

May 6, 2015

Dear Reader,

Throughout grade school and most of high school I was not a confident writer. The feedback I had gotten from teachers was never positive and my friends always got better grades than me. It was not until my junior year of high school that I realized when I applied myself, I could produce a well written paper. The teacher I had for government, Mr. Fritz, assigned my class a paper. He told us that this would be the hardest paper of the year and he would grade it harshly. I worked very hard on this paper. Collecting research and planning the structure of my paper was what I spent the majority of the time doing. When I had gotten the paper back I got one of the highest grades in my class, and there were a lot of positive comments. It was after this paper that I realized I could write.

During my senior year of high school, I took a college writing class. I absolutely loved this class. This class taught me all the foundational tools of writing. Throughout the college writing class I had to write five different types of papers, some of them I did not even know existed. Although the friends that were in my writing class still got better grades than me, I did not care because this was something I enjoyed. Thesis statements had always been something that I struggled with, but after this class I was able to form a strong thesis statement. The papers that I had to write in other classes also improved because of the college writing class.

After high school my writing career had come to a standstill before I took College Writing Two with Professor Angie Johnson. I had written some research papers for other classes, but nothing that would increase my foundational writing skills. The first assignment that we had was to write four academic paragraphs based off of Sir Ken Robinson's speech on the educational paradigm. Each paragraph was an introduction paragraph, so we had to write four different thesis statements. My ability to write thesis statements had grown, but my confidence had not. Also, academic paragraphs are a lot longer than your typical five to seven sentence long paragraphs. Right away I was intimidated by my first assignment. I decided the best way to go about each paragraph was to make an outline. For each topic, I found at least two quotes and then figure out how I was going to support those quotes with my own words. After lots of revision, I was able to hand in four academic length paragraphs that I was satisfied with.

The last assignment that my class was given was by far my favorite. It was a narrative that was originally supposed to be audio, but I am not technologically savvy so I chose a written narrative. I do not do well with little structure, and this assignment had very little structure. We could pick whatever topic we wanted and structure it however we wanted. I started out with a problem immediately, I had no clue what to pick for a topic. I began to think about events that had happened to me that had changed my life. Caroline, my friend from high school, was in a terrible accident the summer of 2014. This was the topic I knew I should write about. My traditional written narrative ended up being one of the most emotionally draining pieces I have ever written. I had to reread all of the entries and look at all of the pictures of Caroline on Caring Bridge. This was exceedingly hard because it was like I was reliving her accident all over again. For one of my sources I called my friend Elizabeth to clear up a few of the details. Talking with her about it helped a lot because it assured me that Caroline was okay and making improvements. Another problem that I struggled with was the structure of my paper. There were a lot of time hops and scene changes that happened throughout my narrative. My professor suggested to me that I fix this

problem using page breaks. I really liked this strategy because it visually showed the reader the leaps in time. This project aided in the widening of my writing style. Most college students, including me, adjust to a formal writing style because this is what a typical research paper is written in. The narrative that I had written was addressing college students, therefore needed to be a more relaxed style. I was able to adjust my writing style to the change in my audience.

There are still some things that I struggle with in my writing. First, I had a hard time with omitting needless words. I like to use a lot of words to describe something, so that I can emphasize that amazing details of a person or thing. When I do this, readers can sometimes get confused reading all the words that I have put in. Fewer words can still convey the same and paint a clear picture of what I am writing about. Another thing that I struggle with is the words “that” and “who.” I tend to use the word “that” instead of the word “who.” The word “who” is meant for people, while the word “that” is used to describe things. Part of the reason that I do this is because I like to write how I talk. When I talk I am not paying attention to what is grammatically correct. Therefore I am not always conscious if what I am writing is correct as well. Lastly, I know that I still need to work on what type of voice I use in my writing. The majority of my writing is done in a very passive voice. Crucial information can still be understood by the reader, but it would make a more significant impact if it was written in an active voice.

Throughout the semester there have also been a lot of things that I improved on as well. At the beginning of the semester I used to struggle with keeping the verb tense throughout my paper consistent. It was hard for the readers to be able to track what was happening and at what time. Now, the verb tenses in my academic writing are more consistent throughout an entire piece. The structure of my papers has also improved significantly. I have found that I cannot just type out papers and hope that everything will make sense to the readers. When I outline a paper beforehand and write down my thoughts, I am able to compose a paper that not only makes sense to me but my audience as well. This goes along with how I learned I brainstorm best. The outlines I make for my paper look very messy, but help me a lot. It is a way for me to piece together a paper and then write down other ideas I may have as I structure my paper. In doing this, I do not necessarily have to write my paper from start to finish, I can start in the middle and skip around to whatever paragraph I want.

This class has ultimately taught me to be a more confident writer. When writing a first draft I like to think of the phrase “if you’re going to sin, sin boldly!” The works that I have done have been edited, but could probably use a lot more editing. They will never be perfect, but that doesn’t mean that they are not well written. Because of this class, I know that I can write a piece that will be worth people’s time reading, and they will enjoy it. The writing that I do is my own work and I should be proud of it because it’s something I came up with on my own.

Sincerely,

Abby Wegner

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Professor Johnson

ENGL 210

10 February 2015

Academic Paragraph #1

Sir Ken Robinson is a well-known and well educated man who has received numerous awards for his ideas and accomplishments which has made him a trusted expert. First of all, in order to have success in any field one must be educated in the subject. Robinson has a PhD in drama and theatre with several honorary degrees from the Rhode Island School of design, the Open University, the Central School of Speech and drama, and many more (sirkenrobinson.com, para. 3). He has been executing the ideas he accumulated from his education by working with governments to improve education systems in Europe, Asia, and the United States of America. The experience he has gained makes him an effective professor of education at the University of Warwick for twelve years (sirkenrobinson.com, para. 2-4). Next, Robison's education that has led to his tremendous work has not gone unnoticed. He has received many awards including the "Athena Award of the Rhode Island School of Design for services to the arts and education, the Peabody Medal for contributions to the arts and culture in the United States, and the Gordon Parks Award for achievements in education" (sirkenrobinson.com, para. 2-4). Achieving these awards has helped him to receive worldwide recognition. According to "*Fast Company Magazine* (2011) Robison is considered to be 'One of the world's elite thinkers on creativity and innovation'" (sirkenrobinson.com, para. 2). He has also been an internationally recognized leader in the development of creativity, innovation and human resources in education. Even Queen Elizabeth II has recognized Robinson's remarkable way of reforming education by giving him a knighthood

for his services to the arts (sirkenrobinson.com, para. 2-4). The recognition that Sir Ken Robinson has received for his brilliant ideas regarding education makes him a reliable expert on the subject of education.

Academic Paragraph #2

In his lecture, “Changing Education Paradigms”, Sir Ken Robinson (2008) claimed that there are two reasons why “every country on earth is reforming public education” (Robinson, 1). First, a common concern for any parent is how to prepare a child for an ever changing economy. The main goal of education is to prepare children and young adults to take the place of adults in the twenty-first century. It is exceedingly difficult to educate someone on any subject which is constantly changing (Robinson, 2). The adult figure in children’s lives are having a hard time preparing their children for the economy because they do not know what it is going to be like the next day. Next, countries are attempting to influence students today with a sense of cultural identity. When cultural identity is achieved, then the “cultural genes” of a community can be passed on to younger generations. The difficulty which has been realized in these countries is the struggle between educating students about cultural identity and keeping up with the process of globalization (Robinson, 2). The concept of cultural identity is important because parents like to have their children know where they came from. Parents also want their children to carry on their culture and pass it on to their children. Education systems are doing a poor job of trying to correct these problems, being economic and cultural. The leaders of education “are trying to predict the future by what has already happened in the past” (Robinson, 2). This process is very flawed because it ends up alienating students who do not have the motivation to do well in school. Another reason why this does not work is because the world is always changing and the past has no power to change that. Students have lost this motivation because they realized a degree is not necessary

in order to get a job. Therefore, economics and culture have left many countries uncertain with how their education systems should be executed.

Academic Paragraph #3

According to Sir Ken Robinson (2008) in his lecture, “Changing Education Paradigms”, the education system was developed at an earlier time and is no longer applicable to students today. The first problem is that the ideas of how an education system should be structured began during the time of the Enlightenment. When the system was being developed people believed that there were children who were incapable of learning. This meant that there were already negative assumptions about children built into the system before it was even created. Children are aware of the negative assumptions and because of this, their motivation for school is already declining. Another reason that Robinson (2008) is no longer applicable to students is because the Enlightenment education system had its own view of what intelligence was. Intelligence consisted of a certain type of deductive reasoning and knowledge that led to academic ability. How the system was then developed was that students were separated into two groups of smart people and not smart people. This leads to the third reason why Robinson (2008) said the education system is no longer applicable to students today; there are flaws in this reasoning because of we know more about intelligences. Researchers have come to realize that there were exceedingly smart people who thought that they were not smart because they were judged (p. 2). Robinson has nothing positive to say about the Enlightenment education system. The words he uses to describe it are “chaos,” “modern epidemic,” “misplaced,” and “fictitious.” The education system is exceedingly outdated and because of this students suffer.

Academic Paragraph #4

Sir Ken Robinson presents many facts about how the education system today is flawed and how it should change in “Changing Education Paradigms”. The first issue discussed was how ADHD is over diagnosed and pills are given to children that inhibit their creativity and desire to learn (p. 2). I agree with Robinson that ADHD is over diagnosed and that there are students who actually have this learning disability. Some students cannot make themselves concentrate in school on their own and the pills that are given help them tremendously. The problem with the pills is that they limit the student’s creativity and sometimes change who they are. ADHD medication is meant to calm the student down and in doing so can make a difference in their personality that is not always good. Next, Robinson (2008) mentioned how there have been many theories as to how a classroom should be structured. He argued that schools should not have to put the same age groups together (p. 3). Instead, he wanted the students to go where they will succeed. I disagree with Robinson on this issue. The reason why students are put with peers their own age is not because of academics, it is because of psychological development. If a student is academically advanced in a certain subject, typically arrangements are made so they can continue. Psychologically their brains are still developing and younger students are not going to understand the social norms older students can. Lastly, Robinson argued that student creativity is limited in regards to testing (Robinson, 3). Students are taught that there is only way to go about finding an answer. Instead, they should be presented multiple ways to find an answer because that is how life is, there is always more than one way. Sir Ken Robinson (2008) has done exceptional job at pointing out some of the major flaws in the education system and how it is affecting students.

Abby Wegner

Professor Johnson

ENGL 210

27 April 2015

Caroline's Accident: How One Mistake Can Change Everything

For most students, high school is a very scary transition. The comfort of one's friends from grade school are gone, and the process of making friends begins all over again. For me, the person that helped me through this transition was Caroline. We met during volleyball tryouts at Saint Bernard's high school in Saint Paul, Minnesota in the fall of 2009 and immediately became best friends. There were so many things that we had in common that conversation always came easily for us. First of all, we were the tallest girls at our school reaching six feet tall. We also had our own type of humor that would leave us crying because we were laughing so hard while other friends around us never understood why we were laughing. Normally, this would consist of Caroline doing some sort of crazy stunt that would get her almost hurt, and then me laughing at her. At lunch, we would sit as straight as we possibly could and talked with a British accent about what was going on in the cafeteria. Our friends that sat with us would just stare at us like we were the weirdest people they had ever laid eyes on. Caroline was one of the most outgoing people I had ever met. She wasn't afraid of anything and was always trying to come up with some crazy activity to do. When our school would have mass (we went to Catholic school) she would jump down every single flight of stairs, everyone thought that she was insane and that she would get hurt. She was the friend I went to when I needed to talk about my problems in high school, like how much homework we had or what boys we had a crush on. This was the Caroline I remembered. After the summer of 2014, one mistake Caroline made changed her both physically and mentally.

It was a hot Sunday in June of 2014 and I was singing in the hot balcony of Jehovah Lutheran Church. The heat up there was almost unbearable because it was 90 degrees. I sang three songs to help lead the congregation while my brother accompanied me on the piano. After church, there was a potluck in the basement (where it was much cooler), followed by a meeting to discuss current events happening in the church. During the meeting I received a phone call from my friend Elizabeth. Elizabeth was one of my friends from high school and even though we were at different colleges, we still talked occasionally. She was crying and panicking informing me that our friend Caroline had been in a terrible accident and the paramedics were unsure if she was going to make it. My whole body went numb. Caroline and I had not talked in four years because after our freshmen year of high school, we both transferred to different schools and it was hard to keep up with each other's lives. Even though we did not talk anymore, I never thought that anything bad would happen to Caroline because of what a strong person she was. I had no idea what to say or do. The first thought that came to my head was pray. I told Elizabeth that all we could do is hope and pray. We said a prayer on the phone together, then said we would talk later that night. I went into the meeting and told my mom to step out with me in the hallway. We talked about what happened and I asked her if the meeting could stop so everyone could pray for Caroline. As my mom was talked to the pastor I was told my dad and brother what had happened. It was then that reality hit me. I couldn't even finish my sentence saying that they were unsure if Caroline was going to make it when I started crying. The meeting stopped and everyone prayed while my dad held me.

The accident took place in Snowmass, Colorado. Caroline and her friends from college decided to go on a summer vacation together and were staying in some relatives' house who had

left for their own vacation. One of the nights they were in Colorado, the girls decided to go to a bar. While at the bar, Caroline had met a group of guys that she thought were really nice and outgoing. Everyone hit it off and the guys were invited back to the house that Caroline and her friends were staying at. The guys brought alcohol with them, so that the party could continue once at the house. During the party, Caroline had disappeared. For some unknown reason, she made her way to an elevator shaft two stories high outside of the house...and jumped. Nobody had noticed her absence until the party cleared out. The girls went looking for her for an hour. They looked on every floor of the house, in all the bedrooms, the living room, anywhere they could think of. Then one of the girls looked out the window and saw Caroline's unresponsive body, lying limp on the concrete floor with her head to the side. All the girls ran to help her. One of them performed CPR while another phoned an ambulance. The CPR performed had caused a few of her ribs to break, but one of the paramedics had said that without the CPR, Caroline would have had no chance of survival. Caroline was brought to the hospital in Snowmass, but they did not have the resources they needed to help her. She was then airlifted to Saint Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction, Colorado where she remained for forty days.

Everyone back in Minnesota wanted a way to see and read about Caroline's progress. Her aunt, Peggy, had started a page for Caroline on *Caring Bridge*. Through this website anyone could see what treatments Caroline was receiving. Also, friends and family could make donations and send comforting words to Caroline's family. Caroline had suffered several breaks in her pelvis and a couple of broken bones in both arms. Her face had cuts, bruises, and cracks to her bones. When she first arrived at the hospital she could not breathe on her own and was sedated for long periods of time to help manage the pain. She also endured brain trauma from the impact of hitting

the concrete floor. Because of this she had trouble forming sentences and could not talk very well. Later through the healing process the doctors had realized that Caroline had also been suffering from small seizures. Surgeries and various forms of therapy (physical, occupational, and speech) began to be Caroline's life. They had inserted a feeding tube into her and it could not be removed until the speech therapist worked on how to swallow with her. Her pelvis needed a lot of attention and had screws put into it through her spine. Eventually, they had inserted metal rods into her pelvis that protruded from her body to keep it aligned. Caroline remained in the intensive care unit for two weeks to make sure that she could make it on her own. When she got approved for travel, she came back to the cities and stayed at Regions Hospital in Saint Paul, Minnesota until her house was fully equipped for her arrival in North Saint Paul. Her family had to make sure that their house had wheelchair access, which also meant moving her bedroom downstairs to the main floor.

I really appreciated *Caring Bridge* because it was a way to be informed about my friend and see how she was doing. Reading about all her problems did not bother me, as much as I thought it would. What did though, was seeing the pictures posted of her. In the first few pictures, Caroline did not smile and her stare was blank. It was like she was not there anymore. She did not look at the camera, just off in the distance. This was not the Caroline I knew anymore. When we used to take pictures she always had the biggest smile plastered on her face and we would pose in the silliest ways we could think of. I knew that she was turning a positive corner when her aunt posted a story about Caroline's mom trying to take a picture of her and she turned over and flipped the camera. After that story, that I knew Caroline would pull through because that was the Caroline I was friends with my freshmen year of high school.

Another thing that helped me cope with Caroline's accident was helping out with her fundraiser. A lady that knew Caroline very well organized a fundraiser to help out with some of the family's expenses. There was a ton of stuff that people had donated like baked goods and other items for a silent auction. Elizabeth and I went to the fundraiser together to help sell soda to raise money for all the bills that Caroline and her family had accumulated. Looking at all the people at the fundraiser and all of the donations that were given was so moving. I saw old friends from high school and was able to talk to other people who knew Caroline. When I had tried to talk to friends prior to this event, they sympathized with me but they really did not know what everyone was going through because they did not know Caroline. It was like they did not understand the severity of the accident. At the fundraiser I was able to openly talk about Caroline's accident to people that truly understood what happened. Through the fundraiser we raised over \$10,000, which helped out the family a lot.

About a week before Elizabeth and I went back to college in early August we went to Regions Hospital to see Caroline. We were both very nervous because we did not know what exactly to expect. First, it took us awhile to find the unit she was staying in because the hospital was so big. Then once we found her room, she was not in it. There was a set of tables and chairs that we went to while we waited for her. The nurses informed us that she was in a meeting about her transition back to her house. We sat there waiting and watching. Hospitals are a very busy place. There were nurses running everywhere, machines beeping, and hospital residents wondering the halls. Seeing that atmosphere gave us a little taste as to Caroline had been living for the past two months. While we looked around we saw a door open in a hallway that was to the side of us. Inside was Caroline and her family. Elizabeth made eye contact with Caroline's mom and she waved us back. We said "Hi" to her parents and caught up a little bit and then they left so that we

could talk to Caroline. It was really good to talk to her, but this was unlike any conversation we had ever had. In high school, Caroline and I called each other the “twin towers” because we were the tallest girls in our school at the time. So when we saw each other we greeted each other as such. She told us about her accident, as if we would have had no idea what happened to her. Her thoughts were also very repetitive. She would say something like “Oh I just can’t wait to see my cats!” Then she would express how excited she was to go back to school followed by a statement like “My cats are just so cute!” Because of this, it was hard to change topics throughout a conversation. Even though conversation was at some points difficult, it was still really good to see her. She kept cracking jokes about the “hot” doctors that had been taking care of her, or the really annoying doctors that she could not stand. She informed us, because of her brain trauma, that she hardly remembers being in Colorado. All she remembers is talking with her friends about making a trip to Colorado. Seeing her before I went back to school gave me a lot of closure on the accident. I had spent so long hearing and reading about all the bad things that had happened to my friend. When I finally saw her, I saw all the progress she had made and how she was trying to make Elizabeth and me laugh. Caroline now has made almost a full recovery and has returned to school and began working again. She still is not quite the Caroline that I had met back in high school. She is a lot more laid back and sometimes still has a vacant stare on her face.

College students should be aware of Caroline’s story. Partying is a huge part of the college scene, and usually drinking is involved. Students think that nothing bad will happen to them because they are out with their friends having a good time. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism 4 out of 5 college students drink and close to 2,000 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die due to unintentional injuries while intoxicated. There are also

600,000 reports of serious injuries. When you make friends in college you do not think that they will make decisions that could potentially end their lives. These decisions happen far too often at college parties. So instead of ignoring the possibility of a tragic accident, students should be aware and prepared to deal with such accidents. Thankfully, Caroline was with friends that knew how to perform CPR, which ended up saving her life. Students that go out drinking need to know what to do in case one of their friends drinks themselves to the point where they cannot take care of themselves. Underage drinking is far too common to let these things go unnoticed.