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Dr. Spear

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A Purpose of Your Own

When I was in high school, I always felt forced to write when I was assigned a topic. I was even told that I was a horrible writer during my junior year. I started to dislike writing and lost my purpose to write. Looking back at my previous writing experiences, I do not believe I wrote with a purpose until my freshman year at Francis Marion University. I always thought of writing as something I had to do in order to receive a grade to in order to pass a class. My writing should have been one of my top priorities even if I am writing significant purpose such as writing to inform, persuade, or express my thoughts. Although I have had positive and negative experiences, the ultimate experience was when I was told to “write for me”. Having my professor say those words motivated me and inspired me to continue to write.

Almost two months into my first semester of college, my day began as usual and as I walked to class knowing on that day we would receive our writing assignment for our compare and contrast essay a light breeze graced my face. I pondered the thought of having to write an essay as I walked all the way to class. The mild crunch of the fall leaves calmed some of my frustrations about this essay. Once I reached Founder’s Hall I walked up the ramp into classroom 140A.

When Dr. Cowles came in, he removed his black hat and took off his hunter green trench coat and exclaimed, “Good morning,

As he placed his book bag on the table, he pulled out a small stack of papers. We knew it was time for our daily reading quiz.

“Alright here is your assignment sheet for your compare and contrast essay,” he announced.

Once I got the assignment sheet, I stared at it with a completely blank thought. We had to choose two religions to compare and contrast. I tried reminding myself of the different outlines Dr. Cowles had given us the previous Monday. The only one I could clearly remember off the top of my head without looking back at my notes was the easiest one.

Dr. Cowles explained it as, “this being the most common outline you start with the introduction, then go into your similarities, then proceed to your differences, there you discuss the differences of your first topic then go to the differences of the second topic.”

I instantly choose to use that outline for my compare and contrast essay outline. Still unsure what two religions I would choose, I decided to read a student’s sample paper. As I read the paper, I started doubting my outline. Word after word I read, I felt pressure pushing on my brain. By the time I got to the end of the paper, I lost the little bit of confidence I had.

“Boy, this is going to be a tough one because I can’t form the words I wasn’t to say, the first paper of the semester and I am sitting here sweating bullets,” I thought anxiously.

As soon as I got to my dorm room I opened my laptop to schedule an appointment at the Writing Center. I made one for two o’clock the next day. I met with Katie Mitchell and she helped me to develop ideas as well as begin my research process. After leaving the Writing Center, I rushed to catch Dr. Cowles before his office hours were over. As I reached his office that was located a few doors down I saw that his door was cracked with the light shining under it; he was still there. I knocked helplessly hoping for a good outcome.

“Hey, Dr. Cowles, do you have a minute?” I asked anxiously.

He replied “Hey, Freddricka, come on in!”

“I just have a few questions about the paper assignment,” I explained.

In high school I was always comfortable going to my teachers to talk and get extra help. I went on to explain my anxieties about the paper and what his expectations were. He assured me not to worry too much and everything will fall into place. Dr. Cowles asked me what religions I decided to compare and contrast. I told him Christianity because I needed help figuring out another one. He then challenged me to think deeper and narrow the topic down. I then asked could I compare two denominations within Christianity, and he said that would be great.

He ended the conversation by telling me to “Write from my experience with both denominations.” I thanked him and wished him to enjoy the rest of his day.

As I walked back to my dorm, I let his words sink into my brain. The following day was our class meeting day. After completing our daily reading quiz, he addressed concerns others had about the paper because many of us came by his office. He then gave us different types of source suggestions to help us get started. One that stood out was interviewing someone who has knowledge about the topics we chose. Instantly, I thought about emailing my pastor. I remember him always referring to how he grew up Baptist and transitioned into Methodism when he went into the army. Later that day I emailed him. He responded by the next day and I began to look over my outline. I went back and forth with what points I wanted to touch on. I decided to start with my introduction then go into the similarities, then proceed with the differences of the two.

Over the weekend I wrote the first two pages of my draft so that I could have something for our Peer Review Workshop scheduled for that following Monday. I started off slow at first. I would type a few words and stop and pounder on what I was doing. As I sat in my group and

talked about our work one girl, Anna, shared with us that she struggled with meeting the required page length.

“I feel that I may have to toss my entire draft because I am stuck,” she stated,

We all assured her that once she includes her research she would be okay. As long as she covered all the points required, she would have strong content. I explained to the group that I had trouble with a title and that would be the last thing I would worry about. The countdown started there was four days until our final essay had to be turned in. Luckily, the night before, I scheduled another appointment at the Writing Center. This time I had more to work on when writing the rest of paper. I struggled with how to incorporate my sources without just plugging it them in.

Katie explained that “when using sources, it’s better for you to use them to support my argument rather than quote it just to cover the requirements.”

I never realized that before and I was anxious to go back and revise my paper. As I worked with my paper I tossed up several titles: “Methodist versus Baptist”, then “Two Denominations One Main Purpose”, and the list went on. So once again I decided to come back to titles. As I typed the rest of my paper, I felt so confident in what I was writing. I never felt that engaged in a writing experience. The words went through my head as I typed away:

“Write from your experience with both denominations,” as stated by Dr. Cowles.

I felt connected to what I was writing because just as my preacher grew up Baptist and later transitioning into Methodism. The same thing happened to me as a child. I went to a Baptist Church until the age seven and then later started going to a Methodist church. By the time Wednesday came I was excited to have completed my next to last draft. I scheduled my last

meeting at the Writing Center for Thursday and I was ready. After class I went to Dr. Cowles's office to share how I excited I felt about the paper.

"Hey, Freddricka, come on in," he exclaimed. "What can I help you today?," he asked.

"I just wanted you to know I have really put my all into writing this paper. I never was told to basically write with a purpose, my purpose," I expressed.

He smiled and replied, "Writing without a purpose of your own is pointless, and I cannot wait to read your paper."

Before leaving I thanked him and walked out with a smile full of joy. I went to my writing appointment on that Thursday and got help with making sure the flow of my paper, grammatical errors, and other error that I may not have caught. That was a successful session and I went to my room to clean up my paper and decided that my final title would be, "Equal, but Separate." Confident in my finished work, I printed out my paper. As Friday approached I was excited. When I woke up that morning I felt that I was a new person with confidence in my writing. I handed in my paper and could not wait to see did my hard work pay off.

A couple of weeks went by and it was time to get our papers back. When I received my paper I was a little nervous to turn my paper over but I earned a 97. I was so thrilled and overwhelmed. Before class was over, Dr. Cowles asked to copy my paper to use as a sample paper in the future, and of course I agreed to that. This one paper has made a tremendous impact on my writing. Now every time it is time for me to write I think about what is important: "Write for me!"