

Journal

26. 9. 2019

1. Sadly, I don't really write that much nowadays – it's not a lack of time, I would say a lack of motivation
2. I've always liked to write short stories and poems (although those were not really good). And surprisingly, last semester I also enjoyed writing research papers on books (not all the research papers we had to write, just the ones on the books I liked, with the others I just felt like I have nothing much to say)
3. Like I stated above – I don't really write when I don't have to these days
4. I must say that I do take pride in some of my works, mainly because I know that I did my best to write them. Honestly, I'm not that kind of person who can just say "whatever" and write some nonsense; I always strive (well, sometimes more like "struggle") to create something worth reading
5. It depends. Some days I'm able to sit down in front of a computer and write two pages worth of research paper (well, that happened only once and boy, was I surprised!) and other days, writing a short paragraph is worse than walking barefoot across a room full of scattered Legos
6. Once I know that it's the best version possible under given circumstances, I don't mind showing it to people. Actually, since primary school, whenever I write something my best friend is always the first one to read it and give me feedback, even though she just always says that she loves it (and that's not really a helpful feedback, although it is very nice to hear that)
7. I think that as long as a piece of creative writing has some deeper meaning or carries a message (and it doesn't matter if it's your standard good-beats-evil in fairy tales or something more intricate) it can be considered academic. Because as we concluded in the lecture, "academic" writing should educate you, make you think
8. I believe that I am rather open-minded about books (read: I'll read anything that looks interesting enough, no matter the genre). Generally, I like detective stories, fantasy novels and comic novels. My favourite book (although it's hard to pick a favourite) is Vango. It's 700 pages long and read it in three days, I was so engrossed in it! I especially like the structure – there are many characters and many subplots, but it all comes together in the end and turns out that everyone knows everyone (that's oversimplified, the real story is so much better – check it out if you want)
9. I'd say that during the semester, I'm able to read one book a week (however, it looks like that this semester I won't be able to do any leisure reading ☹). During the holidays, it depends on how much time I have, I think my total

record this summer was three books in a week (I know it doesn't look like much, but it was the Lord of the Rings trilogy)

10. Well, vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure come to my mind first. There is also the structure of the whole paper. Then it depends on what I'm writing. For research papers I often have to extrapolate information from outer sources and incorporate them effectively into my text. For leisure writing, I always just let my imagination run free (though I guess that's not a language skill per se)
11. I believe that an essay is a piece of writing where the author expresses his or hers thoughts and opinions on a chosen subject in an interesting and (for the reader also) enjoyable way.

30. 9. 2019

1. Character analysis: For me, a good story starts and ends with its characters. I don't want to say that the plot doesn't matter, it's just that when the characters are dull and flat, I just can't enjoy a great plot. That's why, when the characters are well-written, I like character analysis – I like to ponder on their motivations, behaviour and choices.
2. Joke: There's nothing really deep about this – I just like jokes and laughing. I especially love puns, because understanding them makes me feel smart (even when they are completely silly and easy).
3. Limerick: When I was in eighth grade, we had to write a limerick for our Czech class, and it was so much fun! It may sound easy, but in reality, it wasn't. I tend to write rather long sentences (as you may have noticed), so the third and fourth lines were a bit difficult. But I still enjoyed it. It's not some sophisticated literature that speculates about man's purpose in life, but sometimes you just want to relax and have a few laughs.
4. Myth: I like history and I like fantasy stories – and myths are like a combination of both. I especially love Greek mythology, because the gods are petty and self-centred and they make mistakes – just like humans. They might have their "I-am-better-than-you-humans" attitude, but they aren't, which makes exploring Greek mythology really fun and interesting.
5. Songs: This one is kind of obvious, who doesn't love music? I think that I have a rather wide range when it comes to taste in music. It largely depends on my mood, but I enjoy rock, metal, some country, pop and classical music (especially piano). I also think that movie soundtracks are important – sometimes you don't even notice the music, because you concentrate on the plot and it takes multiple viewings to pay attention to it as well. But still it subtly completes the atmosphere for action and talking scenes, and even creates it in silent (non-talking) scenes. My favourite soundtrack is probably the one from How to Train Your Dragon (by John Powell). It's just SO good! For example:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5JHOYmfPpo>

There's no dialogue during this sequence, just a few sentences in the beginning. The music perfectly captures the initial uneasiness, slow acceptance and final trust.

08.10.2019

Analytical essay

The purpose of an analytical essay is to analyse one aspect of the whole (e.g. one symbol from a book). It is supposed to carefully explain your interpretation and provide evidence supporting your claim. The audience are usually educated people interested in the subject.

Review essay

In a review essay, the author provides his or her opinion on a piece of literature. This opinion should be supported by evidence in the text, just like in analytical essay. However, review essay evaluates more than one aspect; it focuses on the whole book. The audience are people interested in the piece of literature in question, wanting to explore different opinion than theirs (or confirm someone has the same opinion as them).

I would read both analytical and review essay if they discussed a topic interesting for me, for example an analysis of the newspeak in 1984 and a review of The Lord of the Rings. I like to listen to (or, well, read) other people's opinions.

Narrative essay

Narrative essay aims to build a short story around a single motif (or a theme) set by the author. The theme is usually some life experience and lesson learned from it. Narrative essay has a specific format - it should have one or more characters and dialogue. On the other hand, it also has a thesis statement and closed ending. It's like a mix between a short story and an essay, which is why it could interest wider audience than, let's say, critical essay.

Narrative essay is interesting for me, because it describes authentic experience of people. I'm not saying that you can't (for lack of a better phrase) "learn a lesson" from a fiction novel. It's just that this firm grounding in reality, the fact that a real person went through this concrete thing makes it somehow... more achievable for me (I don't really know how to express my thoughts on this).

Genres and essays

My first chosen genre, character analysis, is basically an analytical essay, so that's that. The others are a tad bit more challenging. I'm not sure about jokes – maybe you

could write a narrative essay where the theme is something funny? Then again, a joke is not the same thing as a funny story, so probably not. I'm not sure about limerick and song either. I guess writing a review essay on these two would not be impossible. Granted, it wouldn't be very long, but who says essays must be ten pages long? As for myth, I can imagine writing analytical essay; after all, myths are full of symbols, themes and motives to ponder on. And maybe also narrative essay? It could be set in the environment of a myth, but with a unique, personal spin . Well, in conclusion, I think that my chosen types of essays correspond pretty well with my genres. I guess if you really are what you eat, you also write what you read. At least I do.

16.10.2019

You see, I was seventeen, my two friends were eighteen, we were younger, and free... so we decided to go on a holiday together. Nothing fancy, we were (and still are) just poor students. We ended up renting a room in a cottage near Rokytno, a village in Vysočina. It was only the three of us in the whole building (which was quite big) and we were grateful for the fact. Just imagine someone witnessing our attempts at starting a campfire in the garden! The flames would stay stubbornly small and feeble, it was impossible! Luckily, we had enough wine to keep us warm... It was a five-day holiday, most of which we ended up exploring the region on our bikes - and by some holy miracle, we hadn't got lost! Like really, not even once! I have so many great stories and memories of the places we visited. Like the church in Zelená Hora. That was probably the best day of them all. The terrain was mercifully flat (well, as flat as it can be in Vysočina), the sun was shining, just a perfect day. The church itself had an interesting atmosphere – somewhat serene, but also fun (although that was probably the courtesy of my goofy friends). Later, as we were cycling back to Rokytno, we decided to take a shortcut – a dirt track between some fields. There, we had the greatest encounter ever ... cows! Not that we have never seen cows before, there was, in fact, a whole herd of them on the pasture next to our accommodation, but those were always far away. These were right beside us, and there were adorable little calf. My friend immediately wanted a picture with it, so I took it... then my other friend wanted a picture with it, so I took it. Then I caved in and said “Hey, take my picture with it.”, and wouldn't you guess, that little bugger just walked away! But anyway... This whole region holds so many special memories for me. It was my first time being on a holiday without my parents (I don't count summer camps – those were a blast, but still with supervision) and I was just overjoyed (and a bit overwhelmed) by the freedom we had. I guess it kinda pushed me to be more independent and adventurous. It also helped me to get to know my friends even better – not only our late-night (wine-influenced) deep discussions, but also more common things (like the fact that my friend eats like three bears combined and stays incredibly skinny, like, what's up with that?). You see, I sometimes felt a bit disconnected from everyone, like I didn't really know the people around me and they didn't know me, but thanks to our little adventure we've grown so much closer that I don't get this feeling very often. And when I do, I just picture that cottage surrounded by green pastures, the campfire, the little shed where we had our bikes... and it always makes me feel calm and content.

20.10.2019

Just a side note – my piece of writing is structured, but other than that it is more like a stream of consciousness with punctuation.

Identity is a good word, pretty self-explanatory. After all, it starts with “I”. Identity is everything that makes me “me” and you “you”. The phrase “I know exactly how you feel” is plain nonsense – how could you? You’re not me! You can’t quote a bunch of lines from Pelíšky and Comeback. You didn’t fell off a swing when you were five and earned yourself six stitches. You didn’t ride a horse through a thunderstorm. You don’t have a weird dent in your shoulder. You don’t listen to a song from Green Day and then put on Fur Elise from Beethoven. You don’t second-guess everything you do. That’s me.

I think that a person’s identity can be viewed as a combination of elements from certain categories that makes the person unique. The categories are things that everyone has, and at least for me those are nationality, experiences, skills and talents, body, taste and interests, and character (as in psyche or nature). In this... let’s say piece of writing, because I’m not sure what it is, I’ll try to explain how these categories make up person’s identity.

Compared to my other categories, nationality might seem a bit different, because it is not unique to just one person– there are 10,000,000 of Czechs. But it still sets us apart from the rest of the people on the planet. You can think that you’re not a typical Czech all you want, but I guarantee that a tiny bit of you is. Whether you like it or not, you understand why Karel Gott’s death is such a big deal and references like “Gnocchi! Dumplings!” make you laugh. You grew up in the Czech Republic, surrounded by its language, culture and traditions; of course it is a part of your identity, a part of you.

On the other hand, experiences and memories are unique to each person. You should of course remember the positive ones, but do not disregard and forget your less-happy memories. Good or bad, they shape your identity and affect your behaviour throughout your life.

Skills are what gets you through this life. Some are learned at school and everybody has them, like reading and writing. But everyone has also talents that distinguish them from the majority. Someone is good at sports, someone has a good memory and someone is good with electronics. When you develop these talents, you get even more skills that can be useful e.g. when applying for a job. It is important to note that when you lack talents in certain areas, it doesn’t make you stupid. Seriously, not everyone can be great at math and have straight A’s. And that’s fine, the world would be boring if we were all the same.

On a more tangible note, your body is a part of your identity too. There are tons of articles, essays and talks about body-positivity and they are right – don’t be ashamed of the way you look. Nobody says that you can’t change it, whether with diet or a plastic surgery. But beauty shouldn’t be your main goal in life – happiness should. And it is way easier to reach when you accept that that person in the mirror is the real you.

You can actually express your taste and interests with your body – hairstyles, tattoos, clothes, jewellery and other things. But not everyone wears T-shirts with their favourite band on it; some people are quieter about the things they like. That doesn't mean they like them less. They probably just don't need to shout it into the world.

The last category to discuss is possibly the most obvious aspect of identity – character. I'm going to repeat myself a bit here – everyone is different, we are not the same and that's fine. I feel like there are certain character traits that are disadvantaged in today's society – everyone always tells you to be assertive, ambitious, and to make connections, but not everyone can do this and not be extremely uncomfortable and awkward about it. Being the loudest doesn't equal being the best. Maybe an outgoing person with tons of friends has very little attention to detail. Maybe a person who prefers to be alone most of the time is actually very thorough and precise.

Your identity is you, my identity is me. We might be different in all the aspects, we might differ in just a few, but we will never be identical. Always unique, what an interesting and beautiful world.

6 November 2019

Is it possible to mathematically sequence human brain?

I believe it is not possible. People are so unpredictable, so inventive, how could you possibly mathematically sequence that? I don't know much about math, programming and human brain (or anything, really), but sequencing creativity that some exquisite humans show seems just impossible. There could never be a mathematical formula for creating pieces like *Starry Night*, *Ode to Joy* or *Sagrada Familia*.

11 November 2019

I have a hard time deciding pretty much everything, especially when it comes to favourites. See, I don't have one favourite, I have several, whether talking about books, movies, TV shows, songs, etc. So I naturally had some difficulties when deciding which show to write about. I ultimately chose *Brooklyn 99*, because I just can't wait for season 7!

As for genre, I would say comedy. Someone could argue that it's also crime drama, because it's about detectives in NYC, but I personally feel like the crime-solving is sometimes in the background, to make room for the jokes, shenanigans and personal story arches. The audience are probably mostly people in their 20's, just like me, but that's not to say that a 40-year-olds couldn't enjoy it too. It just has this silly sense of humour that not everyone finds appealing. Being a comedy, its purpose is to make you laugh. But, while being funny as hell, it is able to sneak in some social commentary and tackle prevailing social issues (e.g. racism, homophobia and coming out, sexual harassment, adoption and many more). So it should not only make you laugh, it should also make you think.

Just a warning - I'm going to repeat myself a bit here. This show is appealing to me, because I like its (often silly) sense of humour. Sometimes, all you need after a long day is to kick back and laugh at ridiculous plots and jokes. As I stated above, it also discusses some real issues, offering a different point of view or an argument I haven't thought about before. Plus, the characters are all so loveable, you can't help but be invested in them. The creators really managed to make each of them unique, but relatable in some aspect. The cast has great chemistry and the actors play off of each other really well. In addition, this hasn't really occurred to me, but in an interview with one of the actresses, she said that she had been amazed that two Latinas were cast as leads. This is apparently not common in TV shows and movies not exquisitely about Latinos. So not only the plot and characters are progressive – the people making it are too. I can't really think of anything I would change about this show (I sound like such a fangirl... I am though, so that's fair).

The show has not (thankfully, it was cancelled once) arrived to its end yet, the seventh season is scheduled to premiere in 2020. I started it when there were already 5 seasons, so those I watched whenever I had time (usually around 5 or 6 episodes a day). When season 6 started airing, I always watched the new episode right away, because I just couldn't wait! I would say that I am generally a patient person, but my curiosity always gets the better of me when it comes to TV shows. I just don't have the strength to stay away from new episodes.