

The Short Story Project

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PURPOSE

This project was a part of an attempt to “write every day” like they say. Often, the main thing holding me back from this is the fear - fear that whatever I write is going to awful. And, you know, sometimes it is, and it's okay. It's a part of it. In a whole page full of trash, though, there's always one good line. That's what I'm trying to do here. Write every day, and find those lines. This is called the “Short Story Project” because short stories turned out to be my favorite medium for this daily writing.

RESEARCH

Just because my writing was allowed to be trash didn't mean that it had to be! The main goal of this project was to improve in writing, and I believe that if a writer does not read, they cannot write.

My form of “research” was a quest to find books that inspired me and taught me to be a better writer. My writing style isn't just my own voice. It's a blend of my favorite styles from my favorite authors, and (hopefully) finding a balance.

My top influential writers during this time were: Oscar Wilde, Benjamin Alire Saenz, Stephen Chbosky, Neal Shusterman, Mark Twain, Connie Palmen, Elie Wiesel, Joseph Conrad, Adib Khorram, Steven Sater, Anthony Doerr, John Irving, Sandra Cisneros, and Leif Enger.

WRITING

One of the first short stories was actually written for the DoveTales literary competition called “Writing for Peace.” We were instructed to write from a perspective of a different race. I chose to study 1930s Spain (Spanish Civil War era), because the idea of being in love during a time of incredible tumult was fascinating to me. Now, I



FIGURE 1: Books That Shaped my Writing

tend to prefer the straightforward way of writing - the Ernest Hemingway style, if you will. But every now and then, I love a good dose of dramatics, and that is exactly what my piece “Timelines”, written as an unsent love letter, was (its working title being “The Dramatic Spaniard”).

Another one, “The Truth of Flight,” was written after reading Neal Shusterman's *Challenger Deep*, a book about schizophrenia and mental illness. An interesting idea to me was how mentally ill patients are not always born that way - often, they are “made.” “The Truth of Flight” addresses this topic from the viewpoint of a pessimistic patient who has been sexually abused by her stepbrother. It describes so-called “insanity” through the metaphor

WRITING, CONTINUED

of birds outside a window, stirring up leaves.

The final one I'll talk about here is called “When I Was Young.” It's about youth and the madness that comes along with it. When we were cohorting, I never really saw any of the other grades up until a couple of weeks ago, and what struck me was the unadulterated chaos of it all. And how we used to be the same way. Lines fall into my head for these stories. For this one, it was: “I remember what it was like to be so young, to feel like life was falling apart and falling together at the same time.”

These are the first three of my short stories.

ANALYSIS

Each of my lines, whether it's conscious or not, is influenced by the writers to the left. Oscar Wilde and Stephen Chbosky taught me to see the beauty in elegant writing, and that it's always worth the effort to make your work not only fun to read in terms of content, but also a pleasure to read in of itself. Benjamin Alire Saenz, Adib Khorram, and Sandra Cisneros taught me that simplicity is the best policy. Mark Twain, Connie Palmen, John Irving, and Leif Enger taught me the importance of being willing to dive into your character, mind and soul.

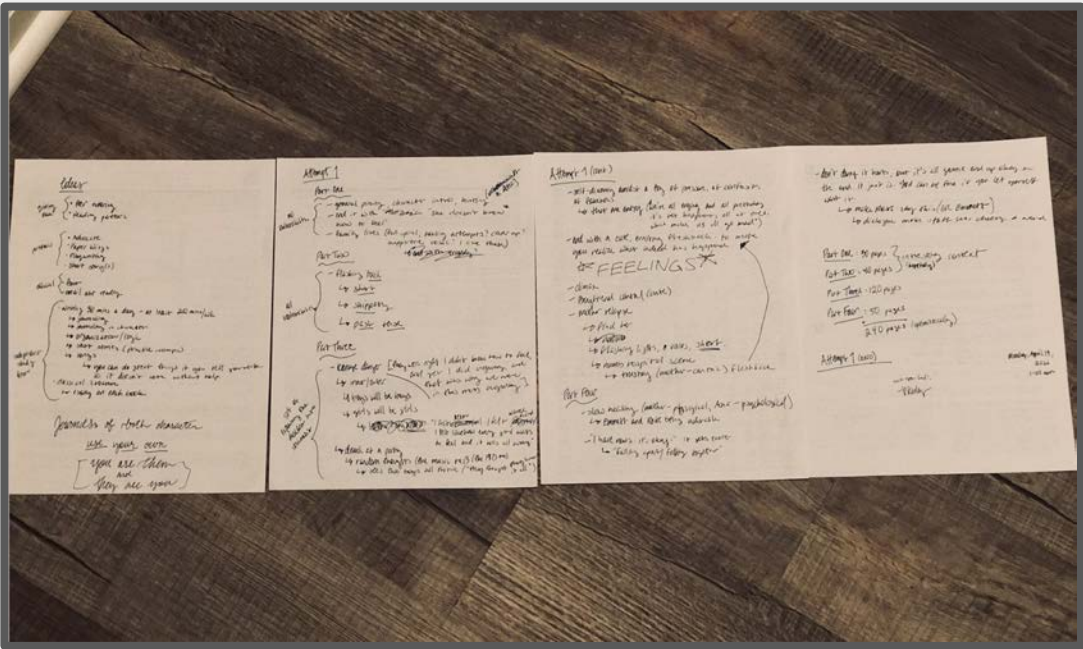


FIGURE 4: “Careful Outlining”

CONCLUSION

It is hard to look back on my work and think there's something off about it, and for each one of these stories, I feel that way. But it's all right. I learned what's bad and what's good, and I know now that it's always better to just write, even when it's scary. So yes, of none of these works am I particularly proud, but in each one, without fail, there's a line I really do love. Maybe even several lines. When I'm terrified to write, it shows, but this helps with the fear - and, I do believe, has turned me into a better writer. Or at the very least, it turned me into a real writer. I do not think I will be stopping this project.

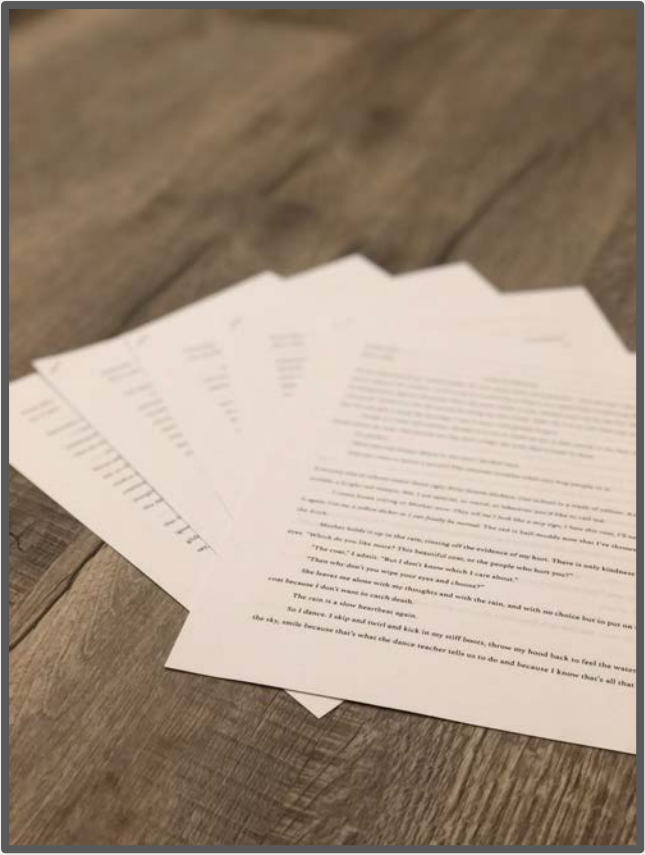


FIGURE 3: All my Short Stories



FIGURE 2: The Writing Notebook I Try Very Hard Not to be Scared Of