Grade 12 Reflective Sample

Following the Yellow Brick Road to Literacy

As a child, I spent my summer days at my grandparents' house with my sister and two cousins. We spent countless hours playing together in the basement. We made up companies that we worked for, put on dance recitals, taught imaginary classes our vast knowledge, just about anything that you could imagine four kids coming up with. But one particular summer, our jobs at imagined companies and pretend teaching became old. When boredom finally took over, we needed something new to do. It was then that we came up with the idea of putting on a play.

Looking back on those years, it was our first production, *The Wizard of Oz*, that has left the most lasting impression. I was too young to realize it then, but the experience of writing our own play and producing it ourselves corresponds to the process of writing that I currently use today.

We went through four phases when developing our version of *The Wizard of Oz*. These stages were choosing an audience, planning, practicing, and the final production. These stages all relate to a certain phase in my current writing process.

Stage 1: Choosing an Audience

As aspiring playwrights, we knew it was important to select an audience. Considering all we knew was family, that was our audience. But, not only did we have to choose who we wanted to develop the play for, we also had to sell tickets to them. We had to advertise the play, and really make it seem interesting. These two steps are similar to what I did when developing my portfolio. I first had to choose an audience for each of my pieces. After choosing who my reader was, I had to sell them my paper. I have learned that you MUST get your audience interested immediately. Having an awareness of my audience allowed me to develop my introductions in each of my pieces to really draw in their attention and sell my piece.

When writing "The Belief of a Scanner/Shredder Girl," I had a very unusual audience to consider. This piece was written for an essay contest titled "This I Believe." If my piece was chosen, it would be read on a radio program. This was a hard audience to write for because it was important that I not only focus on the writing, but how it would be read as well. I worked to make this piece conversational. I wanted it to sound as if I were saying it myself, not like it was being read straight off of a piece of paper. I also had to keep in mind that I not only had to express my belief, but I had to do so with only six-hundred words. With this restriction, it was very important that I kept my piece concise. I had to limit the detail, and through that, I realized that if you use the right language, you really don't need as many words.

One piece which I feel I strongly sold to my readers is "Teen Smoking: Out of Control." I decided that this piece would be best developed as an article in a parenting magazine. When I knew that my readers would be parents of teenagers, it was easy for me to focus on audience awareness. I was able to develop my paper about teenage smoking into an article to help parents dealing with this issue. Once I had chosen my audience, I developed my introduction to draw their attention by using the statement "teenagers have always been classified by elders as the immature, unmanageable youngsters." When I read this, I can envision my grandfather talking about teenagers these days compared to when he was growing up. I knew this would be a similar image for many other readers. By making this statement, I hoped readers would immediately have an image of someone they knew classifying teenagers in the same way. From this, I was able to lead into some of the bad habits teens take part in and introduce smoking as one popular habit.

Stage 2: Planning

Back at our playhouse in the basement, it was time to start planning. We spent hours watching *The Wizard of Oz* to be inspired for our writing. We wrote our lines based on what happens in the movie. After we had our lines down, we had to plot the action of the play. We outlined what needed to happen in our version. Once we had completed the outline, we began to write the actual play. We correlated our lines with the action. After weeks of work, we completed writing the play.

The tedious planning we used to develop our version of *The Wizard of Oz* is also an important part of the writing process that I use. I take time in developing outlines that I use when writing my pieces. When writing my Internet book review on *For One More Day*, I started with a simple outline:

1. Introduce story
2. Structure of novel
3. How the novel reads (quick read)
4. Segmenting novel with flashbacks
5. Conversational tone of the novel
6. How title correlates to the theme
7. Conclusion with personal touch

To set up my outline I first had to decide what I wanted to review about the novel. I chose the important features of the novel that made it such a great choice to read. Then, once I knew what I needed to include, I arranged my outline order into a logical sense that would allow my piece to flow. After creating this outline, I was able to write my review with more focus.

Stage 3: Practice

Back at our summer production, we finally completed the writing of our play and it was time for practice. We knew that the more we practiced, the better our play would be. Practice makes perfect, right? We practiced at least four or five times the week before we put on the play. On certain days we dressed up in our costumes to make sure everything was just right. As we practiced, we found a few minor errors in our writing or our props that needed some work. We finally made all the changes we needed to, and had our well-tuned play ready for production.

Practice is one of the most important steps in my writing process. Practice is probably better known as revising in the writing process. With my portfolio, I found revising to be one of the hardest, but most rewarding phases. When revising *The Beliefs of a Scanner/Shredder Girl*, it was difficult to know what needed to be done. That was when I opted to find some help. As a writer, hearing others' opinions on my writing always gives me new perspective. In English class this year, we had the option of editing one of our pieces with help from the entire class. I decided that this was what *The Beliefs of a Scanner/Shredder Girl* needed. We used one of the new projectors to project my paper onto a screen. When I read my piece to the class, each student would give suggestions. I found that this was one of the most helpful forms of revision I had ever used.

Stage 4: The Final Production

Back at our grandparents' house, it was finally performance day. We had put a lot of work into our play, and were immensely excited for the production. Our last challenge was to make our play presentable. We worked hard to set up our grandparents' basement for our play. We set up seats, curtains, lighting, a back stage, the whole nine yards. This was it. No more dress rehearsals. No more changes. It was time for full costumes. We performed perfectly, without one mistake. Our production was a success. All of our planning and practice paid off. Our audience was pleased.

Like the final production of our play, with writing, the final production is key. As my portfolio writing was coming to a close, I began to prepare my pieces for their presentation. I set up two of my pieces using Microsoft Publisher. Since "Teen Smoking: Out of Control" was a magazine article, I made it look as if it were in a magazine. Since my book review on *For One More Day* was an Internet book review, I made it look as if I had printed it straight off of a website. I read each of my papers once more to look for last second mistakes. After changing any mistakes I found, I printed each of my papers. My portfolio was complete.

Throughout the experience of creating a portfolio, the most important thing that I have come to realize is that I have truly grown as a writer. From

the stages of choosing an audience, planning, practicing, and putting on the final production, my writing process has only strengthened through four short years of being in high school. I have a new confidence in my writing. It was an amazing feeling when I realized that with hard work, my writing was something that I could be proud of.

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Title suggests focus

As a child, I spent my summer days at my grandparents' house with my sister and two cousins. We spent countless hours playing together in the basement. We made up companies that we worked for, put on dance recitals, taught imaginary classes our vast knowledge, just about anything that you could imagine four kids coming up with. But one particular summer, our jobs at imagined companies and pretend teaching became old. When boredom finally took over, we needed something new to do. It was then that we came up with the idea of putting on a play.

focuses on early literacy experience and connects with writing development

Looking back on those years, it was our first production, *The Wizard of Oz*, that has left the most lasting impression. I was too young to realize it then, but the experience of writing our own play and producing it ourselves corresponds to the process of writing that I currently use today.

We went through four phases when developing our version of *The Wizard of Oz*. These stages were choosing an audience, planning, practicing, and the final production. These stages all relate to a certain phase in my current writing process.

"Stages" of experience help organization

Stage 1: Choosing an Audience

writing and performing plays = literacy experiences / strands

As aspiring playwrights, we knew it was important to select an audience. Considering all we knew was family, that was our audience. But not only did we have to choose who we wanted to develop the play for, we also had to sell tickets to them. We had to advertise the play, and really make it seem interesting. These two steps are similar to what I did when developing my portfolio. I first had to choose an audience for each of my pieces. After choosing who my reader was, I had to sell them my paper. I have learned that you MUST get your audience interested immediately. Having an awareness of my audience allowed me to develop my introductions in each of my pieces to really draw in their attention and sell my piece.

Develops ideas by connecting experience with writing

References samples from portfolio

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Reflective idea development demonstrate thinking about writing decisions

Stage 2: Planning

continued learning connection

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describes process of outlining

To set up my outline I first had to decide what I wanted to review about the novel. I chose the important features of the novel that made it such a great choice to read. Then, once I knew what I needed to include, I arranged my outline order into a logical sense that would allow my piece to flow. After creating this outline, I was able to write my review with more focus.

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describes own process for revision

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Instructional Notes: This sample clearly demonstrates the connections between literacy experiences and writing growth and development. The student has demonstrated the influence of early literacy experiences (writing and performing plays) to current writing development (portfolio development). This sample is unique to the student's experience suggesting choice and ownership during the writing process.