ENG 3311: Correspondence

Course Sample
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ENG 3311
Practices in Writing and Rhetoric:
Magazine Writing

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Course Content

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Lesson 1: Personal Essay

Analyzing "A Girl Among Trombonists"

Before you begin reading the content below, stop and read

"A Girl Among Trombonists" by Cris Mazza
Pages 577-590 in Creating Nonfiction.

Then return to this page.

When reading a personal essay, it can be helpful to imagine the writer's process creating the essay from an event or memory. So, in the case of "A Girl Among Trombonists," with what story do you think the author began? What story did she want to tell?

That story was likely some version of the one that begins on page 589: "One day after outdoor band rehearsal—as we streamed back into the band room through a narrow corridor that extended from the parking lot where we practiced, behind the auditorium and directly into the indoor rehearsal room—Danny drew me aside."

What happens next is shocking and disturbing—but imagine if the essay focused exclusively on what happened in those moments. The story wouldn't require many pages to tell. Indeed, Mazza tells it in less than a single page, and if the essay went no further, the reader would be left with obvious questions:

- What happened next?
- Why did she allow those boys to do that?

The first question doesn't have an exciting answer. Eventually the sessions behind the stage curtains ended. No one was physically hurt. This story, if you told it to a friend, would have an anti-climactic ending. "Then what?" your friend would ask, and the answer would be, 'Well, then I went on with my life.'

The more interesting question, then, is why the author allowed the boys to touch her. This was likely the question that the author returned to in her mind again and again, and it's the question she spends most of the essay attempting to answer. She answers with context—a version of "you had to be there to understand." Let's take a look at the four types of context she provides:

- Political
- Subject-specific (band)
- Socio-political
- Sexual/gender role

Go back through the essay and label the places where it offers each type of context. Pay special attention to what details the essay gives in each section/paragraph. Consider these two questions:

- What details does the author use to provide context?
- How do those details help the reader understand the story she wants to tell (her experience with the boys behind the stage curtain)?
Assignment One

Assignment - In progress

Add attachment(s), then choose the appropriate button at the bottom.

Title  Assignment 1, Part A: Magazine Research and Query Letter
Due    Dec 31, 2017 5:00 pm
Status  In progress
Grade Scale  Points (max 100)
Modified by instructor  Jun 10, 2013 11:00 am

Instructions

After you have completed Assignment 1, Part A, attach your magazine research and query letter as separate files. If necessary, also attach a copy of your model essay. (If you are not attaching a copy of it, be sure to include a link to it in your magazine research file.) Then, click Submit. (If you are unclear on the requirements for Assignment 1, Part A, re-visit Lesson 1.)

Your attachments must be either .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf.

You must wait for instructor approval of your model essay before you can submit Part B of Assignment 1.

Attachment

Your attached submission

Attachments

No attachments yet

Select a file from computer  Choose File  No file chosen

or select files from workspace or site
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