

Improving the Blank Page 2020 Showcase: "The Aesthetic Academic"

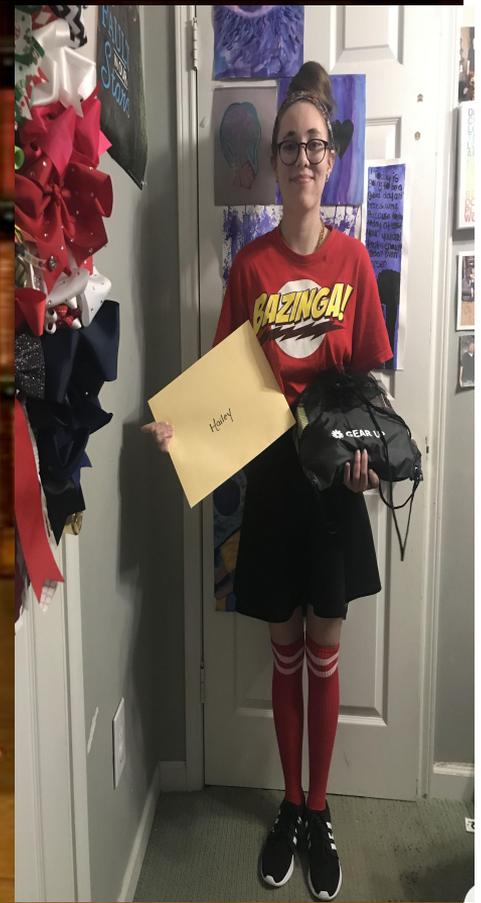
A partnership between the
National Writing Project of Acadiana
and LPSS GEAR UP



Hailey Menard, A Senior from Comeaux High School

A Little About Me

- *I am a 3 year member of my high school's robotics team, (Team 3616 Phenomena)*
- *At school, you are most likely to find me in the library with a novel in my hand*
- *My role models are Ms. Biddick (my english 3 teacher) and Mrs. Ranney (my robotics teacher and mentor). Both teachers inspire me to give 110 percent each day and have encouraged me continue writing .*
- *In the words of Ms Biddick, " You have a voice that needs to be heard!"*
- *My future career: A High School English teacher . I would love to show the next generation that they can be the authors of their own story !*
- *My hope for the future : To be able to read my poetry at a Poetry Slam*



Hailey Menard's Plans for Senior year at Comeaux High School

My plans for my Senior year are

- *Enroll in Ms. Biddick's Speech 1 class*
- *Use the Scene writing exercise Mr. Josh taught to create my own scenes (for Speech class)*
- *Perform my own scene from the scene writing exercise*
- *Continue working on my "The Start of an Epiphany" poem*
- *Apply the techniques I learned through the Revision exercises to my own poetry*
- *Collaborate with other poetry writers*
- *Continue to use my voice to tell my story*
- *And most importantly, IMPROVE THE BLANK PAGE, Always*



The Start of an Epiphany

This poem was inspired by a quote from Jack Bedell, "I wish I could dream all the time."

1. *I fell in love with a writer*

2. She smelled like apple cinnamon tea on an early autumn morning

2. Her tendrils of dark curls cascaded down her back

1. She captivated me with her words

2. And her oversized sweater clung to her

1. And her smile could light up an empty room

2. *I fell in love with a writer*

1. Her memoirs recounted memories with a nostalgic bliss

2. She works best at night

1. I felt as though I lived each moment with her

2. While the world around her is fast asleep

1. *I fell in love with a writer*

2. As silent as it can be

1. Our mornings were filled with

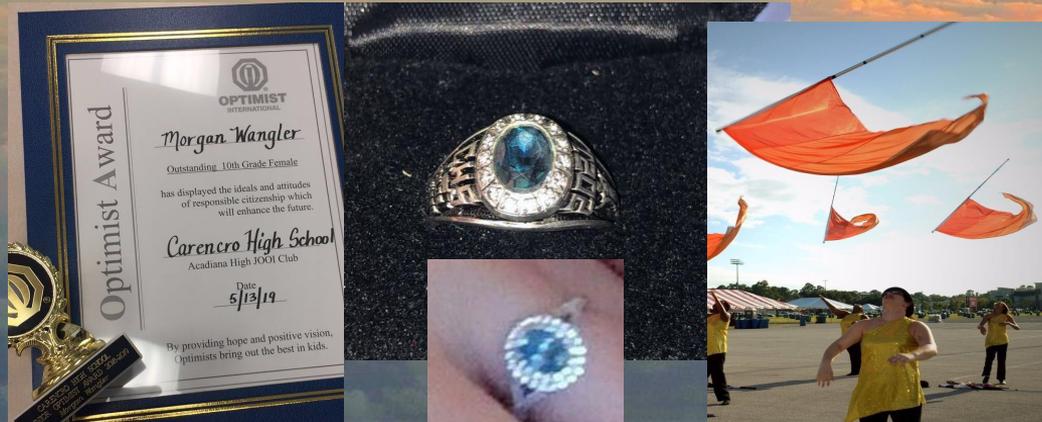
1. coffee stained paper and ink smeared hands

2. She types away as her typewriter bings

Who am I?

I've always been one to be optimistic and help others. I'm passionate about people and things I love. I try to never put myself first. My younger brother is my biggest inspiration and drive in life. I was given that ring on his first Christmas.

My senior ring is a reminder of all my hardwork and dedication from my past years of school. It also shows where I'm going and I have the grit to achieve it. Guard is my life, my passion, and my escape. I'm captain and love performing. It has played an important role for me.



Morgan's Experience

- **Finally believing in my writing through creativity and I'm no longer scared for what's in my head.**
- **I love the free writes because that's what gets my emotions and thoughts out. It helps clean my mind for improved writing.**
- **One activity that stuck out was the Point Of View task. It really taps into your emotions but also shows the different ways people see a picture.**
- **My backgrounds are clouds because writing gives me the sense of freedom like I'm flying.**
- **IBP has shown me that writing techniques to use for Dual Enrollment and also ways to impress myself**



Life Changing

Grey fur, soft touch, big bow, signs full of life.

Pure and innocent that will hang on the door

Never letting its feet touch the floor.

When I was 15 years old,

A baby was born. Life changing, bear hugging, pure and innocent.

10 little fingers and toes that will leave the door.

Oh and his little nose.

A younger sibling was all new but my, how I love you.

Can you feel what I'm saying?

It is peace or happiness,

Something small or large,

Real or fake

This is what a brother makes.

Mr. Fitz Carencro High – A Memoir

In the confines of my own cozy cavern
I settle in my navy blue reader's chair
There's a dribble of piano keys escalating from the
spinning jazz record
During late nights, I scratch my pencil against the
cotton paper -
Sketching out the remnants of my memory.
These are the nights when I pour all of me
onto the page
Uninterrupted

The record stops
Silence creeps in
And I breathe in the peace
Of a moment untouched



How to use AWP Lessons...

- Bridge the gap between creative and academic, allowing students an engaging and personal way to access post-secondary writing skills
- Develop collaborative communities of learners who enjoy sharing and commenting on writing
- Rethink the drafting process and how to approach daunting tasks

Mr. Fitz - Carencro
High

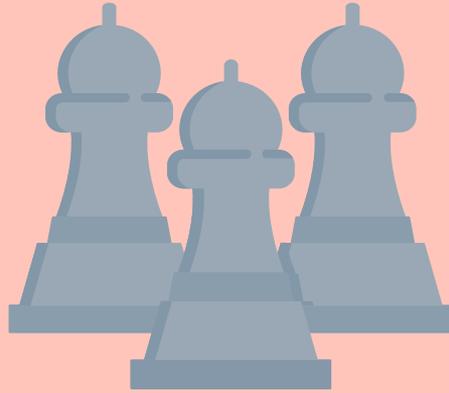


Family Strategies

Glossed black and gold
Felt tip and a rounded nub
I brush the dust off to reveal its shine
The carvings indicate age
But the faux wood material goes against it
Although it only moves forward
It does just as much as the king

When I was 21 years old
My father gave me a chess set
He said it came from an antique shop
Its aged appearance fascinated me
Here was a treasure I thought to be unique
And my father and I played a round on Christmas evening
But we never knew who won
The board was set at a tie

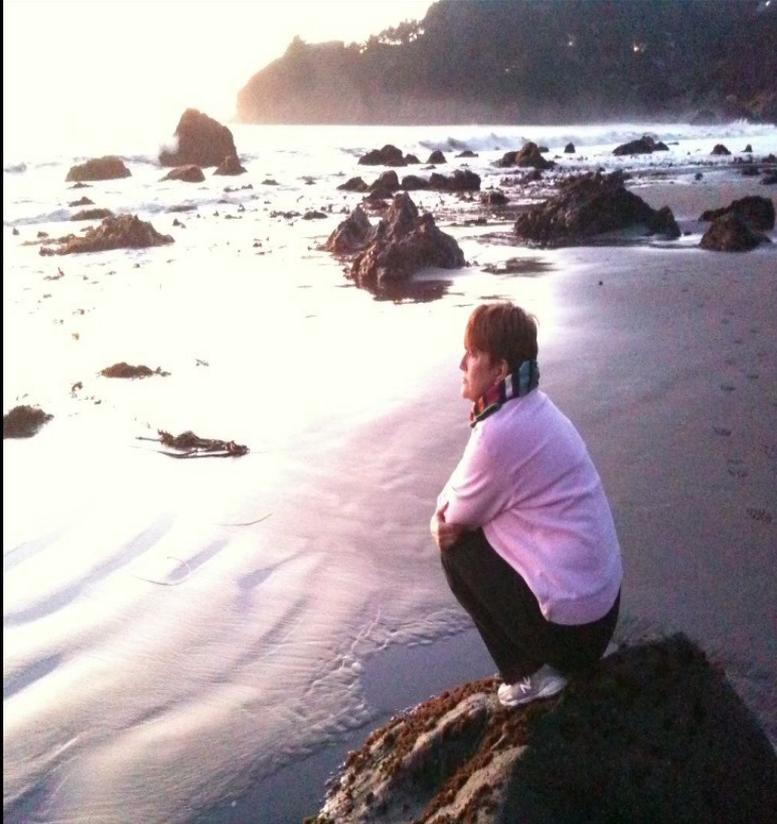
Can you see what I'm saying?
It's black and gold, a treasure I thought to be unique
It's moving forward but never knowing who won
It's doing just as much as the king but always tying
That constant competition
For my father's appreciation



Mr. Fitz Carencro
High



Still Life and 100 Words Biography



Not even with a running start could she hurl that stone far enough past the breakers to reach the ocean's floor where the undertow and seaward sloping might drag it out to another beach, away from her shore to wash up and rest, buffed and pearl-like, a treasure in a toddler's pail, or perhaps a peg in the six-point star of an Eastern game, or, detritus on a roadside verge, but, at last, absent from a crook in her shoe, the loose memory scraping the arch of her bruised sole. Not even with a running start or the moon's pull.

Connie Melancon-Carencro High

I will use my experience with AWP to request that enrichment writing activities accompany Guidebooks required content.

I will investigate funding for an “activities bus” so students can have a ride home from after-school clubs or leadership organizations. Every student needs to feel a sense of belonging at school.

I will advocate for writing as the best form of assessment of learning.

Connie Melancon-Carencro High

The Golden Shovel Activity

*“Love at the lips was touch as sweet as I could bear;
And once that seemed too much; I lived on air.”* Robert Frost “To Earthward”

Age steals joys past, but love
Folds itself to hide at
Day’s edge. Sleep calls up the
Bliss of flushing face, lips

On mine, a petal was
Brushed against my cheek, touch
And weight tinged with pain as
Strong as clove burned, yet sweet.

Primrose at dusk? As
Night goes, light comes. I
Wake breathless. Those dreams could
Bring pain too much to bear!

I wake tearful. Worn and
Bruised. I close my eyes once
More to feel rough joy. That
After-mark of old scars seemed

Pleasant somehow. Far too
Many years gone. So much
Lost in ether. Oh—I
Ache to know my loss lived

Then. I fear time moves on.
My past--vanishing air.

Connie Melancon-Carencro High

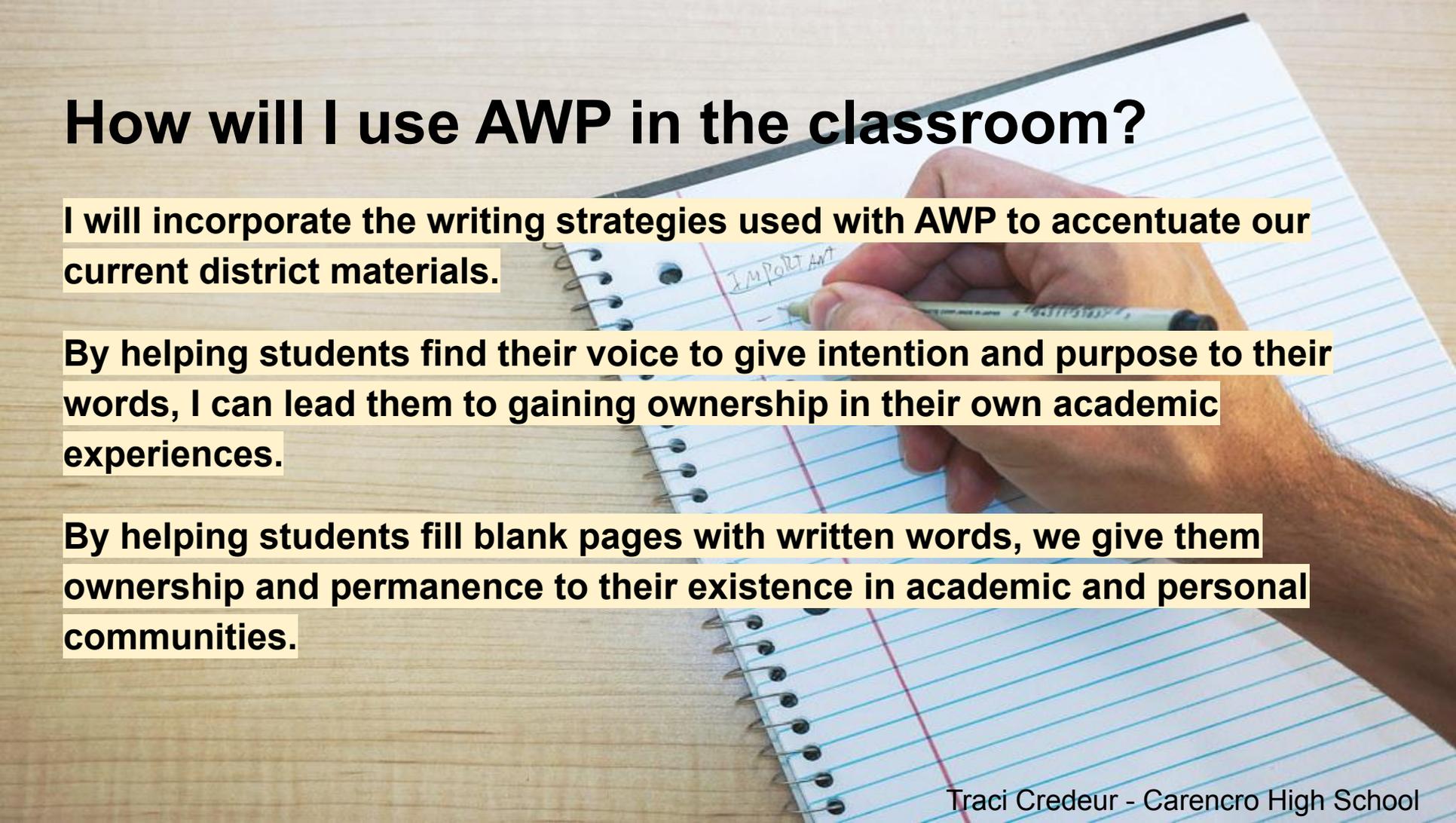
Memoir of a Newly Empty Nest

Music oozing out of me
In the shower or a rainstorm
Seeking joy in rocks or remnants of trees
Of yesteryear or tomorrow's year
Writing my song of the nest left empty
Three birds ago
Who once sang with me
Who sing their own jingles
Jangles that are pieces of me
That are pieces that once were me
That are pieces that are no longer me
That I hear in the wind
Music that fills my soul with hope
We begin this new life
Without our birds
Singing from afar
Lyrical versions of myself
Composing measures of their own scale

Traci Credeur
Carencro High School



How will I use AWP in the classroom?

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a green highlighter, writing the word 'IMPORTANT' in blue ink on a lined notebook page. The notebook is open on a wooden surface. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the writing action.

I will incorporate the writing strategies used with AWP to accentuate our current district materials.

By helping students find their voice to give intention and purpose to their words, I can lead them to gaining ownership in their own academic experiences.

By helping students fill blank pages with written words, we give them ownership and permanence to their existence in academic and personal communities.

So Much Depends Upon...

So much depends upon

Ashes in my coffee

Gazing out of a rusted screen door

Through silent tears of yesterday's regret

Rosary beads falling onto the lap

Of a mother forced to say goodbye.

"Poieō:
One Hundred Fragments of a Dream"

Someone once asked me
if I dream in color—
The truth is,
I dream in verse

For me, poetry stirs the feelings
That color my world and
Forces the ink to bleed words—
Flowing like a fountain
Over blank pages—
Translating emotions

I dream of a little girl
In a teal dress—
With curls as free as the leaves—
Dancing to the rhythm
Of keystrokes,
While she grows
With the world around her

I dream that she can speak
The poet's tongue.
And I wake to
Her free verse magic

For she is always
Watching Mom—
Knowing she's
My poetry.

Megan Breaux, GEAR
UP & NWP-A

“A Formal Apology to my Dreams”

To writing the ghosts out my blood
And reading shivers up the spines
Of unsuspecting listeners

To thumbs softly caressing my name
Tattooed on spines and cradling
My words in one hand

To finding my audience
And to my audience finding me

I haven't forgotten you...

As regret sits at my bedside
Like a wilted flower
Thirsty for life and light

I haven't forgotten you...

As fear hovers over my footboard--
A shadow from my past
Pulling each toe as a reminder
Of how I mess up each step

I haven't forgotten you...

As Equilibrium holds me down--
Like a weighted blanket--
In the dark,
I watch you
From behind eyelids
While the flower
Dies a slow death

I haven't forgotten you...

Though, it took me too long to see,
Equilibrium is death
As I am the flower
And the shadow
As I will be death
If I don't follow you

I am Sorry.

Sorry

Megan Breaux, GEAR
UP & NWP-A

“Renewal”

~A double shovel inspired by Raymond Carver’s
“Happiness”

The water reflects my soul beneath **the sky**.
Over a rippled mirror, time **is taking**
Pale blue loneliness from deep darkness. **On light**,
Hangs saturated sunrise dripping hope. **Though**
Still, my eyes bid a final farewell to **the moon**,
The moon-- my company when sorrow was **still**.
Though the memory of pain, on darkness **hangs**,
On light, a draped dream--through eyes no longer **pale--**
Is taking defeat, claiming its reign **over**.
The sky frames soul renewed over the **water**.

The sky frames soul renewed over the water.

Is taking defeat, claiming its reign over.

Megan Breaux,
GEAR UP &
NWP-A

Nikki Broussard - Acadiana High School

I. When the announcement was made on the intercom that we wouldn't be returning, I sat, sighed, and let the emotions crash over me like waves. The waves were questions that couldn't be answered or stopped. I sat there, unsure what to do next, so I made my students the priority. I heard the nonstop popping of popcorn and the crackle of cellophane wrappers. Laughter and then the stillness before a movie. I was glad I could at least provide comfort for them with so much uncertainty. And then my student asked, "Ms. Broussard, do you need anything?"
Breathe in. Breathe out.

IV. I sat on my porch with Poncho and Luna who were panting and staring at birds. The morning light was streaming through the low hanging oak branches. It was already too hot and overflowing with humidity. Sipping morning coffee, I breathed in and out.



How this GEAR UP experience will aid me in future teaching practices...



- How to respond kindly to one another- creates a safe community
- Stronger job and college applications
- Creative writing as a segue to academic writing (annotated bibliographies, resumes, etc)
- Embracing the risk of sharing
- Vulnerability- how that translates into other academia

Nikki Broussard - Acadiana High School



West Coast Freedom

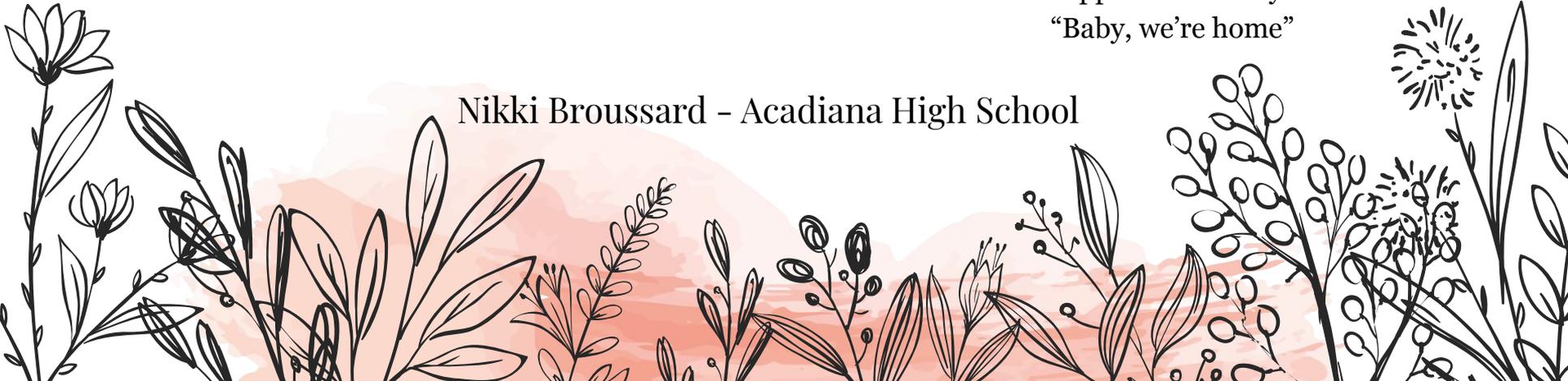
“Are you ready to take off?”

The screen door slams on the back porch
Don't be scared now, have a little faith
There's magic in the making
The radio plays with the windows down
Two open lanes and like a vision in the
night
Freedom dances across in the moonlight
We've been waiting far too long
Baby, it's finally time.

This is our goodbye
To the low hanging oak branches
The soft lands of the swamp
The never ending flats of rice fields
The swaying sugar cane in the wind
Summer figs and salty shores
And Sunday morning zydeco drives
Baby, let's just be ghosts in the
night.

The blue mountain sky is waiting
Rumbling with distance thunder
Laughter and an empty trail
That's my type of scene
Danger ain't no thing
You and me we've been around the
world
We've been patient, but now it's fate
I don't mind trying for the love of you
He reached over and took my hand
slipped me the keys and said
“Baby, we're home”

Nikki Broussard - Acadiana High School



Gavin Chesteen- Acadiana High

My name is Gavin Chesteen and I have been attending the Improving the Blank Page workshop for 5 years now. I can be very chatty when around friends but overall I'm usually a very quiet person, that people usually have to ask me to speak up! I've been having a hard time recently trying to get use to these new times and adjusting to the normal we now live. However, I tend to find confidence in myself when times get low for me, so this was no different. Now I plan on taking on this challenge of a new life to make my dreams come true!

Gavin Chesteen- AHS

- My first year, there wasn't a lot of courage in me to fill that notebook with the amount of writing it had in it after that camp but I was in love after our showcase and I didn't want any of it to stop. I found a new love for writing that I REALLY needed.

After five years of this, it wasn't just a camp. It was a family event.. Every year we are granted with new faces who just found out about this camp, but we are also joined by the same incredible staff and peers and I believe every year we get a little more comfortable with each other. This camp isn't just us taking in new writing skills.. Which may I add are super incredible lessons that I believe everyone should try once, but what I'm taking from this event is the memories we were able to experience, and cherish. This writing camp has allowed me for 5 years to dig in to a passion I never knew I had and allowed me a second family to bounce ideas off of and read writing to, and going in to college I will be forever grateful of the memories and skills I took in from this camp. Thank you all SO MUCH.

Gavin Chesteen- AHS

I looked into the perspective of my doubters and changed something about myself. I now look at graduation through a lens of “when,” instead of a lens of “if.” That hunter green gown and cap is gonna look so good, but the gown is also gonna be holding a memory. A memory of all these years I thought I couldn’t do it, memories of friends who made me happy, memories of the hard work I put in. Most importantly Gear Up memories. I was offered something different with Gear Up, like I said, I was given a chance. So thank you to Mrs. Dawn for keeping me going all these years, helping me realize that I am worth something. Thank you to Mrs. Megan for taking a chance on me on being a student editor and keeping me going with the amount of times I have taken these state tests. I hope that my story can motivate other students who are struggling to recognize their value and what they have to offer this world.

Who Am I? My still life subjects in six words.



Cold drinks while cooking is best.

Cast iron skillets are a necessity.

Peppermints ease pain and increase focus.

Music always playing assuages the awkwardness.

Proper lighting can eliminate anxious thoughts.

Games forge friendships and sharpen wit.

Stories are a form of travel.

Laura Trautman, teacher
Acadiana High



Moving Forward...

**This experience
has strengthened
my “teacher
toolbox” by giving
me strategies to
merge the creative
process with the
academic product.**

**Laura Trautman, teacher
Acadiana High**

Limping In

Despite the morning freshness that hung about the air, the room still smelled stale from the high volume of human traffic that traverses daily over its carpeted floors. Vanessa had a small bankroll and an excitement to play, to meet new characters, and to forget about the responsibilities that awaited her outside the doors of the casino. Looking around, she saw her future opponents sitting in chairs or standing, all impatient. Theirs would be the first game to start up for the day and the room felt empty without the clicking stacks of chips at each table.

In an hour or two, the players would be swift in motion of the game, with others filing into the room and filling up all of the tables until no vacancies remain.

Ever patient, Vanessa waited for the old timers to receive their service from the check-in counter first. She never understood how that generation of players could expect red-carpet treatment. *Just because there is red carpet, doesn't mean you somebody*, she thought.

"What game you in?" the room manager asked upon Vanessa's arrival to the counter.

"Omaha Hi/Lo please," she replied.

"Sounds good. You'll be at seat 5. How much?"

"300."

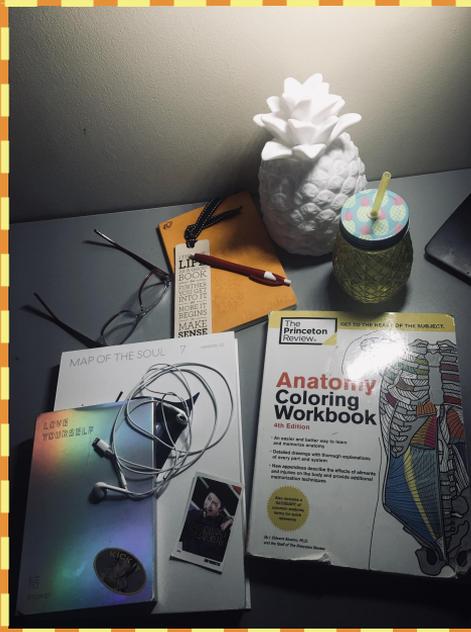
Seat 5?! she thought, as she walked away. Since when do they start assigning seats before the game begins? Blue-hairs, man. They want what they like; they want what they like when they think they need it.

Vanessa promptly placed her rack of chips in front of her seat and immediately sauntered toward the restroom. She would rather avoid the shuffle of gruff, grumpy exchanges that took place while the dealer unlocked the table and the players strived to seat themselves simultaneously.



**Laura Trautman, teacher
Acadiana High**

•WHO AM I??•



MY 100-WORD MEMOIR

Music around the world ventures me out to a fresh scene of life. I read stories from anyone who can push my thoughts into boundaries I never once sought. When I see people sick and need aid, I know there is more than myself to take care of. If something flips unexpectedly, I want to turn it around if needed. When I discover new aspects of life, I want to share that experience in different ways despite my own perception. Me being an all-around person leads to new skills, knowledge, and motivation to always find beginnings to a new chapter.



Next Steps

When I first started my experience with Improving the Blank Page Virtual Writing Camp, I wasn't aware of how or what I could present as a writer, let alone a fairly new writer. Right now as I am writing this (well typing), I realize how I am comfortably letting my hand and my mind freely soar, with knowledge to improve myself as a high school student now and as a young adult in the future.

SIX-WORD STORY

Epiphanies beginning my exploration of originality.

*Mc'Kaila Miller -
Acadiana High
School*



***Mc'Kaila Miller -
Acadiana High School***

MY BIG DECISION

As I am on my computer, I researched the process and expectations of a doctor. Now I was sinking in my mind. The intelligence that others have is difficult to compare towards myself. I do not have a lot of character as a high school student. The financial burden I know is to come. The judgement from my friend saying "I cannot be in school for that long" and my chemistry teacher emphasizing that "you are basically giving up your 20s." Difficulty of knowing and being satisfied with my progress. I see my peers and classmates pursuing things in a light to be spread for their continuing process of their future. Then I am laying on my bed looking up at the dark ceiling not finding that ignition to brighten up my outlook. All of a sudden, a moment of exploration for a path has become clear as my mind gets intrigued with thought of a future for myself: becoming a doctor.

I go on my phone and find events occurring within the world. An ad to donate for the healthcare of the people in Yemen pops up. I clicked on it, knowing my pupils are dilating as I witness the struggle of children, the worry of their mothers and fathers, and the loss of their brothers and sisters.

The summer I decided to volunteer at UHC hospital was an interesting experience. Throughout the day, I was clueless and watched the nurses and doctors. Then, I shadowed a blissful nurse named Beau.

"The patients can be frustrating, but here in the ER, we are the front lines. We have to be there for them and make them feel comfortable as this is not a fun place."

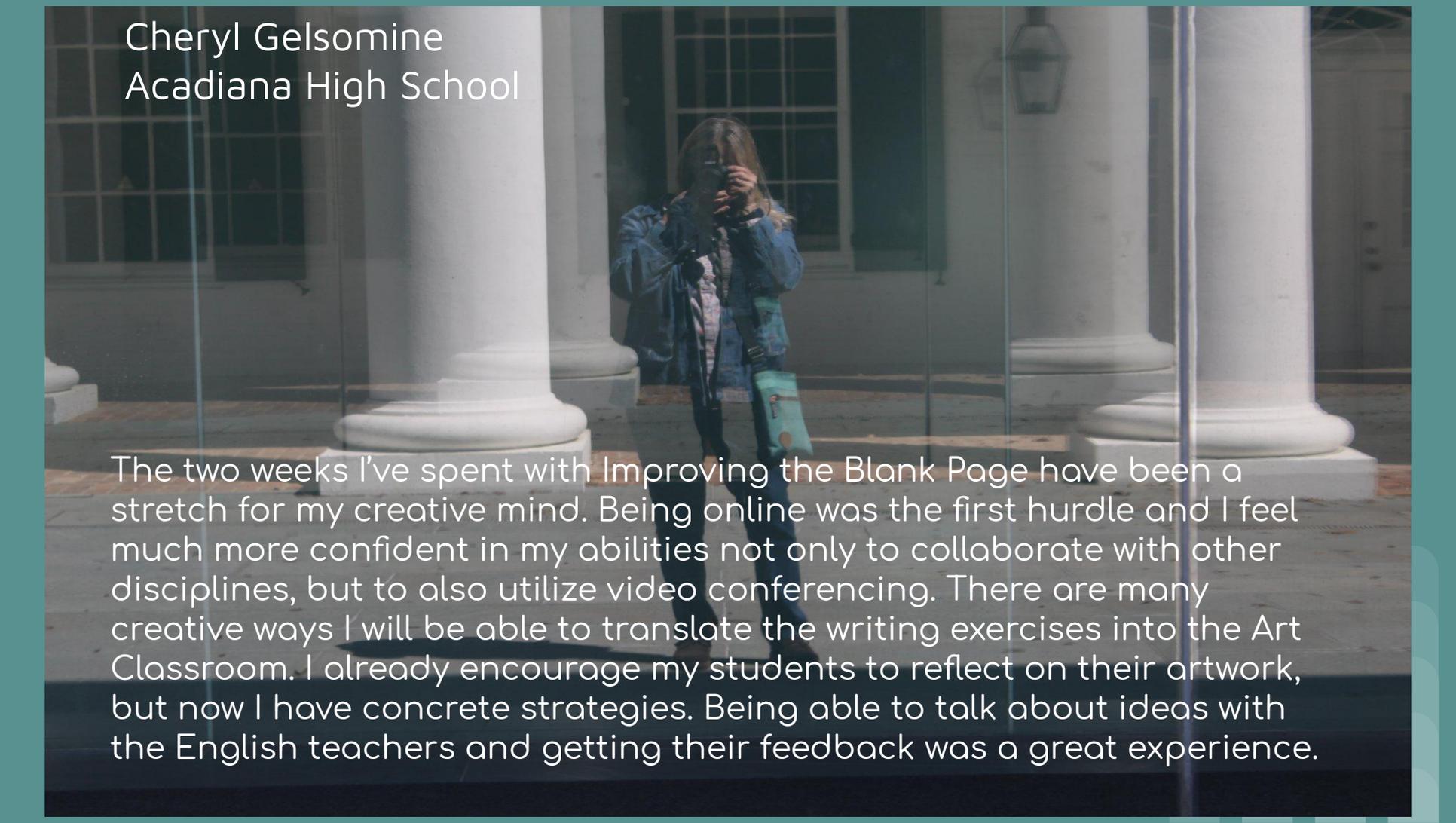
"How do you deal with the stress?" I asked.

"Eh, I just think how I would want someone to care for me. You know, brighten up their day and have a positive attitude." This is how I want my purpose in this lifetime to be represented.

Cheryl Gelsomine - Acadiana High School 100 Words - A Corner in my Room

Being a creative person is something that has been a large part of who I am ever since I can remember. My first path in life lead me in other directions, but I always held the creative aspect close to my heart. I think it is important to use your dreams to find a direction, what you hold in your heart is your true inner soul talking. Creative energy allows me to dream on canvas and knowing that our first direction might be a path leading us to what is truly meant for our life is part of our journey.



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue jacket and dark pants, is standing in front of a building with large white columns. She is holding a camera up to her eye, taking a photograph. A teal bag is slung over her shoulder. The background shows a building with large windows and a classic architectural style.

Cheryl Gelsomine Acadiana High School

The two weeks I've spent with Improving the Blank Page have been a stretch for my creative mind. Being online was the first hurdle and I feel much more confident in my abilities not only to collaborate with other disciplines, but to also utilize video conferencing. There are many creative ways I will be able to translate the writing exercises into the Art Classroom. I already encourage my students to reflect on their artwork, but now I have concrete strategies. Being able to talk about ideas with the English teachers and getting their feedback was a great experience.

Cheryl Gelsomine - Acadiana High School

The Big Decision

I was 40 and I found myself in the dregs of being at that age where I was stuck in a dead-end job that was not a career. It was difficult at best to actually pay rent, bills, and do anything else. It was a sharp reality – not being able to afford to live... what was I to do? I was beginning to become drawn to the idea of going back to college.

I find myself in the offices of UL, speaking to a counselor about non-traditional college entry. Had I been to college before, yes – I had been to college in the past, although back in the 80's and I hadn't done really well. I was nervous because I hadn't taken any of the necessary exams to actually enter college. Well, this lady was a cheerleader on the sidelines, she must have sensed that I needed to do this, she seemed to be like a secret angel. She found a way for me to begin college as a “transfer” student. I was in her office on a Wednesday and in classes the following Tuesday.

Wow. It was surreal. It was crazy. It was overwhelming... I found myself on long lines, trying to decide what was needed and what was not. I began to flourish. It really worked. It was one of the best decisions of my life and one of the biggest. It's never too late to have a happy childhood and it's never too late to get a great education. Doors open when you give yourself the option of a great education. I am a first-generation college graduate – better late than never.

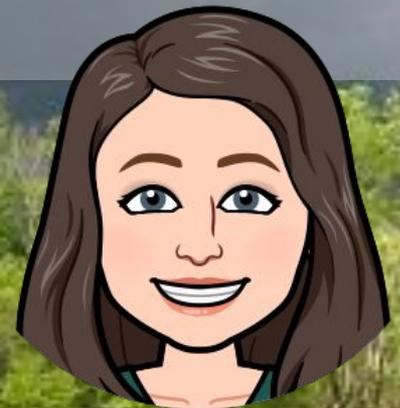


“No admittance except on party business.”

Despite the sign on the door, worries, stresses, and self-consciousness never stop pounding away, demanding entrance. Inside, light beams refract through floating daydreams, shimmering over a collection of physical memories: stories, gifts, creations.

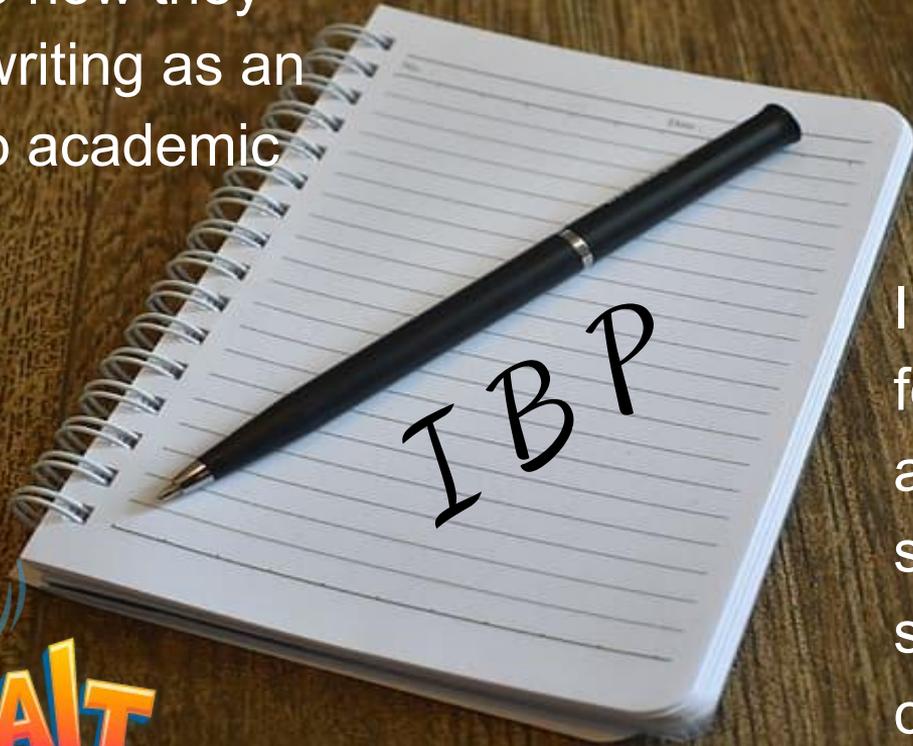
These objects swirl together, spinning these tangible ephemera of life into a whirlwind, often messy, with memories flung to a dusty corner for a year or decade. But through the doing, the experiencing, and the bonding--far more than the things themselves--I can sit in the eye of the storm and revel at the backdrop of dark clouds against green, wind-tossed leaves.

Dr. Godbold - Lafayette High



I'm employing these activities in all of my classes. I love how they use creative writing as an introduction to academic writing.

I'm also looking forward to using these activities to help my seniors create stronger job and college applications.



CAN'T WAIT



**Clay skeet bursting into yellow smoke
Above a honeysuckle breeze**

**My TV static footsteps crackling
On the gravel and seashell drive**

**Clay and stone crumbling
Like the cinder block foundation**

**The rust peeling
Off the faded red bicycle**

**Abandoned
In the whispering grass**

**Our memories rust
But remain**

**Crowding the lawn
With ghosts of the past**

**Their crumbling surface
Flaking off in my hands**

**Stained red and orange
Like the sky's sunset glow**

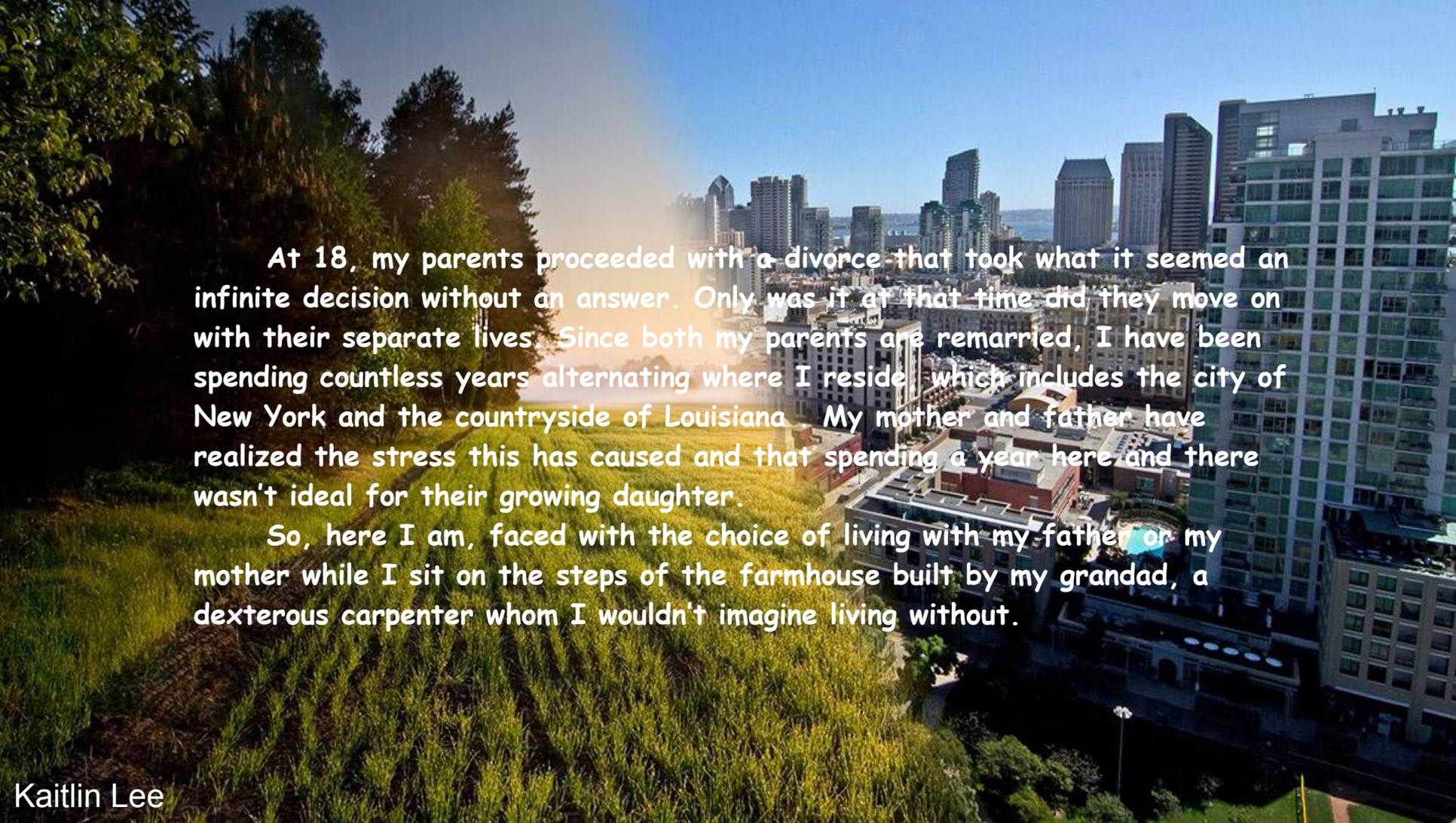
**Clouded by the clay I'm shooting
Just to have something to aim for.**



My life revolves around my family. As I grow up, I continue to enjoy the numerous opportunities to travel with my family. Considering this significant component of my life, my relationship between me and my family members has become stronger over the years. With that said, as I have traveled, I have been able to embrace the passion I have for visual art and use my creative mind to recreate the views I have been able to capture within memories. Having artistic capability has influenced myself to develop an interest in cooking. My passion has also been directed towards swimming.

Kaitlin Lee



An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely San Francisco, viewed from a high vantage point. In the foreground, a dirt path winds through lush green trees and grass. The city buildings are visible in the mid-ground, and the sky is clear and blue. The text is overlaid on the image, centered horizontally and vertically.

At 18, my parents proceeded with a divorce that took what it seemed an infinite decision without an answer. Only was it at that time did they move on with their separate lives. Since both my parents are remarried, I have been spending countless years alternating where I reside, which includes the city of New York and the countryside of Louisiana. My mother and father have realized the stress this has caused and that spending a year here and there wasn't ideal for their growing daughter.

So, here I am, faced with the choice of living with my father or my mother while I sit on the steps of the farmhouse built by my grandad, a dexterous carpenter whom I wouldn't imagine living without.

I envision using what I have learned during this program when working on writings when participating in NEHS. I also hope to improve on assignments in ELA. Now that I have tried the exercises provided generously by the teachers, when creating pieces of art, I will consider adding a writing to extend the meaning of what I want to visualize.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Family

*They are there for you
throughout everything.*

*Good times, bad times, times
you never expected you'd go
through.*

*It's the little things you see
daily that remind you they are
present in everything.*



*Whether it's the piano you
inherited from your
grandparents, the playmat your
daughter plays on, your beloved
rescue dog, a drawing you
created for your husband, or
the printed lyrics to the song
that somberly played at your
family member's funeral.*

*It's the little things in life that
bring back both the good times
and the bad.*

*Through it all, you will always
have your family.*

In the future...

I will use the ideas, skills, strategies, and creative writing activities in my biology classes to further enhance their learning experience in my classroom as I prepare them for their extended response portion of the LEAP2025 exam.

3...2...1..





*From the moment your dad and I first heard
your heartbeat, our lives changed forever.
Lub-dub-lub-dub-lub-dub.
You were the answer to our prayers and
everything we never knew we needed in our life.*

*From the moment we first met you, our lives
changed forever.
Ten fingers and ten toes.
You brought such happiness, joy, and more love
than we knew existed to our world.*

*From the moment you first said mom, our lives
changed forever.
Momma momma.
You added a word to my list of names we only
ever hoped would come to fruition.*

Your heartbeat changed my life forever.

Who Am I

Destinyzoe Jones LHS future senior

I have always been a childish person. I love cartoons and plushies and the color pink. Yet as sweet as I am I enjoy heavy metal and rock music; one of my favorite bands being My Chemical Romance. The bag in the image carries more than just my celebrity crush on the front. It carries the bond between me and my brothers. Another thing is I love to live on the high end of life. Fashion, perfume, shoes, yes, please! Afterward, we have my kitty CurlyFri. She is my pride and joy. Lastly, my journal is my heart written in ink.



Shimmer sparkle and shine
the stench of black Sharpie along the spine
Shimmer sparkle and shine
the darkest thoughts are left inside
Shimmer sparkle and shine
all my secrets are left behind
Shimmer sparkle and shine
when I was 10 years old my thoughts went dark
life was meaningless from the start
when I was 10 years old my thoughts went dark
counselor to counselor but there was no heart
when I was 10 years old my thoughts went dark
magical blade made a crimson Ark
when I was 10 years old my thoughts went dark
can you see what I'm saying
It is Darkness or light
the lies or the truth
It is life or death
and all my thoughts are contained in this book

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Past

When I first joined Improving the blank Page I was just starting my first book and I wasn't sure if I wanted to continue creative writing. IBP completely changed that for me and i new that I definitely wanted to continue to write



Present

Currently I've been part of IBP for 5 years and my confidence in writing has significantly increased. I feel more comfortable sharing my writings which is pushing me to publish at least one of my books

NOW



Posterity

The activities we did this week that i'm definitely going to use in the future is the resume, still life, and out-in-out. These 3 exercises brought the most out of my writing and i know will make the most impact on my life



WHO AM I?

I am worn cowboy boots in 90 degrees,
A flowery dress and hoop earrings,
A mix of his creole curls and her kinky fro.
I often stand independent, a perceived prickly cactus
Thriving on a stack of books.
Books that contain stories elevating my existence.
Telling of my life, my hopes, my fears.
The books are me and my living.
Even though I thrive on randomness, I am balanced.
Equal parts of this and that
make me the exception and a square in every circle.
I never want to be defined by my possessions,
instead my heart and my mind.

Andrea Brew - NHS





Begin with a blank page.

Engage with the blank page.

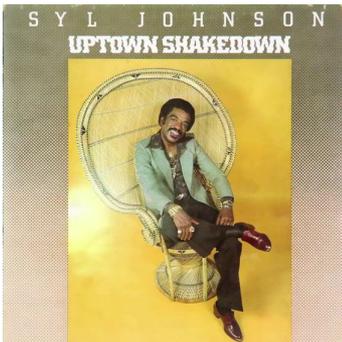
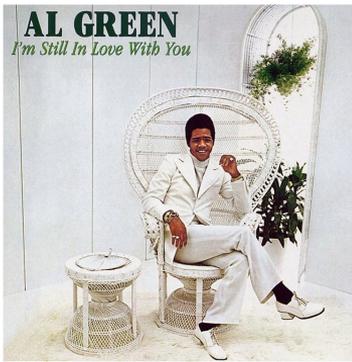
Connect to the blank page.

Empower the blank page.

Share the blank page.

Give you the blank page.

**Together we will
IMPROVE THE BLANK PAGE!**



- I. Commanding attention, regal, a chair stood.
Made from the best that nature offers ,it is ebony and ivory.
Heavy and sturdy it holds powerful dignitaries and culture.
- II. When I was five years old, the year was 1983. The corner of my first home evoked thoughts of bell bottoms, afros, jive turkeys and cool, coordinated handshakes to the sounds of Motown. A record and 8-track player held a prominent position in the living room. Behind it, a wall of mirrors reflected good times. To the right of it, stood a rack of soul. Vinyl albums encased in original covers bearing brown faces and bodies adorned in ornate threads intrigued me daily.
- III. Can you see what I'm saying?
It is regal and jive.
It is ebony and soul.
It is power and culture?
It is an exhibition of the pride of a peacock.

Hi! I'm Mr. Cy,
the GEAR UP guy
from Lafayette High.
husband,
father,
son,
brother,
friend,
teacher,
In that order.



Cy Dugas, GEAR
UP, LHS

My son took this pic for
me in June, 2019



Sloughed grains, shed memories,
eroded essence.
Before my words, our words
their words rang in circles of stones.
Lost language, lost essence, lost in time.
Lost.
Shards of slate,
a fading impression.

Cy Dugas, GEAR
UP, LHS



Imitative Writing inspired by Nikki Giovanni

I want to be a cat.
But not an alley cat
or a feral cat,
Or any old cat,
But one of my cats!

I want to be a cat
who eats without counting calories
and sleeps without nightmares and waking in a cold sweat
and purrs
and purrs
and purrs
when stroked.

I want to be a cat
who doesn't have to worry
about bills, and crisis and crises and stupid politics and COVID
and the end of the world.

I want to be a cat
oblivious to the insanity of humanity.

Cy Dugas, GEAR
UP, LHS

dad died
two days
before the
lockdown.

we knew it was
coming
ever since
he woke up

in the
middle of the night
and stood over his
flashlight collection
and fell
from the latest
stroke.

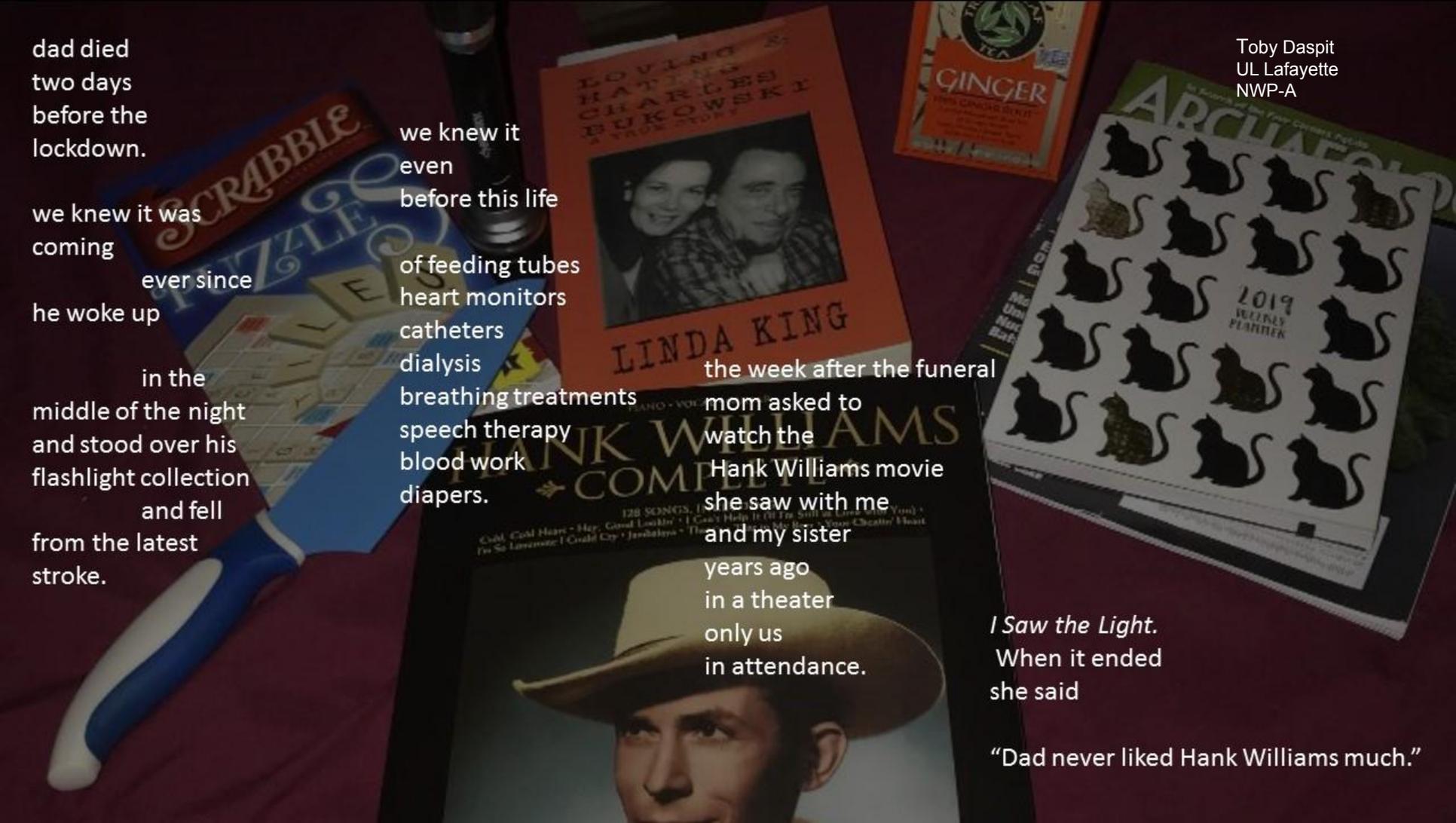
we knew it
even
before this life
of feeding tubes
heart monitors
catheters
dialysis
breathing treatments
speech therapy
blood work
diapers.

the week after the funeral
mom asked to
watch the
Hank Williams movie
she saw with me
and my sister
years ago
in a theater
only us
in attendance.

I Saw the Light.
When it ended
she said

“Dad never liked Hank Williams much.”

Toby Daspit
UL Lafayette
NWP-A



Toby Daspit
UL Lafayette
NWP-A



ain't no such thing
as a blank page
if you look at it right
the words are there

ain't no such thing
as not knowing
where the future's
heading

just needs a little blood
some James Booker
tickling those
yellow piano keys.



just need a little faith
some poets
staring at the sun
seeing the moon.

so much depends upon

Max's pool hall

the way you leaned

on the jukebox

before plucking

"Me & Bobby McGee"



the way you leaned

over the pool table

white shorts

chalk smudges.

Mrs. Nicole Falgout

I am a wife, mother, teacher, gym goer and Junior Leaguer. Seven years ago a blind date changed the direction of my life. I never wanted to be married or be a mom, now God has blessed me with the most wonderful husband and daughter. I bleed kelly green. I am a Mighty Lion, I love my students, my co-workers and the vastly diverse atmosphere at Lafayette High. There is no other place like it. Red's gives me life, and is my therapy. In 2015 I became a Junior Leaguer with a shared passion and mission for lasting community change.



My Writing Week Takeaways

I have learned so many new creative ways I can teach my students to write, that can get them to their academic writing goals that the curriculum wants my students to master.

I will definitely use many of our lessons from the week in my classroom. The one I see using the most is the “loafing” activity. I can see it really helping students make sure they are staying on topic when writing their essays. I also think it will be great to use when going through the peer editing process.



Nicole Falgout LHS

Dancing like nobody's watching
Losing herself in the simple things in life

Watering her flowers and breathing in the
morning air
Letting the sun hit her cheeks

Radio blaring
country music
The notes coming through
From fingers that happily dance on the
strings of a guitar

Losing herself
Unknowingly living in a world of full of hate
negativity
As if it is not even around us

I hope we are raising her to be a part of the
change
Teaching her to go into this world
Always showing love
Always being kind
even when it is hard
Because sometimes in life
It is
Give love and be kind Anyway

You are four
You are kind
You are love
You are sweetest soul we have ever known
Sweet Juliette



My biggest takeaway from this week is that virtual learning can be successful and engaging. I have definitely learned activities and techniques that can be used to engage my students this coming year, whether I am in the classroom with them or online. The activity that will probably get used the most in my classroom is the POV activity. It translates well to historical pictures

-Katie(NHS)



**Perspiration builds
Under my armpits
Between my breasts**

Everything is out of focus

**Heart beating triple time
Knocking against my
breastbone
Like a scorned lover
Rapping on my door**

**My chest hurts
Like i was walking
Behind Sisyphus
When he let go of the world**

Panicking

**It rolled downhill
I felt the spinning
And was simultaneously run over
It flattened me**

**Now I lay here
The weight of the world on my chest
No wonder it's hard to breathe**

- Katie (NHS)



- Katie (NHS)



Coffee and books, the two things that I can't live without. They have both been woven through my life like the shimmery thread dangled from the heavens by Clotho. Some of my earliest memories are my mother reading "Little Women" to me and sitting at my grandmother's table drinking coffee milk. I've never lost my love for either. Coffee has been there to get me through the day after every heartbreak or night spent out too late. Books have been my refuge and allowed me to examine the world and the human condition from afar. Books are my safe place.

Stacy Rougeau (LHS)- This is Us



“God is within her, she will not fail”.
5 years on a roller coaster ride
Fear, tears, excitement as I strap in

September 5, 2014: She was born
September 18, 2014: I met her
July 22, 2019: She took my last name

5 years such a blur
Phone call, social services,
Visitations, temporary custody,
Permanent custody, adoption
“Honey” was my name, now
I am “Mommy”

I put my tough skin on
Threw a cloak over my heart
And said, “YES”

YES to the crying
YES to the late nights
YES to the court dates
YES to the “what ifs”

The ride has ended
And I am relieved
Yet here I am
Strapping up again
A new ride, a new journey





My greatest takeaway was being able to break the barrier of kept emotions hidden from the quarantine and expressing them lively through various types of writing activities. This is definitely something I want to do right when school starts, where high school student minds are ready to burst and emotions are ready to spill.

-Rougeau (LHS)

Working from home



FAVORITE



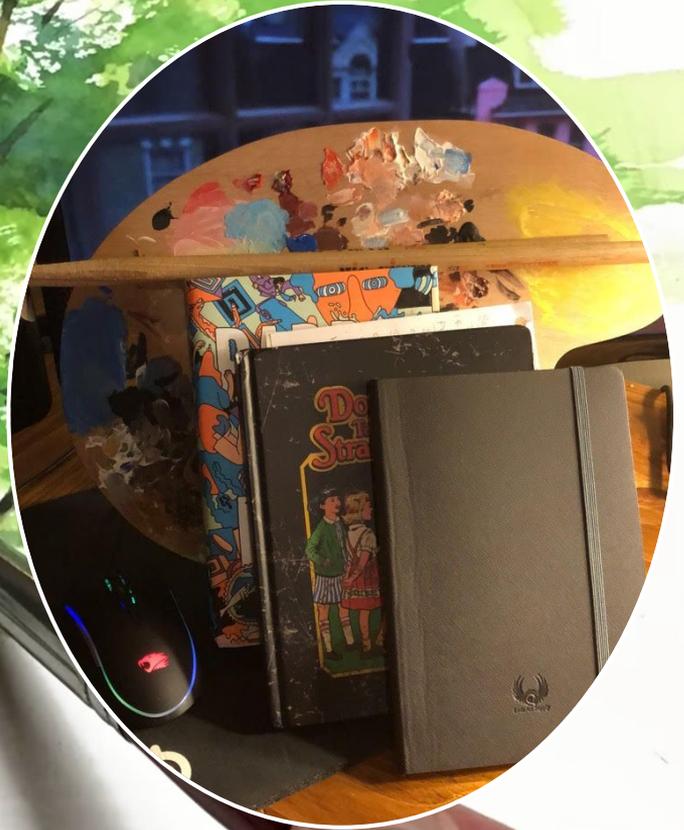
“Thank you, my brother”, the stranger says as I lift him up off the ground. As I carry him through the chaotic crowd of protestors, frustrated cops, and anxious newscasters, I thought to myself, I will never be your brother and you will never be considered my brother. My response was, “Your welcome”.

-Rougeau (LHS)

This is what it is all about! My heart beamed as this beautiful black soul picked me up off the ground and carried me through the angry mob of protestors and cops. “Thank you, my brother”. I made sure to say this loud and clear as onlookers stared at our direction forming their own opinions.

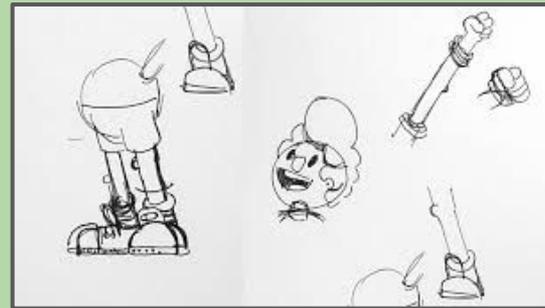
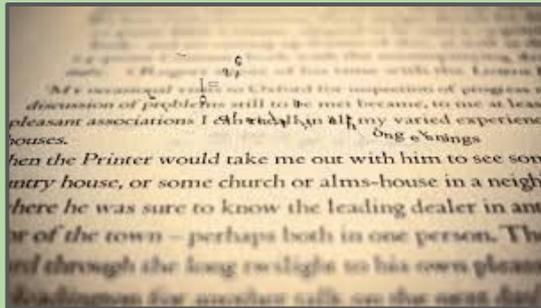
Mackinzie Cormier

As an artist with shelves of sketchbooks and many dirty paint pallets, I believe imagination is one of the key elements in making the world a better place. I let myself become engulfed by the creative and remarkable world of poetry and storytelling by reading books and writing tales for only me to see.. for now. Music is my drive and inspiration for many scenes and stories and in listening to it and playing the drums, I can let my emotions out and eventually on paper.



Improving my Future Writing and Creating

Because of the confidence I gained from this writing camp and sharing with the group, I plan on writing more and using the many techniques I learned to improve on my stories and poems I write. For example, the Moving Scene exercise inspired and taught me the most when it comes to my future writing and comic strips by teaching me how to formulate a scene and get the most emotion out of the audience/reader. With my new confidence and thoughtful writing techniques, I can more easily and masterfully create the poems and stories that I plan on using for my future comics and tales.



Meant to be

Artistic writing harnesses

Beautiful, queer worlds.

Worlds that inspire
and create
and build
and break
and heal

And that let people love
and cry
and write
and help
and be

Whoever they want to be
Which may be free
and heard
and loved
and inspired

Which is a world
Where we

are just meant to be.



Who am I?

Having been born halfway across the world, Jasim is very close to his family and keeps an album to preserve memories. He now looks for things to make a hobby out of during the quarantine. He plays basketball; he's played it for many years. He started to play the piano and finds it difficult but rewarding. He has an air freshener in a cat shape to constantly remind him of his love for felines. He has two cats and loves them. He uses sharpies because it brings strength to his words, furthering his cause to readers.



How this camp helped my writing

I was never really much of a writer. I was always more of a math person but I loved to read. This would help expand my imagination but I still wished to place these ideas on paper. That is why I signed up for this camp. I wanted to be able to improve my writing and learning from some of the most qualified teachers in this area. Throughout the week I have noticed that I have become more confident of my writing and that I actually want people to read it and critique it. I was nervous to see how the virtual learning would affect the program but it actually strengthened me to write more independently.

Favorite Work: Episodic Writing

1. Disaster Struck

It seemed as if it had come out of nowhere. No one knew what this virus was, all we knew at the time was that it was foreign. Was it dangerous? Yes, it wiped out many thousands of people across the globe. Necessary actions were taken, a strict quarantine and temporary closing of many shops and businesses. My basketball continued to lose its grip due to constant use

2. Classic

It was just another day in the school year, preparing for the upcoming math test. Nothing special was going on in the world, it seemed as if we would finally be getting some peace. I went outside and played with my basketball, upon closer inspection, I noticed that it was starting to lose its grip in some areas. I did not think that it would happen so soon

3. Aftermath

While it is safe to say that no one was prepared for this pandemic, the situation was handled surprisingly well. The amount of casualties however, still steadily rises. It is very unfortunate to think about these unlucky people who died by themselves without anyone but god watching over them. The shops and malls are starting to open up again. That's a good thing. I need a new ball.

Dreamer with a K

“Spelled like ‘dreamer’ but with a ‘K,’” I explain.

I’ve had vivid dreams my entire life.

Some crazy stress dreams.

Others completely mundane.

And some completely magical—

The kind you wake
up from and

Try to fall
back into.

I dream of my future life and wonder what it will be like.

Have I met the love of my life? Have I seen the world?

Have I done my best to help others?

To be my best daughter, friend, teacher, and self?

Have I made a difference?

While I worry about the present,

I dream for a better future.

“Spelled like ‘dreamer’ but with a ‘K,’” I explain.



Dear All Those Seeking to Improve the Blank Page:

In my experience, years tend to blur and blend. Tiny moments carelessly run into one another and my memory tricks me into forgetting where one ended and the next began.

I have been involved with the National Writing Project of Acadiana since 2013 and this is my third summer with Improving the Blank Page. As I reflect over the years, I find it hard to remember some of the details that have filled my summers. I find myself asking questions in an attempt to organize the years into tidy filing cabinets in my brain. However, I have realized while I may not remember the first time a new exercise was presented, or where a writing marathon kicked off, or who was involved in which summer, I have taken away far more important memories.

My teacher-parents gave me a sign that hung in my first classroom and sits in my office today: "They may not remember what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel." And I know that forgetting exactly what was said or done, or having memories meld together in my mind is okay. What I will remember many years from now is how being part of IBP has made me feel.

I have gotten to know other educators and hear their experiences and perspective. I have seen students flourish as writers. I have grown as a teacher and writer. Through the partnership between NWP-A and GEAR UP, the Improving the Blank Page project has continually inspired and excited and those are memories that will not soon fade.

Sincerely,
Forever A Writer

Michelle Kreamer
UL Lafayette
NWP-A

I See

I see kittens,
and smiling tots,
and thriving plants.

I see good news told,
and old friendships reignited,
and two families becoming one.

I try to enjoy the purity of these shared moments,
and smile at the positivity in a world that so needs it.
I remember these moments when clouded by others.

I see headlines that cause me to break down,
and posts that are filled with hostility,
and negativity looking for a fight.

I see uncontained anger,
and blatant hypocrisy,
and hurtful words.

Through hashtags,
and filters,
I see.

“A YOUNG PRIEST TALKS TO A NUN ABOUT THE BROTHEL SHE RUNS”

They overlook a food drive, her girls volunteering.
The Young Priest says, They're very good at this.
She says, I'll pass along the compliment to the girls,
and he blushes and then gathers himself and he
says,
You're quite an influence.

Soon, he nods to an older Priest.
He says, You should know. He says,
Father O'Mara. He's not as... complimentary.
She says, Oh yes. She says, I know.
He says, You're on his radar, Sister, and she
says,
If I weren't, I'd feel I was failing.
And he smiles again, kindly, and says,
I know you, you stand by your work,
And she says, It's never finished,
But she can smell the worry on his collar, and
she adds,
Don't worry about me. She says, What I do, I do
because
I truly believe it's what Jesus would do.

The Young Priest considers this.
He nods. And he says,
Sadly, I think Father O'Mara relies more on
Leviticus than Christ.
He says, 'If a priest's daughter defiles herself by becoming a
prostitute,
She also defiles her Father's holiness, and she...
And he clears his throat and he says, She... must be burned to
death.'

She takes a knowing breath, grinning. She says,
So, Father, why is it
We never read about men
Being burned to death?
Ashamed, he says,
We're too busy lighting the fire.

Josh Capps
UL Lafayette
NWP-A

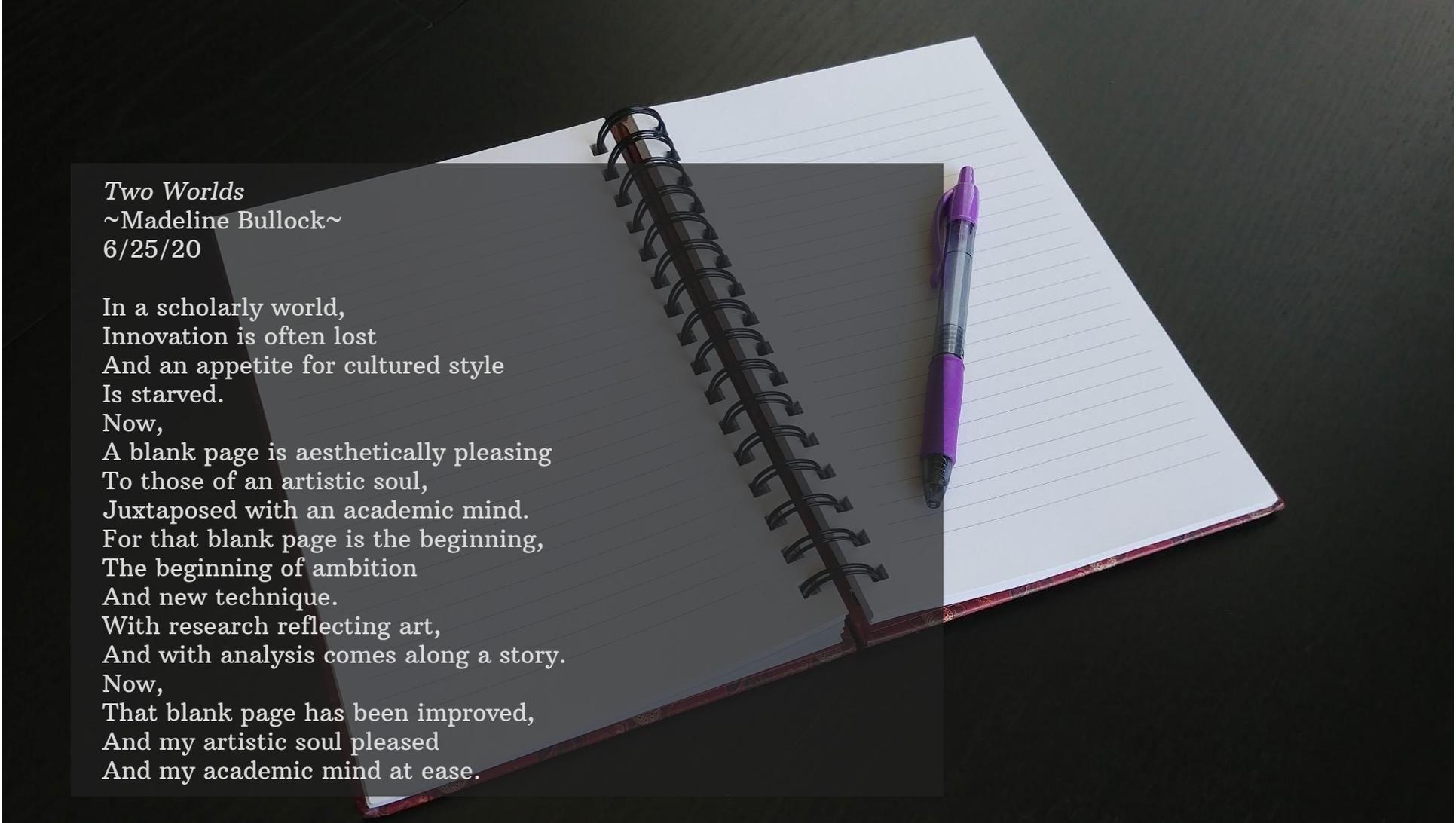


Where I Write
~Madeline Bullock~
6/22/20

Going through day by day,
Week by week,
Titled "2020"
Filled cover to cover
With due dates and practices,
While keeping all of my mess put together.

Leather bound and tied,
Filled with countless pillow thoughts
And secrets,
Kept only for me
And the midnight crickets keeping company.

Hard-covered with a pretty navy blue,
Full of doodles and journaling
Wakes me up each morning
With a prayer,
As my main foundation and strongest
mentality.



Two Worlds

~Madeline Bullock~

6/25/20

In a scholarly world,
Innovation is often lost
And an appetite for cultured style
Is starved.

Now,
A blank page is aesthetically pleasing
To those of an artistic soul,
Juxtaposed with an academic mind.
For that blank page is the beginning,
The beginning of ambition
And new technique.
With research reflecting art,
And with analysis comes along a story.

Now,
That blank page has been improved,
And my artistic soul pleased
And my academic mind at ease.

To be captivating,
Centerstage,
And understood.
Anyone can round the block
And know
Exactly who I am
And what I have to say,
And who I want to reach,
and where I can be seen.

Because not everyone
Wants to understand,
And learn
And be a rightful change.
Instead they act with hate,
And violence,
And closed off minds,
And nothing
And no-one
Makes any sense to them.

But no-one will recognize
where it came from,
Or that I was who started it
And made that difference
And sparked a new flame,
And I will be okay with that.

But any knowledgeable one
would know
Not everyone will agree
And stand
And be side-by-side with me,
And at one point
I will be okay with that.
I will be okay with
making a difference in only one mind
And in a single thought,
And in only one heart,

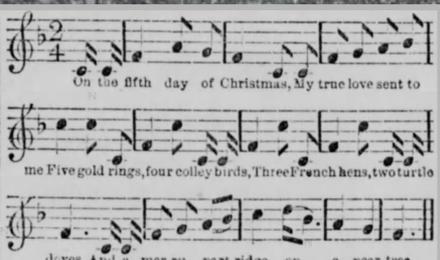
And the world just seems to be
Okay with that.
Like a red flag,
Waving in front of a bull.
But one day I'll take the stage
And that bull will listen
To what I have to say,
And it will understand
And it will make a change,
And that change,
Will turn heads
And speak louder than
Any hateful words.

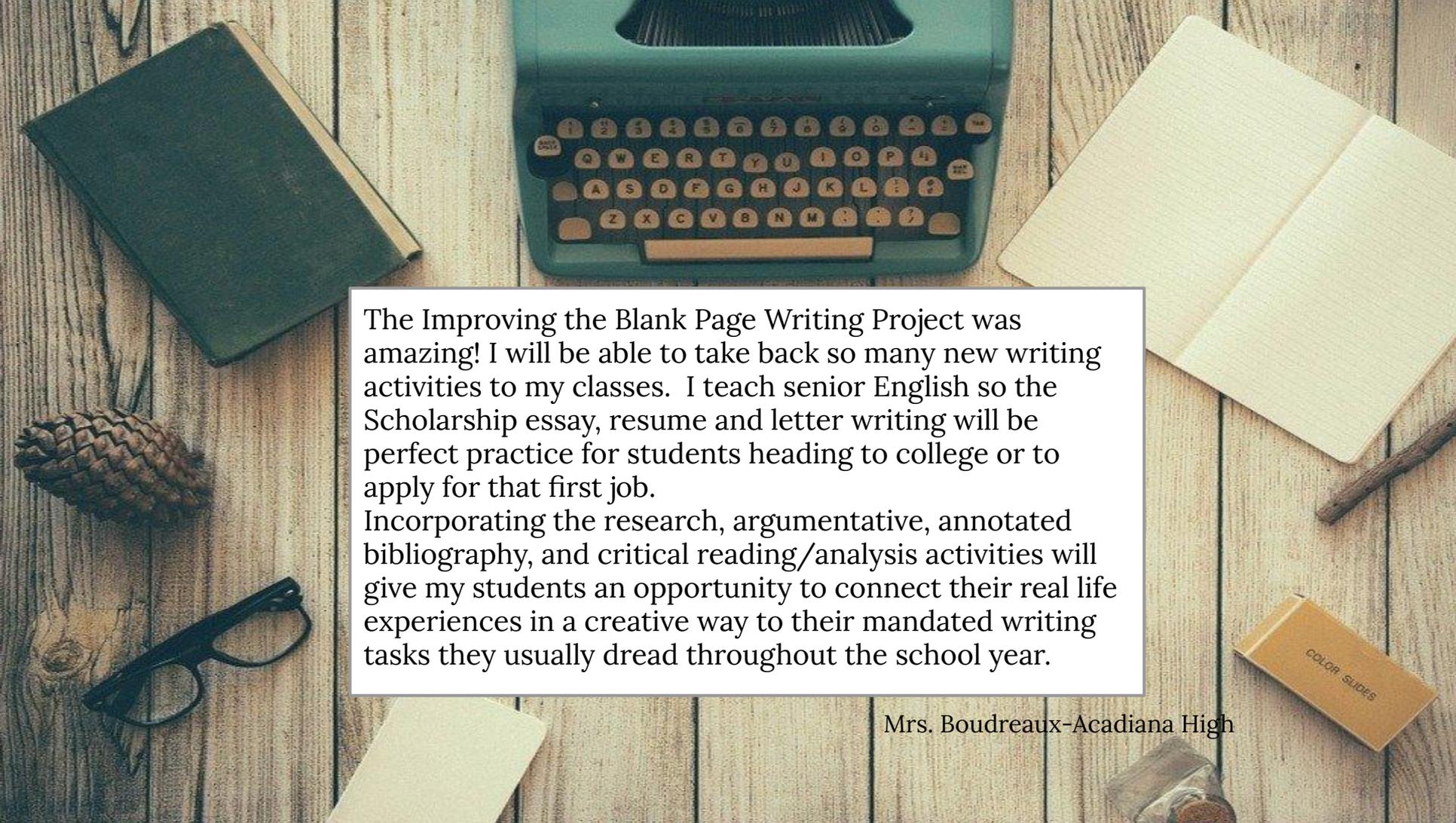
Okay With That
~Madeline Bullock~
6/22/20



My life began in Pennsylvania which sparked my love for falling snow, crackling fireplaces and Christmas. My happiness relies on listening to Christmas music year round and shopping for the best deal with my mom. Family is the center of my life. My three blessings are my world that almost never happened. Spending time with family and friends brings me joy everyday. Traveling to the beach, Disneyworld, the mountains to see my children's eyes light up leaves me speechless. Teaching is what gives me another greater purpose knowing I am making a difference in a student's life is my motivation.

Mrs. Boudreaux-Acadiana High





The Improving the Blank Page Writing Project was amazing! I will be able to take back so many new writing activities to my classes. I teach senior English so the Scholarship essay, resume and letter writing will be perfect practice for students heading to college or to apply for that first job. Incorporating the research, argumentative, annotated bibliography, and critical reading/analysis activities will give my students an opportunity to connect their real life experiences in a creative way to their mandated writing tasks they usually dread throughout the school year.

Mrs. Boudreaux-Acadiana High

So much depends
upon
looking out the back door
Dad driving across several states
to his childhood home
Me in the hot sticky back seat
Radio blaring with the windows
down
dad tapping on the steering wheel
singing along to his old days
Me imagining his thoughts

Mrs. Boudreaux-Acadiana High



1931 Ford 2 Door
Sedan (Street Rod)

The Beach Boys have the best sound in car stereo.



And the Beach Boys know sound.

Craig Powerplay's dual amplification produces over three times more power per channel than virtually any other car stereo. This componentry feature delivers clearer sound with less distortion at all volume levels. Not just more volume.

The Beach Boys' Powerplay car stereos are matched with Powerplay speakers, which are specially designed to handle the extra power.

Get the best sound in car stereo and hear the Beach Boys latest... The Beach Boys score you, on your own, Craig Powerplay system. There are many models of Powerplay stereos and speakers to choose from.



CRAIG POWERPLAY
When you're serious about music.

For full details and specifications on the complete Powerplay line, call 1-800-222-2222 or visit our website at www.craigpowerplay.com. ©2004 Craig Powerplay, Inc. 2222 S. 10th St., Suite 100, Phoenix, AZ 85042. In Canada, contact: Suite 101, 2423 Somerset Ave., Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3E9.



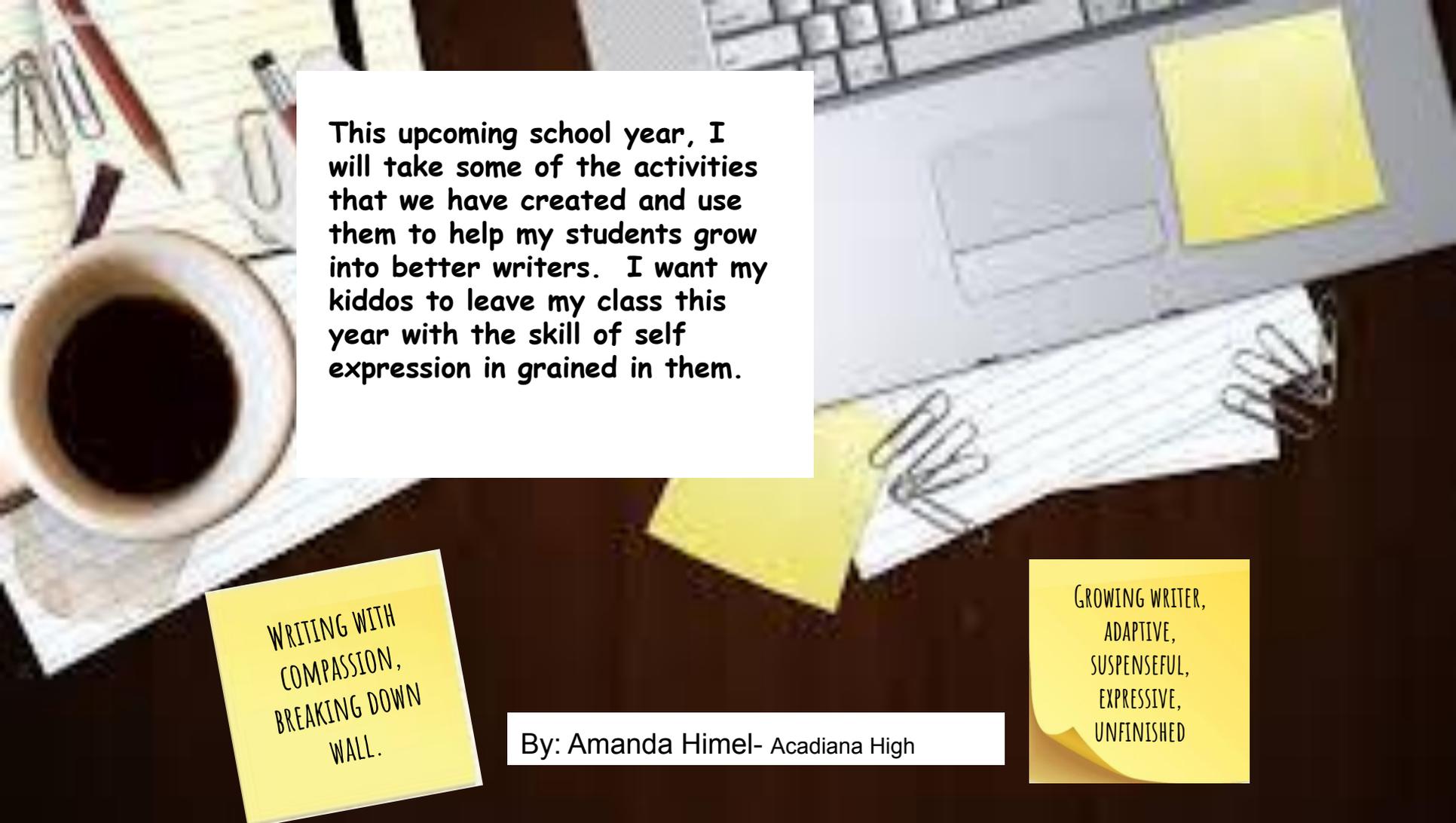
1938 Chevy 2 Door
Sedan
(Street Rod)

Some call it
Chaos
we call it
Family



As my family evolves, I grow because they are my cornerstone. Not a single day goes by that I do not talk to my parents; they are my foundation. Now I have 3 grown children of my own and a grandson who are all the center of my world. To make sure I make lots of memories with them, I enjoy spending time cooking and taking long road trips with my family. I also have a deep-rooted passion for teaching and want to make a difference and inspire the next generation. This is where my leadership and organizational skills shine.

By: Amanda Himel-
Acadiana High

A top-down view of a desk. On the left is a white mug filled with dark coffee. In the center is a silver laptop with a yellow sticky note on the palm rest. To the right of the laptop is a white notepad with a silver paperclip and a yellow sticky note. The background is a dark brown surface.

This upcoming school year, I will take some of the activities that we have created and use them to help my students grow into better writers. I want my kiddos to leave my class this year with the skill of self expression in grained in them.

**WRITING WITH
COMPASSION,
BREAKING DOWN
WALL.**

By: Amanda Himel- Acadiana High

**GROWING WRITER,
ADAPTIVE,
SUSPENSEFUL,
EXPRESSIVE,
UNFINISHED**

So much depends upon childhood memories in the Appalachians:

So much depends upon,

Being bare feet down in the hollar tasting honeysuckles,

Dancing on the porch in the rain while laughter fills the background,

Waiting for lonely coal truck drivers who are heading home to familiar faces,

And remembering the rifle, the bible, and the cross by Granny's bed.



By: Amanda Himel- Acadiana High

Ms. Sonnier: The Road to Writing Instruction

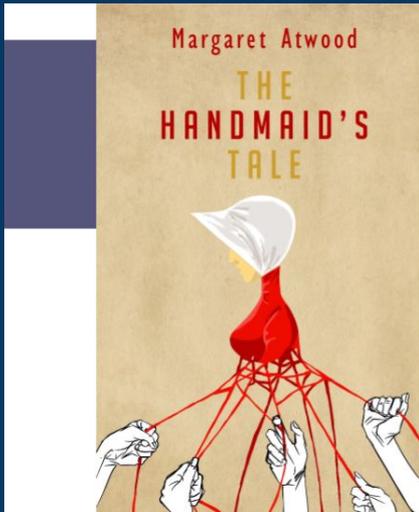
The goddess Athena represents wisdom, strategy, courage, art, and culture. Coming from a long line of teachers, I consider this Greek goddess to be symbolic of who I am. Early on, school became a way of life for me, along with a love of cultivating learning in others. I devoted my life to sharpening those skills, and along with this, I developed a strong imagination and appreciation for the magic of fantasy and fiction. I'm sentimental and love the poetry of things, and writing became both a strength and a refuge wherein self-reflection is the key to learning and leading.

Elizabeth Sonnier - Northside High School



Elizabeth Sonnier - Northside High School

- I've learned new approaches to teaching familiar topics...



ARTISTIC ANALYSIS

- Head- The hat makes it so she isn't meant to be seen, she's looking down -perhaps defeated?
- Turtle neck- conservative, maybe religious

Out-In-Out & Argumentative Writing

Ms. A. Brew & Ms. E. Brew

- Using new tools and techniques

- Collaboration with peers within and across disciplines!

- New ways to reach students and learn from their innovations

Ms. Sonnier's still life

- UL Binder
- Snake Plant
- Statue of Greek Goddess, Athena
- Other mythological creatures (mermaid, Pegasus)
- Golden Apple Paperweight
- Pencils
- Keepsake Jar
- Mirror

What do these things tell you about me? Take a minute to write a brief description

GOAL!

Can you see what I'm saying?

It's an Indian palace

Or a pillbox apartment

It's flowers and pearls

Or craft store plaster

It's the elephant god Ganesh

Or kitschy home decor

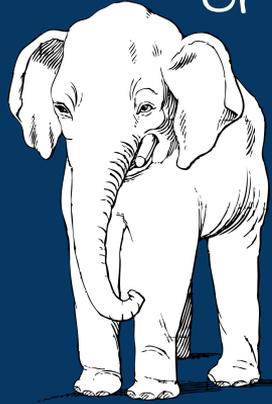
The Mover of Obstacles

Or something you'll lug around

for the rest of your life

Sometimes it's the lotus

Sometimes it's the axe



The Butcher's Daughter

I'm the butcher's daughter
and I hate the smell of raw meat,
I'd rather live off the land
than eat cows who were bred
just for eatin'.



I'd rather stay locked in a room
writing verses about
joyous party scenes
than actually going to
joyous parties;
for some reason they
make me feel more alone
than when I'm sitting in
a silent room.



I'd rather be swallowed up
into the cosmic chaos
than worship your God;
I find it imperative that one day
I return to my own
celestial roots.

Poetic Imperialism

Infinite power and
time to create
is all I need
to take over the world.
Of course,
I'll need some knowledge
and cadence
and endless epiphanies
and I'll embrace my queerness,
I'll live in that little check box
that says "other".
I'll be angry
and vengeful
and I'll scream
and cry
and dance around the kitchen
until my tears are gone
and I am ready to
outlive you through my words.



When I was 16 years old
I had an epiphany in someone's backyard,
a plan to make money off of my own traumas,
to sell my thoughts for cash,
let strangers into the mind of a teenage girl
who is always spiraling.
I immediately called up an old friend
to tell him all about the idea
before it disappeared,
but he didn't pick up
so I just did my best to write it out on paper.

I titled the page *Primary Colors*
Subheading:
*A collection of poems that
make up the contents of my soul.*



Can you see what I'm saying?
It is a late night confession
or the reminisce of a dream.
A painting of a waterfall
or the thoughts of the girl
drowning at the bottom.
A letter to my mother
or a quick look into the mirror.
A love spell or
the ingredients to a potion
that turns boys into frogs.
This little red book contains
the entire capacity of all my powers.

Little Red Notebook

The cover is made of
some kind of fake leather,
it has patterns of trees engraved
on the front
and there's a bright yellow sticker
from some smoke shop
I've never been inside of,
I just thought it looked cool.
The pages are thick
and smell like dragon's blood incenses,
messy strokes of excess acrylic paint
line the outside edges.



Thank you for continually
Improving the Blank Page!

