

Consultation Notes:

Date of Appointments: throughout Spring 2019 Semester

Reason for Visits: Needed appreciation for reading and writing

For as long as I can remember, medicine has been my predetermined goal. With a neurologist as my grandfather and the chairman of the American Hospital Association as my grandmother, I do not think I really had a choice to choose any other route. Not to say they forced me into medicine, but over the course of my childhood I have been subtly brainwashed into being fascinated by the human body and medical mysteries. I remember one year for my birthday receiving money and a hardback copy of Gray's Anatomy. However, I do believe, even without their persuasion, I was meant to be in medicine. When I received that book, I was thrilled even without them telling me to be. I chose to spend hours, as an 8-year-old I might mention, flipping through the pages studying the intricate images and memorizing the systems of the body. So maybe I should explain this more like I demonstrated interest and they reciprocated by encouraging it.

I think commonly science and math people label their disinterest or hate of reading and writing as not liking it because it is not formulaic, but it is different for me. The appeal of science was never about having a firm answer or a formula to plug into, but about it being real. Science was always easy for me to understand because it was tangible and you could see it in action. When we would talk about cells, I could look under a microscope and see each part and understand them. But English never felt this way. Grammar and style and language felt like ideas and rules with no reason behind them. I couldn't learn about commas and sentence structure and go study them under a microscope because they are something you have to do, not something that exists in nature. Chromosomes, cells, and atoms were created as an essential element to life, whereas grammar and language and such were created by man as a style for communication. It always was frustrating to me that I could get my point across without using the right commas or the perfect grammar, but it just was not considered "proper". Whereas on the other hand, things do not exist without the rules of science being followed. Reading and writing always seemed secondary because they were a social construct and nonessential to existence.

That being said, one can imagine how I felt when I heard I had not placed out of all my English courses for college. Not that I completely dreaded the course, but I viewed it more as just another prerequisite to get over with and check off the list. However, over the course of this semester my feelings have dramatically changed towards English. On the first day of class, when we were

handed the syllabus, I was ready to look at it and see all the papers I had to dread and the books I would have to read on SparkNotes, but instead I was surprised. The top of the syllabus was labeled “Special Topics: Three Centuries of Georgia Writer’s”. I had no idea what this would mean or how it would affect the course, but as I listened to the description and outline of our semester, I began to dread this class a little less. On the day to day, we came to class and focused on a new Georgia Writer’s Hall of Fame Author. We were given a short excerpt of each of the author’s best work to read before coming to class and learning about said author. The best part of this whole process for me was the in-class time. Professor Ingle made learning about these authors fascinating because he knew many of the authors personally and was able to give in depth biographical information, but also share personal stories and memories of these authors. This personal perspective had never been offered to me before in learning, but I think it was the key ingredient to my enjoyment of English. Being able to think of these authors not as high up perfect people printed on the inside flap of a book, but rather as people with personalities and flaws like you and me. All the sudden I found myself actually excited to read their works because I thought it was interesting to see how their personalities showed through their works. Never have I ever chosen to read, or wanted to, but this time I did. To even further prove this, when we visited the Hargrett Special Collections Library to conduct research on an author, I was enthralled. Seeing things like personal correspondences, drafts and edits with typos and notes, and Christmas cards and photos was transformational to my learning experience. It made everything so real and personal. Tangible. The exact thing I had never found in English courses that made me dislike them. It was like I was healed.

In writing my papers and doing my research, I actually enjoyed myself. Our Paper 1 and Paper 2 were written on the same author. Paper 1 was a biographical and informational essay on the author, while Paper 2 was a literary analysis of one of their works. Instead of being a dreadful assignment, I found these papers a way to thoroughly study someone I was interested in. Yes, it was an assignment and there were requirements, but Professor Ingle really let us sail with whatever we wanted to read or write about for these papers. This would consume most of my semester of English, so I knew I needed to choose my author wisely because I would be spending a lot of time getting to know them. After careful consideration, I decided on Lillian Smith. We had already discussed her in class one day, and her writing, persona, and story were rather intriguing to me. She seemed like a defiant woman with a lot of ideas and personality. I knew she would keep me entertained for the semester. Little did I know how close we would get!

As the Paper 1 deadline approached, I found myself investing a lot of time in reading about Lillian Smith’s life. I studied her childhood, her family, her relationships, and writing. Typically, I would find this boring and a task, but I learned I needed to think of her as an everyday person to fully admire and desire her work. In doing so I was able to find actual interest in her because I was picturing her life and what it would like to be in her shoes. In previous investigations of authors, I thought of them as a printed face on the inside of a book sleeve, never as a walking, talking, person who make mistakes like me. It was seeing them come off the page that made the difference for me.

Reading then became about noticing details and themes that I could realize were tied to events of her real life, not about getting through the pages because they were assigned. I was intrigued to see how she apply what I had learned about her as a person to her writing. And I then found that this reflected in the transformation of my own writing. The assignment of a paper no longer hung over my head, but now seemed an opportunity. It was an opportunity for me to show off Lillian Smith so that other people could get to appreciate her in the way that I was. I was attentive to grammar and sentence structure not because they were rules, but because I wanted to present this real person in the best form I could. It all became so real. It finally had the purpose behind it that I had long looked for and never found because of a change in perspective.

In the way my mind functions, it is all science. That is why over the course of this semester as I watched my perspective, admiration, and enjoyment of English transform, I saw it like a medical treatment. I came into the course with a problem of not appreciating or understanding the purpose and value behind English and literature; this was my condition. I was taken in by Dr. Ingle, my doctor in more than one way, to be treated over time. The readings and the writing over these readings were my perfect prescriptions. Spending the time soaking in the needed content, I finally could understand the value of English and literature. I was healed of my condition by taking the proper course of treatment from my doctor. Therefore, while I dreaded this course like the plague, I found it was the perfect medication. I came out of it with a desire to read because every work has a story of blood, sweat, and tears behind it. It all is so valuable to someone, and it is published because that needs to be shared and appreciated by more than just the author. Realizing that there is a real life person with struggle and experiences behind every single word that I am reading, makes me realize these stories are not made for fun, they are a reflection on these authors lives and their knowledge, We have so much to learn from reading their work, but we will find the most value in it when we take the time to get to know the author and their story too.