

Knowing Myself

*"Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power"
~ Lao Tsu, Tao Te Ching*

Entering English 1102, I thought I knew myself pretty well. I was confident in my writing ability, believing I already knew everything I needed to be successful in English. All I had to do was show up to class, do the assigned readings, and work on a paper for a few hours and click submit. Easy, right? After all, this method had worked in the past; surely it would work again. However, after just the first draft of my first paper, I could tell this was going to be different.

You can imagine my surprise upon discovering that each essay would require three drafts instead of just one final paper. But even more shocking to me was how beneficial this process was. It allowed me to see my mistakes, know which mistakes I repeated, and eventually master correcting my weaknesses.

It is difficult to craft a well-developed essay if you do not know your capabilities and discrepancies. As Lao Tsu said, knowing yourself is true wisdom. The process of creating three drafts stands you face-to-face with your own strengths and weaknesses, and as you continue to revise your first draft, you begin to know where you often struggle. After using this newfound knowledge and applying it to your second draft, it is then time to master yourself. You are equipped with enough self-awareness to not only know what needs to be changed in your writing, but what you must do to master your

writing. For me, this process showed a knowledge of the imbalances in my writing and the eventual mastery of equilibrium in my essays after several revisions.

The following are examples of my revision process for my first essay of the semester, "The Anti-Love Song of Self Doubt." Each highlighted color corresponds to the same idea in each of the three introductory paragraphs, and this coordination shows the different stages that each idea went through to reach the final product.

Draft 1:

"The poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" written by T.S. Elliot is a poem written as a dialogue between Prufrock's internal dialogue journeying through hell and Prufrock on earth. The narrator, J. Alfred Prufrock, is dying and is afraid of not being remembered or recognized for his work. He is writing this poem to himself as a letter from the perspective of his internal character in hell after death to his physical character still living on earth."

Draft 2:

"The poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" written by T.S. Elliot is a conversation between a character named J. Alfred Prufrock and his self-doubt, which is manifested as an internal dialogue journeying through hell. The narrator, J. Alfred Prufrock, is concerned about his legacy and experiences the fear of not being remembered or celebrated for his work. These fears are materialized by his conscience suffering in hell; however, his manifest thoughts are evil, beckoning him into hell and disguising it as a love song. Prufrock is writing this poem to himself in order to show how self-doubt can consume you and create a living hell. This poem serves as an encouragement to himself and to others that once you realize that it is only your mind that is worried and filled with hellish insecurities, and you finally wake up, your doubts will be drowned."

Draft 3:

"The poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" written by T.S. Eliot is a conversation between two selves: a character named J. Alfred Prufrock and his self-doubt, which is manifested as an internal dialogue journeying through hell. The narrator, Prufrock's inner dialogue in hell, attempts to convince J. Alfred Prufrock that he will not leave a legacy and pushes the fear of not being remembered or celebrated for his work onto Prufrock. His manifest thoughts are corrupt, beckoning him into the underworld and disguising it as a love song. Prufrock is writing this poem to himself in order to show how self-doubt can consume you and create a living hell. This poem is a love song because it serves as an encouragement to himself and to others that once you realize it is only your mind that is worried and filled with hellish insecurities, and you finally wake up, your doubts will be drowned."

Balance?

Each highlighted portion underwent my standard revision process. When reviewing my work, I begin with a yang idea: a compelling and creative argument that adds color to an otherwise black-and-white paper. This can be seen in my introductory sentence of my first draft:

The poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" written by T.S. Elliot is a poem written as a dialogue between Prufrock's internal dialogue journeying through hell and Prufrock on earth."

As you can see, my idea is not complex; it is simply a yang idea, written down plainly without elaboration. This forms the creativity element of my paper, which is then complemented with a yin elaboration in my second draft:

"The poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" written by T.S. Elliot is a conversation between a character named J. Alfred

Prufrock and his self-doubt, which is manifested as an internal dialogue journeying through hell.

In this revision process, I grounded my original abstract idea of Prufrock's character conversing with his inner thoughts as if they were a person, in a Jekyll and Hyde fashion, by utilizing a yin explanation of why this dialogue is occurring: because these inner thoughts are his self-doubt talking, of course!

In my final revision, I attempted to find a balance between both my yang idea and my yin explanation:

"The poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" written by T.S. Eliot is a conversation between two selves: a character named J. Alfred Prufrock, and his self-doubt which is manifested as an internal dialogue journeying through hell.

I took my idea of this conversation between two dialogues within one character and better explained it as a conversation between two selves. I further explained that one "self" is J. Alfred Prufrock's own dialogue, while the other "self" is his own insecurities that are speaking to him. This balanced my creative idea with a more definitive explanation to prevent my idea from becoming too abstract.

All Together Now

*Now that you've seen my process step by step, I will put it all together in one cohesive process with each change during revision labeled as either **Yin** or **Yang**. For this example, I am using my thesis development for "The Anti-Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" which is found earlier in this segment.*

Draft 1:

"He is **writing this poem to himself** as a letter **from the perspective of his internal character in hell** ~~after death~~ to his physical character still living on earth."

- **Yang** elements: 2
- **Yin** elements: 0

Draft 2:

"This poem **serves as an encouragement** to himself and to others that once you realize **that it is only your mind that is worried and filled with hellish insecurities,** and you finally wake up, **your doubts will be drowned.**"

- **Yang** elements: 3
- **Yin** elements: 2

Draft 3:

"This poem **is a love song because** it **serves as an encouragement** to himself and to others that once you realize **it is only your mind that is worried and filled with hellish insecurities,** and you finally wake up, **your doubts will be drowned.**"

- **Yang** elements: 3
- **Yin** elements: 3