



The Community
School

Passages Program



Passages Press

On Reading & Writing Passages Style

Two Points of View...

1. by Becki Giberson

I learned more in the Passages program than I ever would have in a normal high school. I wrote more papers than I probably have in my entire life. I never used to like writing. I would rush through papers just to get it over with, and it would be poor quality work. Writing papers comes naturally to me now, because I have really enjoyed what I've written about. I have written approximately twenty-three papers. All being completely different. I have written things from cover letters and resumes to book reviews and plenty of core-skills. The papers I have written are not research papers. They are papers that have meaning to me and have let me learn. From each paper or transcript I wrote, I learned wide varieties of things. Really important things that make life and living more understandable.

By reading six very different books, and reading research and processing all the information, I have grown in my ability to learn new things and be open to all different types of reading. I never used to like reading. It was boring and slow. But choosing books that I never thought I would be interested in showed me how much more interesting reading can be. For example, The Woman Who Walked into Doors was something very different from what I used to read. It was a true story and very deep. I read it a while ago, and it still sticks with me. Chicken Soup for the Expectant Mothers Soul was a great book. I could definitely

relate to it. I like being able to relate to what I read. Those used to be the only kind of books I would read, but now I realized that reading something that you can't relate to right away, will teach you a lot. It will open up your mind to different types of people and different types of experiences.

By all the reading and writing I have done in the Passages program, I can honestly say that I am a better person. I understand a lot more and I have a new perspective of life and all the different things it contains. I am able to gather information, process it, and sit down and bring it all together in a very readable paper.

2. by Ashley Luce

I have always liked to read as long as the book interested me. If the book did not interest me, I never finished it. I had a hard time with this in Medomak because they made us read stupid books that had no meaning. That is one thing that I really liked about this program. I had the choice of what I wanted to read. Although I will tell you now, I have read my fair share of non-fiction books and stupid plays. I like plays, don't get me wrong, but I hate reading them and not doing them.

I myself feel that I have made improvements in my reading comprehension. I really realized that sometimes you have to look deep below the surface for the true meaning of a story. A good example of this is Tending to Grace. It was a great book, but Grace was only talked about two or three times and they only went to see her once. After I had finished reading the book I sat back and reflected on everything that had happened. After taking the time to do that, I finally realized why the book was called what it was. I don't want to tell

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you, because I think it is a great book and you should read it, and let your mind work on its own.

I believe I have proved that I have a great ability to communicate through writing. I believe that I have done this in all of the transcripts that I have written. I think the best example that I can think of is my U.S. Citizenship transcript. Although it was 21 pages long I feel that every word in that paper has great meaning and needs to be there. I could have made it a lot longer, but I made sure that I had only the important information. I believe that is part of writing a good paper. If you fill the paper with meaningless information then it is boring and no good to anyone.

One of the main reasons why I have always enjoyed reading fiction books is the fact that nothing in the book is true, so your mind can run wild and imagine anything!! I love reading good authors because you can always see in your head exactly what the object, place, or person looks like. A great book for letting your imagination go wild and develop things in your head was *A Northern Light*. This was a wonderful book. I also really enjoyed *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold. This was another great book for letting your imagination go. The only problem that I find with books like these is that I have a really hard time putting them down. When I start to read a book that allows you to use your imagination, I like to try to plan out the whole book in my head as I am reading. I am very rarely ever right, but it is just the point of using my imagination to generate off the wall ideas.

I had a hard time doing writing assignments at Medomak too because they tell you exactly what you have to write. When I write I like to be able to let my mind go and it is almost like the words go straight through my fingertips onto the paper. I like to write when I have time. I start with a plain and boring idea, and turn it into a wonderful and exciting story. I had to use this technique while completing U.S. Citizenship. My tactic to beef up a story has always been humor, and using my own "voice". So far this has worked great for me! I tend to write a lot better when it is something that I am passionate or excited about. You know, if you sit down with a blank piece of paper, your story limits are as blank as the paper. You can write about whatever you want, however you want. It doesn't ever matter if the story makes sense. As long as it has humor, creativity, and uniqueness, it does not matter. Your imagination can go wherever it would like. There is no limit!! To infinity, and BEYOND!!!! (Ha

ha a little saying from Buzz Lightyear in the movie Toy Story).

Like I said before, I have never been much of a lover of non-fiction stories. I am going to be completely honest, since I have been in this program I have only read fiction stories. I think fiction stories appeal to me because someone sat down and let their imagination run wild! I absolutely do not like Shakespeare. The only play I kind of liked reading by Shakespeare was *A Midsummers Night Dream*. I still didn't really get into it, but I was able to choke it down. I do not find non-fiction stories very interesting because to me they are boring. I like colorful imaginary stories. Now as far as biographies go, don't get me started. I have only picked one of those up in my life, and I didn't get past the third page. On that day I vowed to myself that I would never read another one again, and I have not. The closest I have gotten is watching the movie *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. I actually thought this was a decent movie. Part of the reason is because it was about slavery and survival stories, which interest me. I do not think that I could have read a book like the movie, though. It is not the same.

Well, every transcript I write is one closer to the end! Thank God this one did not have to be as long as U.S. Citizenship. You know, my challenge for this transcript was finding the time to read more than one book during the time I have been in Passages. I also would like to find more books by the author of *A Northern Light*, although I have forgotten the author's name. I guess I will just have to go into a bookstore or library and find out! Thank you for trying to get me to like other genres, but nothing could ever get me away from fiction and into something else.

Untitled

by Elizabeth Burnham

Cold gray
steely air
the brisk air chills -
chills a human down
to the succubus
that lures the unexpected
death still comes.



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Beautiful Pain

by Nicholas J. Halliley

Everything has changed
Since I became a dad
I still miss being a kid
But that doesn't mean I'm sad

I love my little girl
She's so adorable
Even when she's being mischievous
And getting into trouble

She's just starting to stand
But she keeps falling over
She makes me so happy
She's like my four leaf clover.

I'm glad I didn't finish high school
'Cause then I wouldn't have moved from Mass.
And my daughter wouldn't be here
To be a beautiful pain in the ass.

I won't take it

by Santa Havener

I don't know what to do anymore
I feel like I am locked behind a closed door
I feel empty inside
My thoughts are running through me like the
oceans tide
I am going crazy
I wish someone could come and save me
I don't deserve this
I don't need this
I won't take it
His actions are ignorant and insane
I am tired of being the one going through all of
the pain
Life is what you make it
I won't allow mine to go down the drain.

School

by Nick Halliley

I was such a fool
I didn't finish school
Maybe 'cause I wasn't "cool"
Either way I didn't use the right tools

Now I've got another chance
To do right
To get me to do my work though
we might have to fight

Got to do it for my daughter
Got to finish this time
Got to get my diploma
So I don't have to cross the "fine line"

I'm going to finish this poem now
But first I want to finish school
So I can make everyone go "Wow"
And maybe then I can be "cool."

Life as a Loving Mother

by Erica Giannone

A mother am I?
A mother gives herself, her soul, her grace.
A mother is love and devotion
not just to herself, but to her family, her
partner as a wife.
I scale the wall of devotion,
Compromise and patience,
But most of all - commitment.
From motherhood to partnership
I'm a sponge for the zest of family.
Even amongst the hottest of deserts,
I feel hydrated with the refreshed
Realization that comes from love as a mother
and a wife.
So I am these things?
Yes, I am.

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Rally for Rights

by Katie Stimpson

The community resources core skill asks us to widen our involvement in the community. So, I attended a public rally. In November, before the statewide vote on Question One, I attended a rally for gay/bisexual rights, which was held in Belfast. Question One asked whether the people of Maine should repeal a law we voted into effect a year ago giving gays equal rights. The rally was held to encourage people to vote no on repealing this law. I learned about what would happen if the yes vote won. It meant that straight people would have the right to kick gay people out of their jobs or deny them access to housing based on their sexual preferences. I got a "vote no on one" button to help spread the word to the community. Going to the rally gave me the opportunity to learn about the wonderful members of my own community who are fighting to end discrimination. I feel strongly that we should allow everyone the same rights and not discriminate on a sexual basis. This is a private matter. I don't think it's right to push our morality and beliefs onto other people. Oh, and there was a bonus in going to the rally! The music was great!!!

I was going to submit this to "letters to the editor" in my local newspaper, but I was too late. The thing to know is that we can write to the editors anytime we want about any issues we want. We have a voice in things and we should use it. This is our right to free speech in a democracy.

I was proud to go and vote. Of course, I voted no and guess what? We won! Maine isn't going to discriminate. Going out and voting made me feel wonderful. Afterwards, I felt more independent.

What is an Alternative School?

by Brittany Fales

I know exactly what an alternative school is because I've been to one. I attended Warren Alternative and now I'm going to the Community School, which is also an alternative program. A lot of people think this kind of school is for kids with learning disabilities, or students who are "dumb", but it's definitely not!

I actually feel like an alternative school is a school for kids who don't like, and can't deal with, regular school. There are many different reasons why kids don't like school. One of the reasons is that

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they don't get along with the teachers. They feel like there are too many students and they can't get the one-on-one help they need. Another reason is that they don't get along with other students, they don't fit in or aren't accepted. Sometimes they just don't agree with the teaching methods of regular schools.

Alternative school is definitely not for dumb kids, because when I went to Warren I was doing the same exact work that they were doing over at Medomak, if not *harder* work! I could concentrate better without all the students in a large classroom and I had one-on-one time with my teachers. This was good for me because I actually made relationships with my teachers over there. Like if I ever had a problem, I could go to my teachers and talk with them, and if I ever needed anything outside of school my teachers gave me their numbers so I could call them whenever I needed to. Another reason I didn't like regular school was I couldn't focus on the work because I had a lot of friends who I hung out with and that seemed more fun. I always knew I was smart but I just wanted to hang out with my friends instead. This was a distraction.

Alternative school is different because hanging out with people isn't as important. You can focus better. The Community School offers me the same things I had at Warren Alternative only I like the curriculum better. I am learning things that are practical, like things that I really need to know now. Like it's important right now for me to know about parenting and budgeting. I really like alternative school. I would go back to Warren in a heartbeat if I could, but that means having to go every day. The reason I'm at the Community School now is because I don't have to go every day, I can have class at home and that is way easier now that I have a baby.

"Freaks" and "Weirdos"

by Brittany Fales

I would have to say I have called many people freaks and weirdos. I don't know why I do it, because sometimes the people really aren't freaks. I guess I just use that word when someone does something different from the way I do things.

I think I mostly call people freaks that look or dress differently from me. People who wear lots of make-up and big earrings in their ears just freak me out, so I consider them freaks. I know I shouldn't,

because I bet if I got to know them, they probably aren't as different as they seem to be on the outside.

Sometimes I call people weirdos because they do things differently than I would. Like when people eat weird foods, or do house work differently than me, or take care of their kids in ways I don't approve.

I guess people just judge people who aren't their definition of "normal". Which makes no sense, because who's to say what or who is normal? There is no such thing as normal, because everyone has different beliefs, tastes, and attitudes. We all have different backgrounds. I don't think anyone is "normal" and so judging is silly. Everyone is different. We should respect people for their differences. It would be a dull world if we were all the same.

A Potter's Craft

by Amanda Cates

I interviewed a guy who does pottery whose name is Peter. He has been doing pottery for 36 years. He really enjoys his job, even though sales are down right now. He keeps his interest just knowing that there are people out there that still place orders, so he makes some money. He does a lot of traveling to craft shows to show off his work and make money that way, too.

I sat with him one day and just watched how he did things. He put his clay through a pug mill at one end, he pushes a lever down and it comes out the other end, and that helps get the bubbles out of the clay. Then he puts his clay on the keep wheel and spins the clay up straight and pushes it back down just to double check that all the bubbles are out of the clay. When spinning the clay, wetting it helps it spin; when it is dry, it may skip in your hands and mess the piece up that you are making.

When you are making something, it is always better to start with more clay than you need; it is easier to trim the clay off than it is to add clay after you already have a piece made. When wetting the clay, it is better to use an elephant ear sponge than a sponge you would use for dishes, because a dish sponge holds more water. If the clay gets too wet, it will crack, fold, and get weak. When you are done forming your piece, you would use the elephant ear to soak up the extra water that is left over.

When Peter packs up to go to a show, he wraps his art in a lot of newspaper and puts them in plastic boxes. When he puts the boxes in his truck, he has to make sure he does not stack them too high, because when he goes over bumps they can break.

He made spinning clay look so easy. He made a bowl and the wheel was spinning and he took a chowder hook to help trim the extra clay. He takes a fish line to cut off the extra clay he doesn't need from the bottom of the bowl. He makes the trim so easily. He has such a sturdy hand. Peter says you need to have a sturdy hand and be gentle with the clay when spinning it. I said, "I could never do that!" But my teacher says, "Check out how many years Peter has been working on this craft."

So, I went and saw Peter today, I watched him spin the clay and make something. He was showing me how to work everything so he could give me a turn on the wheel and try to make something myself!

How to make something from clay!

1) Peter handed me a ball of clay, and I had to throw it on the center of the wheel, which I did well!

2) You have to make the clay kind of tall, but still needs to be in the center of the wheel. You put your right hand cupped around the clay, and your left hand pushing down lightly on the top. Took me a lot of tries to do.

3) Now you have to put your thumb in the center of the clay and push down leaving about 1/2" of clay on the bottom and between the wheel.

4) Then you want to put your left middle and ring finger in the center, and your right hand cupped around the clay firmly. Now with your fingers you want to push down and let your fingers slide to the side of the clay. When you have reached the sides you want to indent your fingers a little and lightly pull up to thin the clay out on the sides.

This was as far as I got, because I did not realize it 'til I was hands-on, that you really need to know your strength, and how much to use in each step you take. I tried three different times and I collapsed every time after the third step. I would love to go back and try it again!



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THE BOOK CORNER



Couldn't Keep it to Myself

by Wally Lamb

reviewed by Amanda Cates

This is just a good book. All the women in this book learned a lesson one way or another. They all did something to land them in prison for a while or for life. They all lost a part of their life- their kids, their parents who passed away before they could say goodbye, and holidays spent behind bars.

After they had been there for a while they knew what they did was wrong, and there was nothing they could do to take it back if they wanted to. But after taking this writing class I guess they found a way to justify it to themselves, and help them understand why they did it.

So when the prisoners knew what they did was wrong, and understood what they did, they all took classes to better themselves for the life they wanted outside of prison when they did get out. The ones that are doing life, I guess they just took the classes because they really don't have much other stuff to do with their life in prison.

Wally Lamb was not so sure of the place when he first started doing the writing class in prison, but he ended up doing a good job and I'm sure he is proud of himself. I'm sure it takes some guts to go into prison where you always hear bad stories about the fights and just all the other bad things that go on inside prison.

A Child Called "It"

by Dave Pelzer

reviewed by Leana Hendrickson

I just read the book A Child Called "It". This book was so great, but so horrible at the same time. Most of the time I could not believe that what I was reading truly happened.

The book is about a child named Dave Pelzer who was badly abused. When the abuse started he had two other brothers, and by the time it ended he had two more. The thing that I do not get is why he was the only one out of all of them who got treated the way he did. Dave's mother treated him like he was everyone's slave, and got

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her other sons (Dave's brothers) to treat him badly too. Dave's father did not agree with what was going on, but he could not get his mother to stop, and eventually he just sat back and let it happen. In the end Dave's father left, but he didn't bring Dave with him, which is something he told Dave he would do. Dave was waiting for his "hero" to take him away, and was heartbroken and filled with hate towards his father when he didn't.

In the beginning they were all a happy, loving family, then one day it just changed. I'm not sure what happened, but it was like Dave's mother became a different person. It must have been mental issues, but I'm not sure. She still treated the rest of the family the same, but used Dave as her punching bag when she became upset about anything. Then it turned into little torture games she liked to play with him. The things she did were so horrible.

This book isn't just based on a true story, it is written by Dave Pelzer himself. I think he is so brave to come out and write about what happened to him. He goes into detail of very embarrassing things his mother did to him. Even though in the book he always thought he must have been a bad boy, or did something really horrible to deserve what he went through, by writing this book I know that he realizes it was not his fault and he was just a victim, like so many other children in the world.

I thought this book was great, but shocking. I can't wait to read the next two he wrote that tell more about his life and might give some answers to the questions I have about the first book.

Life's Passages

Since our last newsletter ...

Maryanne Skidgel gave birth to sweet baby Autumn on October 25, 2005.

Brittany Fales gave birth to darling Mikayla on November 17, 2005.

Laurie Matthews gave birth to her charming baby son, Isaac on December 17, 2005.

*Congratulations to all
the new moms and dads!*

