Grade 12 Reflective Sample

"A Tale of Two Towers: Reflections on Writing"

For some high school students, writing is a painful process drawn out by (what they believe to be) multiple unnecessary drafts, erratic revisions, and critiques that go unheard. When I began to take writing seriously and focus on the quality of my writing rather than simply writing to complete an assignment, I realized that being conditioned to write, read, and revise each piece that I had written did nothing but build on and improve my writings. These processes only contributed to writing that was structurally sound; it didn't benefit the actual content of my writing. This is why my growth as a writer isn't best described through the various school related tasks that have been assigned to me. The development of my writing proficiency and my attitude towards it is most evident in my personal writing endeavors, those that have been read by none but endlessly amended by me at any opportunity.

My interest and progression as a writer starts with my inspiration. While other kids were being lulled to sleep with classic fairy tales, I was being read comic books. Instead of watching *Cinderella*, I watched *Star Wars*, and I knew who Frodo Baggins was before I could recognize Mickey Mouse. Knowing this, it should come as no surprise to learn that the majority of my personal writing – writing that isn't for a class – is filled with fantasy and science fiction elements.

At first, I went down the oft-traveled path of fantasy writers. It was fifth grade, I had recently read Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and in my mind, that qualified me to begin writing my own fantasy epic. Without any preliminary thoughts, I began writing and in only a few hours completed what I believed to be, as I was writing at least, an impressive first try. My hopes were shattered as I read it through the first time. Not only had I stolen the basis of Tolkien's masterpiece (My tale narrated the adventure of a diverse group of fantasy races who aligned to destroy a Holy Grail-esque necklace that granted the owner unlimited power), but I had also taken the names of locales directly from his maps. Even in my fifth grade mindset, it was painfully obvious to me that, if I wanted to follow through with my interest and not simply write a blatant *Rings* knock-off, I would have to succeed where other author's have failed: creating an original fantasy story that, even if the shadow of Tolkien's overpowering influence could be recognized, would distinguish itself from the classic standard.

It soon became clear that this was no easy task. In fact, it seemed nearly impossible. Throughout middle school, I penned numerous stories, each leaving me with the same feeling. The correctness was there, it always had been, but the

revolutionary content (I would have settled for groundbreaking or innovative, even) was still notably absent. Any idea that came to mind could easily be traced to something made popular by Tolkien. I had no qualms with using the fantasy staples (elves, orcs, dwarves, a hero's journey, etc.) but a new twist on them is what I lacked. This was heartbreaking for me; I truly desired to write something creative and original. I tried more, and I continued to fail. This failure did not prompt me to quit, though, only to try harder.

I'm still trying. I have two binders, nearing three, of content that has accumulated over the past four years, whether it be a hastily written idea or a scribbled drawing. I won't discard anything that may be of use later. If poetic justice were served, I would like to find some closure in my final year in high school, and reach the goal of writing to my own satisfaction. I've managed to write a few short stories with fantasy elements, but I'm still searching for the idea that blows me away. It is these failed attempts and efforts that have furthered my development as a writer. It hasn't been the analysis of writing mechanics, underlining parts of speech, or any other tedious task performed in a standard English class. That helps, but not nearly as much as doing things on my own.

I know how to write. I am sure there are more technicalities that I will learn as my education continues, but as of now I am content with my writing level. It is not the **how** that I am concerned with. It is the **what** that I focus on. As I continue to hone my writing, I am sure that I will continue to come closer to writing something that ultimately satisfies me. Until then, I'll keep trying.

Grade 12 Reflective Sample

"A Tale of Two Towers: Reflections on Writing"

For some high school students, writing is a painful process drawn out by (what they believe to be) multiple unnecessary drafts, erratic revisions, and critiques that go unheard. When I began to take writing seriously and focus on the quality of my writing rather than simply writing to complete an assignment, I realized that being conditioned to write, read, and revise each piece that I had written did nothing but build on and improve my writings. These processes only contributed to writing that was structurally sound; it didn't benefit the actual content of my writing. This is why my growth as a writer isn't best described through the various school related tasks that have been assigned to me. The development of my writing proficiency and my attitude towards it is most evident in my personal writing endeavors, those that have been read by none but endlessly amended by me at any opportunity.

Writing shows insight about students own experience with writing

focuses on writing growth / developmen

My interest and progression as a writer starts with my inspiration. While other kids were being lulled to sleep with classic fairy tales, I was being read comic books. Instead of watching *Cinderella*, I watched *Star Wars*, and I knew who Frodo Baggins was before I could recognize Mickey Mouse. Knowing this, it should come as no surprise to learn that the majority of my personal writing – writing that isn't for a class – is filled with fantasy and science fiction elements.

reflects upon early literacy experiences with comic books and S. Wars to show connections to fantasy writing

At first, I went down the oft-traveled path of fantasy writers. It was fifth grade, I had recently read Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and in my mind, that qualified me to begin writing my own fantasy epic. Without any preliminary thoughts, I began writing and in only a few hours completed what I believed to be, as I was writing at least, an impressive first try. My hopes were shattered as I read it through the first time. Not only had I stolen the basis of Tolkien's masterpiece (My tale narrated the adventure of a diverse group of fantasy races who aligned to destroy a Holy Grail-esque necklace that granted the owner unlimited power), but I had also taken the names of locales directly from his maps. Even in my fifth grade mindset, it was painfully obvious to me that, if I wanted to follow through with my interest and not simply write a blatant *Rings* knock-off, I would have to succeed where other author's have failed: creating an original fantasy story that, even if the shadow of Tolkien's overpowering influence could be recognized, would distinguish itself from the classic standard.

shows insight about writing through reflection

It soon became clear that this was no easy task. In fact, it seemed nearly impossible. Throughout middle school, I penned numerous stories, each leaving me with the same feeling. The correctness was there, it always had been, but the

subtle, effective transitions

maintains insight into literacy experience

evaluat persona experie growt

maintains distinctive voice

revolutionary content (I would have settled for groundbreaking or innovative, even) was still notably absent. Any idea that came to mind could easily be traced to something made popular by Tolkien. I had no qualms with using the fantasy staples (elves, orcs, dwarves, a hero's journey, etc.) but a new twist on them is what I lacked. This was heartbreaking for me; I truly desired to write something creative and original. I tried more, and I continued to fail. This failure did not prompt me to quit, though, only to try harder.

writing demonstrates effective transitions throughout

maintains focus on growth in writing through literacy throughout

I'm still trying. I have two binders, nearing three, of content that has accumulated over the past four years, whether it be a hastily written idea or a scribbled drawing. I won't discard anything that may be of use later. If poetic justice were served, I would like to find some closure in my final year in high school, and reach the goal of writing to my own satisfaction. I've managed to write a few short stories with fantasy elements, but I'm still searching for the idea that blows me away. It is these failed attempts and efforts that have furthered my development as a writer. It hasn't been the analysis of writing mechanics, underlining parts of speech, or any other tedious task performed in a standard English class. That helps, but not nearly as much as doing things on my own.

considers a personal goal in literacy

I know how to write. I am sure there are more technicalities that I will learn as my education continues, but as of now I am content with my writing level. It is not the **how** that I am concerned with. It is the **what** that I focus on. As I continue to hone my writing, I am sure that I will continue to come closer to writing something that ultimately satisfies me. Until then, I'll keep trying.

demonstrates insight and analysis

Instructional Notes: This personal essay demonstrates an effective evaluation and reflection upon writing growth through early experiences with reading. While the student has demonstrated an experience common to many writers (the reading/writing connection), the focus is unique to the student and does not seem forced or prompt-driven. It is evident throughout the essay that the student was given clear choice and ownership related to the intended purpose of the reflective entry for portfolio assessment.