

Starting Lines

As the quarter crosses its midpoint, it can be helpful to hear from other student writers--particularly those published in *Starting Lines*--for suggestions and advice as we continue working on our own essays. We spoke with two writers who shared their experiences with their published work.

**An Interview with Julia Arsan, author of
“Misogyny’s Cloak: Entertainment”**

Tell us about your process for writing your Starting Lines essay.

Before I started writing the essay, I was honestly overwhelmed. The idea that writing just flows out of one's fingertips effortlessly, some so-called writing zone, just never really applied to me. I was and still am the person that takes hours upon hours scrutinizing every little detail of my writing word by word, sentence by sentence. Free writing seemed like a waste of my time--why produce writing if it wasn't my very best? But the huge push for free writing in my Writing 2 class really smoothed out the rough patches I most likely would have had without doing so. Those free writing passages really were such helpful catalysts in my writing process. Do not underestimate them, they really guided me where I never thought I needed guidance.

What was the hardest part about writing the essay? How did you overcome it?

I think one of the hardest parts about writing my essay was ironically not the writing part--it was deciding what I wanted to write about. This was the first class that gave me freedom to write about whatever I wanted, which was pretty intimidating considering I've never really been presented with an essay without really solid guidelines. But I think that was the beauty of my paper as well: I got to argue my point about something that I really was passionate about. I didn't have to pull things out of my ass because I actually cared about what I was writing. And I really think that's why I made it in *Starting Lines*.

What did it feel like to be published?

It felt really good to be published, as I'm sure any of my fellow essayists can tell you. The best part about it was actually my teacher reaching out to me and encouraging me to submit it. I never heard of *Starting Lines* before, and it felt really great to know that my teacher reached out to me to be published in a book that I didn't even know existed. I'm very critical with my writing, and when he said it was the best argument he'd seen within a Writing 2 context, it made me feel so reaffirmed and proud of myself, regardless of whether I thought I was going to be published or not.

What advice do you have for writing students?

The best advice I have for writing students is to, seriously, meet with your writing teacher! I've heard nothing but amazing things about the Writing 1 and 2 teachers, and my experience was no different (shoutout Mr. Baer!). Not only will they help you with almost every aspect of your writing, they also really give you some confidence. Their willingness to meet with you (which far surpasses other teachers/professors I can assure you) and the really positive feedback (don't confuse constructive feedback with negative feedback!) gives you a lot of motivational confidence to keep pushing your writing to the next level. None of us like to do things we don't think we're good at, but these writing teachers never fail to make you realize how much potential you have to be an amazing writer. They push your writing boundaries, but they do so in a way that makes you feel like you can, you will, and it will be brilliant.

The interviews continue on page 2 . . .

MORE TALKING WITH THE AUTHORS

An Interview with Isabel Aguilar, author of “Flimsy, Little Board”

Tell us about your process for writing your Starting Lines essay.

Initially, I had trouble finding an object that I truly valued. I limited myself to objects that I still had or the stuffed animal I had as a child, which I thought would be very generic. I talked with my ACE writing tutor about objects and my memories attached to them. Remembering my childhood, I realized I spent countless hours playing Monopoly with my brothers and how this game brought us together. I tied the idea of everyday objects having a significant meaning and a connection to memories with an article we read in class. There it was! I found my object to write about. I thought outside my box and chose an object I no longer had, contrary to most of the articles we read in class where most people still had their meaningful object. I brainstormed points I wanted to make for each paragraph, searched for sources that would fit with my idea, peer reviewed several times, and attended office hours.

What was the hardest part about writing the essay? How did you overcome it?

The hardest part about writing the essay was deciding how much of my personal life I wanted to share. I wrote about the relationship I had with my brothers in the past, as well as the relationship I have with them now. Part of me wanted to write that we became close as we grew older all because of the board game. To overcome this, I knew it would be easier to write about something I knew. I tend not to talk about my personal life with other people, but I find it easier to write about it. I decided to be honest and let the audience know that even if my brothers and I lack a relationship, I still have memories of the times we spent together. That was the point of the essay, linking memories to objects.

What did it feel like to be published?

When I first heard that I was published, I was surprised. After several weeks passed, I had forgotten about my submission. I remember reading the email regarding my publication twice because I couldn't believe seeing the word "congratulations." I did not and still do not consider myself a great writer, but I realized that I like writing narratives and personal essays. I get carried away with sharing my emotions, life, and memories (that I don't share verbally) in my essays, which makes writing not as dreadful as I thought.

What advice do you have for writing students?

My advice to other writing students is to make your writing as creative and personal as you can. That's when you enjoy working on your piece the most. Also, I would say to use your resources! Peers, CLAS writing tutors, and professors are there to help you and further develop your writing. Lastly, don't be afraid to push your boundaries, be a little uncomfortable, and take risks. This is where I find I grow the most.

*See more readings and resources
(and information on submitting your
own work) at:*

www.startinglinesmagazine.com

Spring 2017