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Writing for the Sciences

**Semester Narrative**

Before the lessons of this semester, if someone were to stop me to get my opinion on terms like rhetoric and forward-facing science, I would have done everything to avoid it. The previous training that I had received in writing had not introduced me to any of these concepts. The lack of understanding about forward-facing science is a major problem in our literate society, and thus it is a very important skill for someone pursuing a career in the scientific field.

A career in the sciences means, waking up every day questioning the world and learning more from it every day. It means answering nature’s most intriguing questions that can further the progress of humans as a species. It is the responsibility of every scientists to learn what the ones before him have discovered and building upon it. That new construction should be stronger than the last, so that the ones that come after can continue that improvement. This transfer of information, of knowledge is what has furthered the advancement of humanity.

Because of this, it is not enough for future scientists to understand the science. A great scientist should be able to effectively communicate their findings with the world. It is their responsibility to not only make their discoveries accessible to their expert peers, but to the less educated too.

As someone who is pursuing a career in the sciences, this semester was especially useful in furthering that ability to communicate my ideas with others. This semester’s English class, writing for the sciences, has taught me many new tools and habits that can have helped me with developing and delivering my ideas to my audience more effectively. But before delving into that I want to give a little bit of background in what my previous experiences with writing classes have been like.

In the past, my writing classes have been mainly focused on the rules of constructing a written work rather than on the message. My last college writing class was heavily focused on how to conduct a good research and applying citations rules correctly. Most of our writing exercises were meant to enhance our research abilities, such as finding reputable sources and citing them correctly. These skills are important for the writing process; however great writers can master both these rules and can also create a compelling narrative for their audience.

Writing is not about deadlines, grammar and following the rules of writing; its about creating thought and transferring a message to the audience. This was the main focus of the Writing for the sciences course this semester. All of the projects we were assigned this semester focused on the rhetoric and the techniques to create a work that was appealing for our audience. This approach was novel to me and kind of difficult to grasp at the beginning.

The first project, and admittedly the most difficult to grasp out of all was the Rhetorical analysis. For this assignment I was asked to take apart a work of nonfiction so that I could later explain how all of those work to convey a message. The word rhetoric did not mean anything to me, I had never been asked to do something like this. Knowing nothing about it, I thought this analysis would serve me no good. I was wrong about this. To convey that appealing message, as writers we need to be mindful of the needs of our audience and the tools, we are going to use to employ to capture its attention.

The basic idea of the article was to analyze other writer’s purpose, intended audience and other rhetorical aspects to understand how to develop our own work with these rhetorical aspects in mind. Being interested in immunology, I chose an article about stopping the spread of disease in schools. Through the analysis of this text I could understand why the authors structured their work like they did and made the choices they made to appeal to their audience. I finally understood the valuable lesson that as a writer, I need to keep my audience in mind as I approach the development of a piece.

I was a little bit more related to the process of conducting the next assignment. I needed to conduct some research to answer a question. I was familiar with this process, but now I needed to apply what I had learned from the rhetorical analysis into my research. Not only did I develop an inquiry with reputable sources, but I needed to cater the message contained in many pages worth of work into two new, condensed works that catered to two different audiences. This was the most challenging part of the whole process. To do this I had to research my two new intended audiences so that I could utilize strategies that would appeal to them.

Writing the children's book gave me a different perspective on writing. We had to learn how to successfully get a point across while using language that children would understand. Using phrases such as “over and over again” instead of saying “repeatedly”, or using “a lot” instead of saying “ an abundant amount”. With my book being about how viruses affect the human body and how they work, I really had to focus on how to use words that the kids would understand even when this process is very difficult and complex. This really helped me develop as a writer because I was allowing myself to expand my horizons and not only know how to appeal to a mature audience but also know how to appeal to a young audience.

While writing this, not only did I need to understand everything I was writing about, but I also had to anticipate questions that children would have while reading this book. As I went through the book, I realized that I had a lot of space for questions, so I had to insert transition pages and make sure the book ran smoothly. I also had to create images that matched what I was describing within each page. The illustrations had to be very appealing and childish so the kids would stay interested and want to know what happened.

Another thing that I had to make sure was that the children are learning something. Almost all children's books have either big, or little meanings behind them, whether it’s to share or to be kind to one another or even to learn something that later on in life they would learn about. My goal was to allow children to understand the simple version of how viruses work. I anticipated that children would have an adult with them as they read the book, I allowed room for the adult to explain that a virus is what causes stomach aches and other illnesses. Allowing that room for the adult to teach the child assured that they would understand how the process of all this works.

This specific assignment allowed for me to grow as a writer understanding different techniques and styles that allow me to appeal to different audiences while transmitting the same message. I gained knowledge on specific words, writing techniques, and ways to transfer over a learning lesson to children. I now see how diverse my writing is getting just by doing assignments and realizing on my own how to become more advanced in this genre.

This semester was full of changes and struggles, but it was also one of great growth as a writer. I realized the importance of shifting my focus when writing something from the rules of writing to creating an appealing narrative. I created a better understanding of how to cater our work by keeping our audience in mind through every step of the process. These new habits will al serve me as a communicator of science going forward in my career.