
writing.

As Genung, Buck, and others promoted expressive writing as a helpful tool for
teaching writing, there remained those who believed that teaching correctness in writing
was the most effective tool for creating “good writers.” In 1891, Harvard University
formed a committee of three men who had never taught a composition course. The ideas
that emerged from this committee significantly impacted the rise in teaching writing for
correctness. The method based on correctness is what Berlin refers to as the “scientistic
approach” to rhetoric, but is also known as the “current-traditional rhetoric” (62). The
ending result of an instructor using this approach is to teach expository writing, in that the
goal of current-traditional rhetoric is to “appeal to understanding and reason” (63). The
scientistic approach continued as a common approach for composition teachers, until
Fred Newton Scott, greatly influenced by Emerson, began developing an alternative.
Scott believed in a holistic approach to rhetoric, in which writers were to consider their
experiences, influences, roles, and audiences, all the while incorporating the correctness that current-traditional rhetoricians implemented (83).

Between 1920 and 1940, during the time of what James Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality* refers to as “progressive education” (58), expressive, or personal, writing became one of the most prominent approaches in composition programs. Progressive education sought to apply principles of psychology and sociology to education in an attempt to “reshape” universities across America in order to “better serve society, making it healthier, more prosperous, and happier” (58). A focus on the individual became the prominent educational tool, and there was no exception in the case of the composition classrooms nationwide. Articles were published during this time by well-known professors and rhetoricians, including Adele Bildersee, Oakley Calvin Johnson, Howard Francis Seeley, and J. McBride Dabbs, regarding the importance of expressive writing, and implementation many times included journal writing and peer editorial groups. Composition was seen as “inherently creative” (60), focused on “cultivating the individual” (72). The focus was strongly placed on changing, shaping, or “transforming” the individual, based largely on the influence of psychologist Sigmund Freud (74).

The composition department of Harvard University took part in implementing personal writing in the early 1900’s. Harvard’s personal writing approach involved writers presenting their reaction to personal experiences, rather than an “exploration of the inner self” (Brereton, 15). Harvard’s approach was attacked by many who believed Harvard was neglecting the teaching of literature, as well as by those who promoted a course “that emphasized the writer in his or her social relationships” (237). An anonymous article was published in *Century Magazine* in 1896 entitled “Two Ways of
Teaching English,” which was one of many attacks on the Harvard composition program (240). The author of this article purports that writers can be nurtured into becoming good writers only by exposure to literature. “To neglect the teaching of literature for the teaching of composition, or to assert that the second is more important, is like showing a man how to work his jaws instead of giving him something to eat” (240). The article denies the idea of “practice makes perfect,” in direct opposition to Buck’s article, which states that “it is by writing that writing is learned” (243).

Between the 1960’s and 1980’s rhetoricians such as Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, Donald Murray, James Britton, James Kinneavy, Walker Gibson, and William Coles, Jr. were some of the prominent advocates of self-discovery writing in the composition classroom, focusing on the individual as a priority in teaching writing. Many of these rhetoricians emphasized the voice of the individual. Examples from select advocates of the self-discovery approach during this time period follow.

In the 1960’s, James Britton undertook extensive research of writing development in students ages 11 through 18. His findings are recorded in The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18). Britton’s conclusions on expressive writing are based upon the hypothesis that “expressive writing, in carrying forward the expectations and resources of expressive talk, is likely to be both the most accessible mode for younger writers and the key to developing confidence and range in using written language” (142). In addition to the belief that expressive writing, by allowing writers to draw upon personal experiences, was an approach that all writers could identify with Britton also felt that it gave writers the potential to improve written language in various situations. As an example, Britton provided an excerpt written by a fifth grade student as a response to the prompt, “What
do you think is wrong with the Church and its services . . . how do you think it could be improved, particularly to attract more young people?” (145). The student’s writing was an obvious expression of her ideals and experiences with “the Church,” but ultimately addresses the prompt, which promotes transactional writing, as her purpose becomes to inform the reader of methods that would best serve the church. The student writes, “The Church should be more of a family willing to welcome new members, rather than the ‘holier than thou’ attitude which seems to prevail in some churches . . .” (146).

Kinneavy explores what he calls the “expressive discourse” to readers in his 1971 publication, A Theory of Discourse: The Aims of Discourse, as he views it as one of the modes of discourse that should be visited present, defined, and explored (393). Kinneavy considers the expressive discourse so significant that he states, “it is the expressive component which gives all discourse a personal significance to the speaker or listener” (396). He assigns three “dimensions” to expression: “Being-For-Itself, Being-For-Others, and Being-In-the-World” (405). These three components result in the achievement of “true self-expression” and individuality (406). Though these dimensions and this discourse have great potential, Kinneavy continues by presenting the dilemmas for some of the dimensions. The for-itself dimension can suffer because of a writer’s lack of self-confidence and willingness to be truthful, and the for-others dimension can suffer because of the writer’s denial of others’ opinions of him.

In the mid-1970’s, William Coles, Jr. wrote Composing: Writing as a Self-Creating Process as a textbook for students of composition. In the introduction of the text, Coles states that gaining an understanding of the “activity of writing” provides writers the opportunity to “discover also the ways in which one’s identity as a person is dependent
upon the languages he commands” (2). Coles’ ultimate goal is to help students find the voice within through language, declaring, “the best a teacher can do, a course can do, an education can do, is to put you in a position to improve yourself for yourself and be ready to acknowledge your effort” (5). The assignments that Coles includes in the text prompt students to examine themselves for a response. For instance, one of Coles’ assignments prompts students to explore the following phrase: “Holding hands is not really so easy a thing to do as many people think. How to hold hands is something a person must learn” (7). He intentionally withholds much additional information regarding this quote, simply listing some items for consideration as students write responses, and ultimately tying everything into teaching and learning (7). Coles’ “teaching and learning” ideas about writing instruction and assignments advocate the very design behind self-discovery journal writing.

In his publication *Persona: A Style Study for Readers and Writers*, Walker Gibson argues that the voice of an individual serves as the message to be communicated. This unification of speaker and message is a spin-off of Aristotle’s identification of three “rhetorical means of persuasion the character of the speaker, the audience, the argument itself” (xi). Even in transactional writing, Gibson states, “there is always an ‘I,’ whether he is expressed or not” (18). A voice is ever-present in every form of writing, and that is why Gibson focuses on finding that voice.

Ken Macrorie’s *The I-Search Paper* details his recommended approach to research writing, involving a complete focus on the student’s ideas for writing. Macrorie believes that a greater understanding of others results from a greater understanding of the self. Likewise, he considers exploration of an individual to be the key to unlocking the
curiosities and knowledge within that individual. To promote this exploration, he recommends free-writing and “truth telling.” Macrorie argues that by focusing on correctness in writing, teachers have created writers who write “say-nothing, feel-nothing, word-wasting, pretentious language of the schools” (22). He also feels that a damper has traditionally been placed over “truth telling” in writing because of teachers who would rather focus on correctness, and “the giving of too many instructions about how a piece of writing should be put together” (29). The formal structure with which many students are expected to write has suppressed the true, real knowledge that lies within each writer.

Peter Elbow published several articles that emphasized the “self” in the writing process, including “Closing My Eyes as I Speak,” which he included in his collection of essays, Everyone Can Write: Essays Toward a Hopeful Theory of Writing, and Teaching Writing. In this 1987 essay, Elbow promotes “writer-based prose” over “reader-based prose,” stating that even the most experienced writers sometimes write commonplace pieces “because they are thinking too much about how their readers will receive their words” (97). The power of any writer, Elbow argues, can be released when the writer is able to set aside the needs of the audience as he writes (97). He claims the teacher can assist students in setting audience needs aside, and ultimately helps students to release this inner writer, by being “a special kind of private audience to them,” one whom the writer can trust and believe in (109). Elbow’s approach, much like the approaches presented by Coles and Gibson, stresses discovery of the inner voice of each writer.

In a way, today’s college composition classrooms are similar to the classrooms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in that modern American universities offer a
variety of approaches to teaching the college composition course. Within the single “introduction to composition” course is found a wide array of teaching methods. As the student population continues to grow in its diversity, America’s college composition classrooms continue to make adjustments accordingly. For instance, Western Kentucky University’s English Department has designed its composition program in a way that caters to the diverse needs of students. The introductory composition course that WKU offers requires that instructors meet the following objectives:

*This course fulfills the A.I. (Organization and Communication of Ideas) general education requirement at WKU. The course will help you attain these general education goals and objectives:*

1. The capacity for critical and logical thinking
2. Proficiency in reading, writing, speaking

*The goals of the course are to introduce students to college-level writing and critical reading, to give students instruction and practice in writing and reading college-level essays, and to make students aware of how various audiences and rhetorical situations call for different choices in language, structure, format, and tone. Students receive instruction and practice that allows them to clearly articulate their audience, purpose, and rhetorical situation for writing assignments. Reading assignments stress how and why authors make rhetorical choices and are designed both to immerse students in written language and to develop critical thinking, reading, and writing skills.*
Western Kentucky University’s rhetorical approach to the standard composition course explores issues of audience, purpose, subject, and writer, encouraging writers to undertake a search for the voice within. The above description illustrates the modern college composition course’s design of addressing diversity in education. The objectives consider the likelihood of many different situations presenting themselves to students, such as the challenge of writing in other disciplines, and equip students with the necessary preparation for these varied circumstances. By emphasizing the importance of audience awareness, these objectives also help students to consider the diverse population around them, looking within themselves to find the most appropriate voice for any given audience or situation. This approach creates the prime situation for use of self-discovery journals as a tool to explore the inner voice and the self, from which more public voices can be constructed.

Through this brief exploration of writing in American colleges and contributions to the field of expressive rhetoric is found a recurring theme of voice and the self. Many believe that understanding and utilizing these two elements should be viewed as necessary in learning to write well. In the following chapter, I will address the role that self-discovery journals play in manipulating and discovering the writer’s true voice.
CHAPTER THREE
The Voice of Self-Discovery

When you read good writing, you hear the sound of another human being talking to you.

A writer's style is the sound of a voice on the page. The natural place to start with a
beginning writer is with his or her own voice.

Kirby, Kirby, Liner Inside Out

Ralph Fletcher’s What a Writer Needs dedicates an entire chapter to the
importance of voice in writing. “When I talk about voice, I mean written words that carry
with them the sense that someone has actually written them. Not a committee, not a
computer: a single human being” (68). I would be mistaken to think finding and using
this voice is an easy task for everyone, but as Anne Lamott states in her work Bird by
Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, “the truth of your experience can only come
through in your own voice” (199). Even after many years of writing, I struggle to find my
own voice. I worry about what my readers will think of me. I recently came across some
of my writing journals from about ten years ago. One poem reads as follows:

Remember once when we were young -
The world did not know us.
Remember when our dreams once hung -
Upon a bed of roses.
When all our world was made up of -
Dreams come true and lace.
Remember when we didn’t care -
If the world would laugh at us.
Remember when they all stared,
Since they didn’t know who He was.
Remember all we shared together -
Before you met the world.

As a fourteen-year-old girl, I seemed to know exactly what I wanted to say. I knew, and had discovered my voice, even if only for this brief poem. Looking back on this poem, I can remember the circumstances surrounding it. My thoughts were constructed genuinely and truthfully in a religious poem. A couple of months later, I remember finding out that my two older brothers had looked through my journal when they made several hurtful comments to me about my journal entries. This event raised a significant awareness within me of the reader’s presence, and had a great impact on my writing from that time forward. The poem below is a chief example of the immediate influence my brothers had on my writing. Before sharing this poem, there are some things that you have to know about my 1995 brothers. Brent and Colby were the coolest brothers around. They played in a band together, and dressed in only the finest “hippie” clothes. They wrote their own music, with lyrics usually pertaining to nature, love, and any other 1960’s inspired theme possible. Fully realizing all of these facts about my brothers, and anticipating another raid on my journal, I wrote this poem hoping they would consider it “cool.” My words were written “freely,” with very little premeditated thought. The poem reads:
Tell me, do you see through me?
Just tell me what I ought to be.
My head is rushing round and round –
Catch it lightly on the ground.
Thoughts lose control as usual –
This feeling’s only mutual.
We eat the daisies carelessly,
And fly through the air so light and free.
Pick the prairie in the field –
Never use them as a shield.
Write my face and lose the thought –
Use the things that they brought.
Curse the winds with no intention,
Look at me and take my pen.
Tell me, do you see through me?
Just tell me what I ought to be.

This poem had no intentional meaning at the time it was written, but by utilizing words like “daisies,” “prairie,” and “field,” I had won “cool points.” Upon closer examination of this poem, I find the unbridled desire to be accepted and the longing to write, undisturbed. Even though I would not consider this one of my well-written poems, and even though I wrote it with full awareness of my readers’ presence (which obviously is
not a “bad” thing), the element of voice is there, making itself known through the nonsense words I chose for my brothers’ sake. The adjustments I made to my writing for the audience is what Dan Kirby, Dawn Latta Kirby, and Tom Liner would refer to as “adapting” or “tuning” voice when writers “adapt their voice in a particular piece of writing to their particular purpose and to the anticipated demands of their audience” (79). In the case of this poem, I tuned my voice to adapt to my brothers’ unstated demands.

The discussion above invokes the question of audience that is also a popular issue addressed by several contemporary rhetoricians. For example, Kirby, Kirby, and Liner address the issue of audience awareness in the same text cited above, Inside Out: Strategies for Teaching Writing. Although they are in agreement with Elbow, who believes that there are instances when too much of an emphasis is placed on the audience, they recommend that aspiring writers should work toward the ability “to feel an audience as they write” (92). Just as Elbow states in Everyone Can Write, Kirby, Kirby, and Liner state that learning to consider the audience can be improved as teachers “provide opportunities for student writers to develop a growing sense of audience” (92). I will touch more on the role of the teacher as audience in chapter four, but it is important to keep in mind that the voice of a writer has room to change, or “adapt,” according to the various audiences who will be exposed to his writing. That is not to say that a writer need not maintain a solid sense of voice throughout all his written works, but the writer’s voice should be flexible enough to change for the sake of the audience. There are situations and audiences that call for a “tough,” a “sweet,” or a “stuffy” voice (Gibson 14), and the writer has the responsibility of identifying the appropriate, authentic voice within for any given situation. Gibson’s describes the “tough” voice as one that speaks in “short
sentences,” and “simple grammatical structures” (41). The “tough talker” takes a “what you see is what you get” approach to writing: “he knows only what he knows, and is aware of his limitations” (41). On the other hand, the “sweet talker’s” voice is one that speaks directly to the reader as an individual. This voice is common among ad-writers, or those who wish to address the needs or desires of the reader (85). Finally, Gibson’s “stuffy talker” is the one that he least recommends, yet it remains the common voice that students many times are required to use in research papers wherein the “I” is not allowed. The “stuffy” voice speaks as though it is “laying down the law as if one were Moses and all the world were a wandering tribe looking for the Word” (109). All of Gibson’s identified prose styles have the potential of creating poor writing, but by keeping the audience in mind, the writer not only finds the appropriate voice but also creates writing worth reading.

As demonstrated by my own reflective experience, I believe journals are key tools in the self-discovery process. A major aspect of the self-discovery process is uncovering the voice within each writer; by providing a safe avenue to express and reflect upon writing, journals are the most effective tools for this approach. The writer can use his journal to manipulate his voice without feeling inhibited by a pressing deadline or fear of scrutiny. As the term “self-discovery” indicates, the purpose of journal writing in this venue is to help the individual. As such, journals can be used for any personal matters, or otherwise, at any time. Self-reflection on the journal writings then provides a chance for manipulation of the writing therein, the place where the furtherance of writing abilities and the discovery of voice occurs. Beyond these purposes and perhaps outside the college composition classroom come opportunities for the individual to discover self-truths that
can ultimately be transferred to an act of self-therapy. Although a therapist is not required in every instance to assist in achieving the goal of self-therapy, he can become an extremely helpful resource for writers who wish to utilize self-discovery journals for self-therapeutic purposes.

I once read Stephen King’s On Writing and was struck by his statement “I’m convinced that fear is at the root of most bad writing” (127). How true this is! King reminds readers of the fear we have all felt while writing under any kind of deadline and encourages writers to let go of this fear. Although it is difficult to release our fear of writing under various circumstances, writers must do so in order to have a productive writing experience. What better way to begin a pattern of writing confidently than keeping a journal that only the writer will choose to see, judge, and share. The freedom that self-discovery journals offer makes them a freewriter’s utopia for confident, productive, and helpful writing. As such, writers who keep self-discovery journals should strive to let their inner voice exude boldly from their writings.

After freely writing in a self-discovery journal, the writer can review and reflect upon her writing by composing a written exploration for self-truths that are revealed in the past writing. My personal experience above is an example of this process. Whether the written reflection occurs the following day, year, or many years later, the potential that self-discovery journals have to provide self-truths is clearly evident. Barry Lane’s text, Writing as a Road to Self-Discovery, draws upon the idea of memory as a means to identifying self-truths in its first chapter, “Childhood: The Myth and the Reality.” Lane states, “writing is a way of discovering truth in memory, and with that discovery comes new knowledge and insight” (8). Lane suggests several activities for investigating the
writer’s memory, many of which require additional prompts for the writer. For example, Lane suggests that the writer locate a photograph of herself as a child, and then describe the picture from an outsider’s viewpoint, with careful attention to the details within the photograph, followed by writing the thoughts that the writer believes were going through her mind at the time the photo was taken. Finally, the writer is to reflect upon the photograph by using the self as it is presently to question the self as it was at the time of the photo (9). Lane’s “Reentering a Memory” activity is simply one of many ways that the writer can utilize her self-discovery journal.

As the writer manipulates his memories and written voice, he also has the potential to experience a sort of self-therapy. Esther Sternberg, M.D., Director of the Integrative Neural Immune Program at the National Institute of Mental Health, speaks of the self-healing nature of writing in her online article “Writing, Emotions and Memory.” Sternberg describes a type of writing in which the writer focuses on a memory. The memory starts off as something vague, but with each written word comes a clearer picture of the memory. The deeper the writer “digs” the more the traces of a past are found that have caused whatever it is that might be bothering the writer now. The writer will associate with senses and images of the past and will soon identify with feelings and emotions felt with the memory as well. This approach is similar to that of the “Intensive Journal” in Ira Progoff’s At a Journal Workshop. Progoff’s approach “brings about therapeutic effects not by striving toward therapy but by providing active techniques that enable an individual to draw upon his inherent resources for becoming a whole person” (9).
I realize that some may fear that a writer’s preoccupation with seeking an inner voice serves as a hindrance to development of other necessary elements of increased writing ability, but as Donald Stewart points out in The Authentic Voice: A Pre-Writing Approach to Student Writing, the process of searching for an “authentic voice” creates a prime opportunity for the writer to also develop “clarity of thought and expression, logical consistency, conciseness, stylistic felicity” (3). And once the writer finds the voice within for any given audience, the remaining writing processes, and the reading of that writing by an audience, become much more enjoyable and painless.
CHAPTER FOUR

Teaching with Self-Discovery Journals

*One has certain images and half-formed concepts in his head and he puts them down; the act of putting them down generates more images, more concepts, and often some organizing principles to put them together. The journal is the ideal place for these processes to take place.*

— Donald Stewart, *The Authentic Voice*

Through a more thorough knowledge of the various approaches and methods for self-discovery journals, the college composition instructor can easily come to rely on these journals as the facilitator for all student writing. When used regularly (perhaps even daily, if possible), self-discovery journals can become the key to an interesting, enjoyable writing experience for even the most novice writers.

There are some aspects of self-discovery journals that should remain standards for those who implement them in the college composition classroom. First, Stewart’s text *The Authentic Voice*, which I have referred to previously, promotes the use of journals as a means to finding the authentic voice. He notes the importance of always treating journals as unfinished writing (50). Self-discovery journals offer a safe place for writers to freely record and reflect upon their experiences and ideas, so the unpolished elements of the journals should not be addressed until they become essay form. Second, and perhaps more obvious, granting the use of the first-person narrative should remain a “rule” in self-
discovery writing. Without the allowance to utilize the first-person narrative, the “self” in self-discovery is diluted. It is vital for the instructor to strive to keep the writers’ ultimate goal of self-discovery at heart when assigning and reading self-discovery journals.

One of the benefits to writing instruction is its flexible nature. The instructor of self-discovery journals in particular should keep his options open as he selects classroom assignments and methods, due to the personal and potentially delicate nature of self-discovery journals. With each new set of students come different experiences, viewpoints, writing styles, and preferences. The instructor therefore has many options available to him as he familiarizes himself with the particulars of each set of students, and in turn implements self-discovery journals in the college composition classroom.

There are many known ways of assigning self-discovery journals. Some approaches are very specific; others are more ambiguous. Momentarily, I will detail the approaches of several writers, some of which are recommendations based upon the actual teaching experiences of those who have implemented some form of writing journals. Many of these approaches fall under one of the following categories that The St. Martin’s Guide to Teaching Writing lists as commonly used journal writing activities, which are

“Writing logs”: These provide a place for students to write ideas about various assignments, and then to reflect upon these ideas as they complete the assignment and as they prepare for future projects.
“Reading journals”: These are intended for students to respond to reading assignments for the class.

“Commonplace books”: This is a place for writers to record thoughts and experiences, as well as quotes from whatever it is they might be reading at the time.

“Research journals”: Research journals provide a place for students to record research as it progresses.

“‘Everyday’ journals”: These are normally assigned by the instructor simply as a way to encourage students to write regularly. Instructors may opt to provide prompts if students have trouble thinking of something to write about. (215-16)

The self-discovery journal can serve as the ideal host for any of the above writing activities, as long as the writer keeps the discovery of the self at the center of his focus.

Donald Stewart’s implementation of journal writing involved a very nonrestrictive approach, in which students wrote freely about whatever they chose. The result of this approach for Stewart was a vast array of writing topics and forms. Some students wrote poetry in their journals, while others wrote one-line statements of thought. Students wrote responses to books, reactions to campus experiences, and personal convictions; all were representative of what was going on within their mind at the time. Stewart’s approach would be considered the “everyday journal,” or as Ira Progoff calls it in At a Journal
Workshop, “the daily log” (86) as he encouraged students to write something down daily (47-82).

Another term for self-discovery journals, coined by Ralph Fletcher, is the title of his book *A Writer’s Notebook*. Fletcher considers his personal “writer’s notebook” to be his greatest writing tool, and therefore provides other writers with guidelines for keeping one. The writer’s notebook is intended for recording reactions to the subjects, or environment, around them (3). Obviously, reactions vary from person to person, but it is important that each individual writer is sure to record that which “moves” her (9). These are the subjects that produce the most interesting writing, both for the writer and for the reader. The writer then must keep her eyes and ears open, so that her sense of perception provides her with key ideas for her writer’s notebook.

To revisit Barry Lane’s *Writing as a Road to Self-Discovery*, there are many suggestions pertaining to the instructor of self-discovery writing. Chapter three of this thesis outlined a memory activity that Lane suggests, involving the evaluation of a photograph of oneself from long ago. This activity, of course, could easily be a part of the self-discovery writing journal. Lane continues by providing ideas for free-writing activities, all of which fall directly under the purpose of self-discovery journals: to provide a place to write freely. For a brainstorming activity, Lane suggests “Brainstorming Your Life” (17), which is simply a list created by the individual of any thoughts pertaining to the individual’s life. It is important for writers to remember the following things as they “brainstorm for their life”:
• Don’t screen things out. Bad lists often lead to good lists.
• Write quickly.
• Don’t worry about spelling, grammar, or style. (17)

Another of Lane’s suggested activities is entitled “Hand Mapping,” and involves an element of drawing, which is also acceptable for self-discovery journals. The writer would trace her hand, and then assign a personality trait or a feeling pertaining to her on each of the five fingers. From each of these fingers, the writer must then draw lines to connect experiences with those feelings or personalities. Finally, the writer can freewrite for several minutes based upon one of the selected experiences (21-22).

Jeffrey Berman, a professor of literature-and-psychoanalysis courses at the University of Albany, New York, began implementation of what he called “diaries” in his classes in 1976. Since this particular course focused primarily on literature, Berman treated the diaries as the lab portion of the course, providing opportunities for confidential and introspective writings. In his introduction to Diaries to an English Professor, Berman describes the diaries as assignments wherein “students would be encouraged to turn their attention inward, and with the help of insights acquired from readings and class discussions, examine their own lives” (1). The analysis that students conducted on themselves was comparable to the analysis they were required to conduct for fictional characters they were studying in assigned literature. Upon receipt of the diaries, Berman
opted to read anonymous excerpts aloud each week in class. He wanted to provide students the opportunity to assist in the analytical processes of their peers. Surprisingly, even while knowing that their diaries may be read aloud in class, students still took an avid interest in the diary assignments, and sometimes included significantly personal material in their diaries. Some students, on the other hand, were opposed to the personal nature of Berman’s diary assignment, so Berman provided them the option of writing about their writing, in an attempt to analyze essay writing skills rather than analysis of the self.

Though Berman’s class was mostly literature-based, his diary method could easily be used in writing instruction courses today. Berman’s method has been a huge success in his literature-and-psychoanalysis courses over the years, as he has used it consistently since 1976, when he first tried the diaries in class. This method is similar to those implemented by various rhetoricians in the early twentieth century, which included journal writing and peer editorial groups, as mentioned in chapter one.

William Coles, Jr.’s approach according to Composing: Writing as a Self-Creating Process provides themes for students to base their self-discovery writing upon. Coles provides themes that students can relate to personally by including thought-provoking prompts about the theme he has provided. One of his prompts has to do with a discussion of the trouble with education a look at why some teachers do not teach and why some students do not learn. To further stimulate the response of the writer, he asks such questions as, “What are the fundamental
difficulties you encounter even when you want to learn, even when you make up your mind to work at it?” (63).

Another somewhat different approach, utilized by Nik Peachey, of the British Council on Teaching English, is what he terms “Learner Diaries.” These diaries are an ongoing, private dialogue between student and teacher, with the intention of both writers getting to know one another, as well as themselves. Peachey sometimes opts to complete the diaries by audiocassette, stating that they help him become familiar with any problem areas students might have related to language. The major difference between Peachey’s learner diaries and the previously mentioned approaches is that his ultimate goal is based more upon building a relationship between student and teacher than on the student partaking in the discovery of the self. Peachey’s learner diaries could easily be adapted to a goal of self-discovery, as long as the instructor is careful not to interfere with the discovery paths that the student takes.

Any of the above approaches could be used as part of the self-discovery journal. Although the approaches slightly differ from one another, a common purpose unites them, and that is the purpose of self-discovery. The most important belief that should be shared about the self-discovery journal is the idea that these journals are forever an “open book.” Even once a student completes the composition course in which self-discovery journals are assigned, his journal serves as an excellent source containing his experiences, thought processes, and ideas, providing a reference tool for any future writing. It is hoped that the self-
discovery journal will become to the student an inseparable part of his being that he continues to use throughout a lifetime of enlightening experiences.

METHODS

Self-discovery journals are by no means limited to one certain method. The instructor can determine to utilize in-class or out-of-class writing, technology, peer editing groups, or journal “art” forms. I have included an outline of each of these options below in an attempt to assist instructors in choosing the best methods for their students. All of these methods can be combined in any given course.

In-Class Writing

As a new adjunct instructor for a first-year experience course, I was excited about the opportunity to implement self-discovery journals in my very own class. As weeks passed, a decreasing number of students turned in their journal assignments. This experience has highlighted for me the benefit of implementing in-class writings, which I truly believe would have increased the percentage of completed journals in my class.

In-class writing assignments are not only beneficial for increasing student participation but they also create a sense of teamwork in the composing process. Although self-discovery journals are ultimately intended to help the individual identify self-truths and an inner voice, writing among peers is sometimes helpful for motivation. Additionally, in-class writing can promote interesting discussion regarding the self-discovery process.
Out-of-Class Writing

Although participation may suffer, out-of-class writing does present some advantages. The primary advantage is the more private environment that out-of-class assignments provide. Many students may feel pressured when asked to write in-class, and may even believe they write better when given a quiet, secluded environment. It is imperative for instructors to gauge their students’ preferences for writing in or out of class, providing opportunities for both.

Technology

Instructors should have an awareness of the many technological tools available to them for writing instruction. One such tool that has become increasingly popular over the past decade is the Blackboard software that many higher-education institutions implement. The advantage to using Blackboard is its many options. Students can submit writings directly to the instructor using the digital drop box option, or can post them on a discussion board, which is available for all the other students to see. The discussion board allows for anonymous entries so that students can post more personal entries without being identified by other students, if desired.

Another technical tool available to instructors is that of “blogs,” which also have become increasingly popular over the years. Blogs are offered by several different web servers, and are available to individual and group users. Church groups have created blogs to hold discussions throughout the week. Websites such as blogspot.com, pleonast.com, and others have created the possibility for anyone who requests a login identification and password to create a
blog on these sites. Instructors can create blogs as a place for students to submit journal entries, keeping in mind that most blog entries are public, to be seen by members of the blog, and sometimes even strangers who are “surfing the web.”

Additionally, instructors may opt to utilize electronic mail. Email provides a quick, convenient means of submitting journal entries, but can many times affect the style of the writing submitted. With today’s popular chat rooms, instant messengers, and so forth, many users have taken on a new form of writing that includes abbreviations, acronyms, poor punctuation, and more. This style many times creeps into the emails that are sent from person to person. Although the self-discovery journals are not focused on correctness, the entries should be written in such a way that the reader can understand the content of the journal. Instructors who choose email as a tool for self-discovery writing should strongly reiterate the importance of writing with the reader in mind in order to avoid confusing and unclear language.

Finally, instructors may have students use audiocassettes to record the journals, as in the case of Nik Peachey’s learner diaries. Tying the audiocassette recordings to actual journal writing in some way may prove beneficial for the writer, such as in the quick access it provides to the writer. The writer can simply press a button and record ideas. Later, the recording can be used for the writer to listen and reflect in written form upon the ideas he hears.

**Peer Input**

Just as Berman implemented peer response to his diaries, there are other ways that peers can provide input to journal writing. For example, students can be
placed in pairs or groups to edit or review their peers’ journals, thereby creating an interactive way for students to examine their writing. When using peer input for self-discovery journals, students should discuss with one another the possible avenues in which the writing is headed, prompting the writer to examine what it is that she has the potential of discovering about herself, whether as a writer or as an individual. Additionally, peer groups can assist the writer in finding her inner voice by highlighting writing that stands out as the strongest, or most authentic.

There are potential dangers to peer input groups to self-discovery journals, including the possibility of group members embarrassing a fellow writer or making the writer feel inadequate in some way. In order to avert these kinds of experiences, the instructor must make it clear to the groups that the role of each group member is to serve as an encourager. Comments such as “you really sound like a madman here,” for instance, would obviously discourage the writer, and could likely damage the student’s writing and self-discovery process permanently. On the other hand, responding with comments such as “What an experience! Do you think this experience has shaped who you are today?” simply encourages the writer to continue in the self-discovery process.

Journal “Art”

Expression can take on many forms, including speech, writing, drawing, song, and other forms of art. Barry Lane’s text *Writing as a Road to Self-Discovery* identifies several techniques for self-discovery writing that entail an alternative to simple journal writing. One technique Lane suggests is that of “Cave Writing,” in which students create doodles portraying various experiences
or thoughts. For the visual expressers, journal art can provide a means for students to express those initial ideas that may be difficult to express in words. Upon the “artistic” expression, the student can then reflect upon the work of art to discover the subject that lies within to be analyzed and written about in the self-discovery journal.

EVALUATION

The teacher who chooses the self-discovery method of writing instruction immediately and irrefutably brings upon himself some difficult challenges. The issue of evaluation can easily become a difficult challenge, as the instructor tries to find the best method for grading journals that are intended for the students’ self-discovery.

Think about these words: evaluating a student’s self-discovery journal. To me, that phrase is oxymoronic, as stamping a grade on the journals can become the quickest and easiest way of stifling the self-discovery process. Instructors who utilize the self-discovery journal serve only to promote the process of self-discovery. The instructor’s feedback should consist simply of encouragement for the student to explore the self more thoroughly. Grades should be based solely on participation and adherence to instructions, if at all. For instance, credit would be awarded to students who turn in journal assignments, and students who do not turn journals in would receive no credit. Instructors may also opt to provide points based on the number of pages students turn in. Instructors do not have to require that every journal entry be turned in, but perhaps one or two per week. To be sure, the journals are not the primary source of graded writing, but are the facilitator...
for these assignments. Perhaps *The St. Martin’s Guide to Teaching Writing* states it best: “The issue of whether to evaluate journals is simple to answer: don’t” (220).

My Personal Experience

During the spring of 2006, I was assigned as a first-time instructor to teach a first-year experience course at Bowling Green Community College. Knowing that I would be working on this thesis as I taught, and most of all believing self-discovery journals to be wonderful tools for any teacher, I decided to implement journal writing. I believed the journals to be particularly relevant to this course, considering that the course objectives focused on the students’ adjustment to college, and ultimately life beyond college.

I determined that students would be required to submit a total of ten journals (once per week for the first ten weeks of the semester), giving students the opportunity to make up journal entries during the last five weeks. Each journal entry was required to be a minimum of one page in length, and could be submitted via email, Blackboard, or in person; all were out of class assignments. The semester began with the intention of assigning students different topics, or prompts, each week, but I soon decided to remove these prompts, inviting students to write freely about whatever they wished. I provided written feedback on the journals I received, trying to serve as a positive encouragement for the students. I refrained from commenting on their writing skills, or lack thereof, as my ultimate goal was to provide an avenue for students to write freely in the
hopes that their desire to write would increase as the semester progressed.

Students were awarded the total possible points for each journal assignment that they turned in, regardless of spelling or other grammatical errors.

On the negative side, only six of my fourteen students regularly turned journals in, although all but two students turned in at least one entry at some point. The journals I received ranged from extremely personal to particularly distant or impersonal entries. (See Appendix A for sample journal entries and responses.) When I received impersonal writing, I tried to word my feedback in such a way that would hopefully cause the student to think more deeply about the situation he was writing about. For example, I received one journal that simply restated the homework assignment for the day, followed by a step-by-step plan for researching the assigned topic. In my response, I wrote, “Do you think your research might affect your personal take on the issue at all? I hope this project gives you the opportunity to learn something new about your life in college. – Mrs. McAllister.” When I received entries that were more personal, my responses were intended to let the student know that I am listening and that I care. One of my students wrote about the stress of working, going to school, and paying bills. I responded, “Wow you really are busy! Just hang in there. You continue to be a great asset to our class keep up the good work, and it will all get better in time, don’t worry. – Mrs. McAllister.”

Toward the end of the journal assignments, I administered a survey in order to measure the students’ interest in the journals, and their opinion of writing in general. The survey included the following questions:
1. Generally, how do you feel about writing? Is it something you enjoy, or something you dread? Please explain.

2. Has your opinion of writing changed at all so far this semester? If so, how?

3. Do you enjoy the journal writing assignments for this class? Why or why not?

4. Do you feel that the journals have affected your opinion of writing? Have the affected your writing in any way? Please explain.

5. Did you find the instructor’s responses to your journal entries helpful, insightful, or in any other way interesting?

6. What could the instructor have done differently to improve the journal writing assignments?

7. Please feel free to add any additional comments about the journal writing assignments for this class here.

Responses

Overall, my students responded positively to the majority of the questions. (See Appendix B for detailed responses.) Most of them enjoyed the journal writing because they could write openly and freely. One student even made the comment that she enjoyed the journal writing assignments because, “I like writing about things I do, or did. Because it just makes it fun.” Another student wrote that he liked them because, “I get to share and talk about what I be doing sometimes.” Generally, the students found my feedback helpful, making statements such as, “My instructor’s responses to my writing make me feel better about my writing,”
“I like getting feedback because you don’t just give us a grade you actually help,” and “She made me really think. All her comments were interesting.”

A handful of students responded negatively to the survey. One student expressed his wish for a stricter “rubric” for the journals. He felt that I was too lenient on things such as format, technical errors, and so forth. This same student wrote that he was “starting to hate” writing, commenting that there was “just too much.” Another student viewed the journals as simply adding more to her homework load.

What I Learned

Reflecting upon my experience, I have learned some very valuable lessons for future implementation of self-discovery journals. Most of the lessons I learned relate to negligence on my part. For one, I believe it would have been beneficial for students to know the purpose of the journals. I never made it clear to my students that the journals were intended for self-discovery, and knowing more about my true intent may have increased their desire to write, to see journals as more than just “more homework.” As The St. Martin’s Guide to Teaching Writing states, “Students need to be shown, and then convinced, that a journal is a record of a mind and its thoughts, rather than a record of a body and its movements” (Glenn 216). Encouraging the students to use their journal entries to spark ideas for essay assignments also would have been appropriate. Additionally, along these same lines, I feel that I should have specified the idea that these journals have nothing to do with “correctness,” so that students might better understand the feedback I give them. I also believe that in-class writings, even if used only
occasionally, would have increased participation, and also might have produced
some intriguing class discussions. Finally, I believe I devalued the importance of
my participation in the journal writing assignments. Just as The St. Martin’s
Guide to Teaching Writing suggests, “You, too, should join your students in the
journal-keeping practice, recording your own classroom experiences and your
responses to your students’ journals and essays” (Glenn 219). I look forward to
another semester, another opportunity for me to share the wonderful tool of self-
discovery journals.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

My Own Self-Discovery

I am delighted that my eyes have been opened to a new world of self-discovery journals. About a third of the way through my research, I bought a small, blank, lined tan leather journal. As I opened its unused pages and inhaled the smell of the crisp new binding, I found myself thinking back to the journals I used to keep, years ago, before I neglected them for educational and career pursuits. I determined to use this journal to serve me in these and other pursuits. So far I have written in my journal only three times, but these brief beginnings have already served as the start of my journey to self-discovery.

Excerpt from entry #1:

Here again, I’ve started something for myself that I dread I won’t complete. I’ve been in this habit for quite some time—the habit of fear of incompletion. Why am I so afraid? I have, after all, finished many of the things I’ve set out to do. But it’s the writing that gets me every time. How many songs have I started to write that I can’t seem to finish? The melody sounds strange or uninteresting, or the lyrics are just lame. I have lots of beginnings with no end. And so I hope I can dedicate myself to this journal, at the very least, so that I can find some key that leads me to the endings I am searching for.
My hope is that this thesis helps you explore new ways of increasing student interest in writing. Based on my findings, I would recommend including a passage like the following in your course syllabus if you choose to implement self-discovery journals:

**Self-discovery journals**: You are to keep a self-discovery journal throughout the semester. The journal serves to provide a foundation for the various writing pursuits that this course requires, ultimately assisting you, the writer, in strengthening your various inner voices, and helping you identify the most appropriate voices for various rhetorical circumstances. I will occasionally provide you with writing prompts for your journal, but it will primarily be used as a safe place for you to freely record your thoughts with the intention of self-discovery.

By providing initial clarification of the purpose of self-discovery journals, your students can better understand how the journals may be used, and that the journals serve as much more than simple busy work. As you begin a self-discovery journal venture in your composition classroom, I hope that you too will participate in this most inspiring writing journey.
Appendix A

Sample Journals

I have included five excerpts from selected anonymous journals I received during my first teaching experience. The punctuation, grammar, and spelling have been left exactly as written by the students. I have also included my responses to these journals. The selection of student writing below demonstrates the general range of writing I received.

Sample 1

In unv. Exp we are doing a Group project on Health and Stress for 15 minutes. I am in group 3 and we decided on Smoking and Stress. But our focus is mainly on Drugs “cigarettes” and “marijuana”, and “alcohol” 3 of the main things that go on outside of a student's life.

Reply: Did your group project/research affect your personal take on the issue at all? I hope this project gave you the opportunity to learn something new about college life.

Sample 2

I just came back from a four day weekend. I didn’t matter because I don’t have school on Mondays. I didn’t go home so my weekend was boring. “Today is Monday, and it is Tuesday”. This means it is Tuesday and feels like a Monday.
B/c of the holiday people are low on gas and lazy. But Wednesday is hump-day, and hump-day is the hard day or long day...

*Reply:* Sometimes it’s hard to motivate ourselves to keep on meeting our responsibilities when the days seem to drag by so. What methods do you use to motivate yourself to keep coming to class, going to work, etc.?

Sample 3

I have a lot going on right now. I have so much school work. And no time to do it. My schedule is so tight I can barely breathe. I really hope I make it through this semester. Between school, homework, job, and my personal life I’m overwhelmed. Next semester I’ll make it a point to do my schedule better.

*Reply:* Wow – you really are a busy student! Just hang in there – it will get better, don’t worry. Besides, think of what you can learn from this experience!

Sample 4

Have you ever woken up in the morning and your arm is completely asleep? Isn’t that the worst feeling in the world? It’s especially unpleasant if you have one of those alarm clocks that just goes "ERRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR" until you reach over and turn it off. This morning, I found that both of my arms had fallen completely asleep. I tried to flail my arm over to end the offensive noise, but I only succeeded in knocking everything off of my bedside table. At least I managed to smash my alarm clock in the process.
Reply: I think we can all relate to that kind of morning. Sometimes our alarm clocks can become our worst enemies. Do you find it more difficult to get up on time since you’ve been in college?

Sample 5

this weekend was the most boring time i've ever had it was so long i really wish i could have been home but i couldn't because i got a new job at toys r us i use to work at babies r us in Louisville so i just got transferred. so i had to work this week and i didn't like it too much it took up the time i could've had with my family that i truly miss because i love my family and i've never been so far from them but this week i will be making a trip back home to see my little sister get baptist and spend time with my family.

Reply: It’s always “a drag” to work when we could be doing something a lot more fun, but I commend you for taking care of your responsibilities. It’s so nice that you have a close relationship with your family, even though they are far away.
Appendix B

Survey Results

Below is a list of the cumulative responses to the journal writing surveys I conducted in my first-year experience course.

1. Generally, how do you feel about writing? Is it something you enjoy, or something you dread? Please explain.

- Student 1: I hate written. I guess because it has so many rules and guidelines you can’t be free with the pen.
- Student 2: Enjoy when its something I am interested in
- Student 3: I love writing. If I could spend all day writing I would. Yes I do enjoy writing. Because it helps me, I’m that type of person who thinks a lot, so I always jot down what I think.
- Student 4: Writing can be good sometimes if you have a lot of writing to do. But I dread writing if its like 3-4 pages.
- Student 5: I wouldn’t say that I dread writing. However it is not one of my favorite things to do.
- Student 6: I love to write because I am a good writer. I love to write poetry and short stories or anything really.
- Student 7: I dislike writing, but it is ok.
- Student 8: I think if you learn to write correctly it can be fun, I enjoy it if it’s leisure writing otherwise it's homework.
• Student 9: I do not like writing I never have been that interested in it.

• Student 10: I enjoy writing only if it is interesting

2. Has your opinion of writing changed at all so far this semester? If so, how?

• Student 1: It easier for me to write something down. Might not make sense, but at least something is down.

• Student 2: Yes I’m starting to hate it (theres just to much)

• Student 3: Yes its made me like it even more, because in college that’s all you ever do is write.

• Student 4: No, I just write the way I was thought and I just been using that ever sense.

• Student 5: No.

• Student 6: No, my opinion of writing has not changed. I still enjoy to write.

• Student 7: no

• Student 8: Yes, I do a lot more of it and it’s level is increasingly harder

• Student 9: Yes, I am doing better than I was in writing.

• Student 10: Yes, because I’ve never wrote so much before.

3. Do you enjoy the journal writing assignments for this class? Why or why not?

• Student 1: The journal are good. You can write about the stress you are feeling in classes.

• Student 2: yes and no. yes because its fun just freewriting but they are just a little nuisance
• Student 3: You I like writing about things I do, or did. Because it just makes it fun.

• Student 4: Yes, because I get to share and talk about what I be doing sometimes.

• Student 5: I enjoy the journals when I can think of something to write about, regardless of how random it may be because it is an easy A for little work.

• Student 6: I do enjoy the journal writing because it gives me a chance to free write and express my feelings.

• Student 7: It is ok, because journals are free.

• Student 8: honestly Not really, but that’s just because I have so much work that it’s all the same

• Student 9: Yes, because we can write about anything and you give us feedback

• Student 10: Yes, because it is basically free write

4. Do you feel that the journals have affected your opinion of writing? Have the affected your writing in any way? Please explain.

• Student 1: No, written is just not something I enjoy. Plus my handwriting is bad.

• Student 2: No not much but its just that they are not enforced enough (format, text, info...ect)

• Student 3: It really hasn’t because I always write. Yeah writing always effect me. I just makes me a better writer.
• Student 4: No they have not affected my writing, but it has made me more prepared about writing.
• Student 5: No.
• Student 6: No, because I wrote about everything before, from feelings to short stories.
• Student 7: no
• Student 8: No, they are just excerpts of my free thinking, I'm not much of a journal writer
• Student 9: Yes and no, it comes a little easier now
• Student 10: No, because it is easy

5. Did you find the instructor’s responses to your journal entries helpful, insightful, or in any other way interesting?

• Student 1: Helpful
• Student 2: Yes but more like comments
• Student 3: Yes, she made me really think. All her comments were interesting.
• Student 4: Yes, my instructor give the most helpful hints and she helps us out a lot.
• Student 5: My instructor’s responses to my writing made feel better about my writing.
• Student 7: insightful
• Student 8: Yes, I enjoyed her responses and/or feedback
• Student 9: Yes I like getting feedback b/c you don’t just give us a grade you actually help.

• Student 10: Yes

6. What could the instructor have done differently to improve the journal writing assignments?

• Student 1: ?

• Student 2: had a stricter rubric for the grade

• Student 3: If I turned them in on time.

• Student 4: She couldn’t have done anything different because she did all the journals right.

• Student 5: Make essay 1 shorter.

• Student 6: I don’t think she could have improved at all. Free writing helps everyone express themselves and putting no limit on it takes a lot off so we can just relax and write

• Student 7: give us 5 minutes at the start of class to complete

• Student 8: n/a

• Student 9: Nothing, I think they are great

• Student 10: n/a

7. Please feel free to add any additional comments about the journal writing assignments for this class here.

• Student 1: They are good for us

• Student 2: I’m going fishin today
• Student 4: I think if we continue to do the same steps we don’t need to change anything else.

• Student 7: more journal topics

• Student 8: I felt despite that I view it as HW, they were not that bad

• Student 10: n/a
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