

Emma Titone

Dr. Lux

ENG 364: RO

25 January 2020

### Week 1 Assignments

In response to the claims made by Peter Elbow regarding writing, I would say that without context, his first statement may sound biased towards his love for writing. Not everyone would admit that they want to write. In fact, I think a substantial amount of people would hold a negative view towards writing in general. However, everyone wants to communicate with the world through a number of outlets, which is nearly impossible without some form of a writing stage (singing, acting, speaking etc.). The struggle that most people face with writing is transferring their thoughts through the pen to paper. Therefore, in extending Elbow's thought, I might add "Everyone in the world wants to write, but few accept the challenge." His following claims about improving one's craft through freewriting is an excellent way to overcome this struggle. Being comfortable with organizing ideas and stabilizing them to complete a thought can only be done through practice. The more one writes, the stronger one's writing becomes.

Commenting on the two questions of: "What is voice?" and "What metaphors do you have for writing?" I would classify "voice" as the communication of a certain topic or theme in writing. In an informational text, for example, a political voice might be speaking on a particular matter. Depending on the author and potential character that is being displayed, the voice will vary in style and in execution of thought. One metaphor that I would have for writing would be that of a closet. There are certain clothing items that people never wear because they forget or don't know how to piece it together into an outfit. The elegant blouse or little black dress is

hidden away and misses its potential to be worn. In a similar way, spectacular thoughts and beautiful stories are never written because of neglect. People don't take the time to sift through the ideas in their mind and put them to paper.

Presented in the film *Freedom Writers*, there are several instances of producing students who read, write, and enjoy the process of doing so. Beginning with a classroom full of gang members and students who have never read a book in their lives, Ms. G. worked from the ground up and transformed her students' perspective of learning. The strategies used to get her students to enjoy writing started with finding their voice. Once they understood who they were as writers, the journey of telling their story began.

The first step for the students in finding their voice involved writing in journals. This is something that I have done for years and can personally attest to the benefits it brings. Daily journaling, or keeping a diary, exercises the action of gathering and organizing one's thoughts into pieces of writing. As the process becomes more fluent, as we see in the film, the voice of the writer becomes grounded. Practicing writing is an activity that is assumed to produce an experienced writer, but motivation within this craft is crucial to the finished product. Ms. G. found an area that each student was motivated and knowledgeable in: their personal lives. Every individual on this earth has a story to tell, and that will always be their first and most important story they can ever share with the world.

Another strategy to encourage students to read and write found in *Freedom Writers* is finding material that relates to them. Ms. G. did this by having her students read a book about a young girl who was in a gang, and the students responded positively to this intentional assignment. The class as a whole was used to being overlooked and deemed as insignificant with not potential whatsoever, so looking at their background and finding a text they could relate to

made Ms. G.'s students feel appreciated. With *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, the students could also relate to the racial prejudice and persecution in the book from experiencing gang violence and dangers of gang affiliation. This is where a love for reading is birthed, through identifying with a character, relating to the author's intended audience, or having an interest in the topic of the reading itself. Then the reading is no longer a burden but mystery that is waiting to be solved. The students in Ms. G.'s class would stay up all night to read the ending of Frank's autobiography because they were invested. Finding an inch of space to work with, such as a relatable storyline, can keep students from putting the text down and kickstart their positive relationship with reading and writing.

The strategies found in *Freedom Writers* gives viewers a number of ways in which one can encourage students to find their voice, ground their stance, and become comfortable telling their own story. Eventually, students like Ms. G.'s and other beginner writers will find familiarity in writing and the true benefit that reading has to offer.