

Interviewer: Alright. Today is November 26. My name is ***, and I'm interviewing ***.

Today we're just gonna talk about your writing experiences and yourself as a writer. Let's start with that. How would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I don't do a lot of writing on my own, but when I get writing, I really enjoy it, and I think I do like expressing myself through it. It's just a lot of the times I need some kind of motivation to make me to do, like school or some other reason, I guess I would say. It's definitely something I do enjoy doing, but usually for academic or if I'm writing a letter to someone, but I don't do a lot of creative writing on my own, I guess.

Interviewer: How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began here at the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: I think I was a pretty confident, coming from high school, but at the same time, I don't think I was the best at being concise in expressing myself. I think I was of the mindset that the more I write, the clearer I am. I think I was confident, but then I realized that I had a lot to learn still.

Interviewer: How would you say you've grown as a writer since being here?

Interviewee: [Pause] I've gotten to the point where I think—I think I can be more—approach it less being—I think I'm less intimidated when I start things now, I guess, as a writer. I think I know how to approach things better, too, and I've gotten to the point where it's not as—I don't dread it as much.

I think as a freshman, I was more worried about the grade I would get when I'm done writing. I think now since I talk a lot with professors and stuff, that's it's become more of a way for me to express my ideas. I dunno. I almost feel like I'm gonna miss having the opportunity to write when I'm done with college.

Interviewer: What's your major?

Interviewee: I'm an English major, but I'm applying for vet school, so I'm not really going to be using it—I guess I think it's applicable anyway, but it won't be a ton of writing, I guess you would say.

Interviewer: What I'm hearing is that there's less apprehension when you start writing nowadays.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: What would you attribute that growth?

[Pause 03:34 - 03:39]

Interviewee: I think just working through papers a lot with my professors and stuff. The more classes I take, the more I like the getting feedback. I also took a [Writing course]. Right? We talked a lot about writing to have a voice and not as much writing to get a good grade.

I think that I'm trying to keep that as my mentality more so. Since that's not my only purpose in writing, it makes it less like people are gonna judge my paper, I guess. Does that makes sense?

Interviewer: What are your purposes or your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I guess convey my ideas, especially ones I'm passionate about. If I'm writing a paper that's more technical and research-y, for those papers I think it's more about the grade. For a lot of my English papers, I think it's more about my opinion, my ideas, so I wanna convey that I have a good point that's worth listening to, I guess.

Interviewer: Why do you think that distinction exists for you?

Interviewee: You mean between—

Interviewer: One seems more grade-oriented and the other not as much.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. *[Pause]* I think it's more if I feel—it's important for me to feel like whoever is grading it actually cares what I'm writing about, I think. For some classes, I think they just want their students to have to write papers to get grades, but I think a lot of my English teachers actually are interested in what their students have to say.

For those I'm more concerned about having a good idea that the professor will like— that I like, too—but that professor might find interesting and not just for the grade, I guess. I still want a good grade, but that's not the sole thing I'm looking at, I guess, when I write those.

Interviewer: Thinking across all of your writing experiences that you have had, what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: To write well. That's a great 06:32 question. I feel like I write well if I can look back on it later and still feel proud of it and not just, "Oh, that's a paper I wrote for a class." If it's something I can tell I was really into and really believed in what I was saying, then I think I wrote well.

Of course, positive feedback from teachers is an indicator, but I do like to feel like I cared about what I was writing about when I was writing. Also, I mean something that I didn't just throw together at the last minute, usually.

Interviewer: What first-year writing requirement course did you take?

Interviewee: I took [Great Books course]. It was through the honors program, but I think we still did a lot of—we focused a lot on our writing still, I think.

Interviewer: What kinds of writing did you do in that course?

Interviewee: I'm trying to remember now. I think we had a few journals we had to do and then a few papers as well. If I remember correctly, we worked a lot with—our GSI [Graduate Student Instructor] really encouraged us to come and work with him and really stressed improvement through the course, I think. I felt like I really developed through it, and at the end he told me he thought I'd improved.

It seems like we worked with the GSI with drafts to get better as we went along and stuff. I guess it was—not more guided, but it was more—they really wanted us to work with the GSI to get better, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah. In what ways would you say you developed your writing in that course?

Interviewee: I'm having trouble remembering exactly, but I think, again—that was coming out of high school, so I was all about, "Oh, I just need to write a lot, and then I'll sound smart." I think I probably did a lot of learning more about organization and about just being more concise to convey my ideas. I don't know if that's what I did specifically in that course.

Interviewer: Were you writing papers in response to pieces of literature?

Interviewee: Yeah. Like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. I think it was—we usually had passages that we would write papers about, if I'm right, not as much comparison, I don't think, if I'm remembering right. [*Chuckles*] It was a while ago. Yeah.

Interviewer: Did these experiences have an effect on you as a writer?

Interviewee: That class?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I think it did, coming into college, because I think the first couple of papers I think I wrote for that class, I didn't do very well. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to write as a college writer, but then I think I definitely improved through it, which helped me feel confident again. Not confident like I was in high

school but more that I knew better how to write in this environment that I hadn't been used to before. I don't know if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. Just getting used to this new place and how to write here.

Interviewer: How did you gain that confidence back?

Interviewee: [Pause] I think just through working with my GSI mostly. I think I could definitely see in my writing how it was different, too, from how I had started writing in that course. I can't remember a lot of specifics about it now, but I could tell that I was developing, I think.

Interviewer: Are you still making use of what you learned in your [Great Books course] in your writing nowadays?

Interviewee: I don't know specifically because I feel like all my writing and knowledge about writing has just accumulated, and I don't know if it's specifically from that course, but hopefully.

[Chuckles]

Interviewer: Did you take [Writing course]?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: You mentioned that your major is in English?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: What kinds of writing do you do for your major?

Interviewee: It's mostly based on different literature, so a lot of responding to passages and stuff, I would say. Basically, all the papers I do are that. It's like forming an argument about something in a book that's not obvious and then proving it through close readings and analyzing the language and stuff. That's mainly what I would say I write for.

Interviewer: How have those experiences affected you as a writer? Writing for English. [Chuckles]

Interviewee: I think—

[Pause 12:55 - 12:59]

Interviewer: I think—[*Pause*—having to write it from books and stuff, I think it helps me—let me think—have good evidence and details to support what I'm saying, even really small things, to make sure there's not holes in my argument, I guess, because with close readings you have to look at really small word choices and stuff like that, to find unique evidence but at the same time make sure that it's not forgetting something, I guess.

Interviewer: Is that a skill that you learned here? Were you doing that in high school as well?

Interviewee: I don't think I did as close of readings of things. I think I probably wrote more big ideas, is what I'm thinking. If I would take a quote of something in a high school paper, I would look at it as a whole and the idea of it, whereas I think I have to look at smaller details and nuances now than I did then. It's a little different approach, I guess.

Interviewer: How confident do you feel about writing in English, in your English major?

Interviewee: Pretty confident, I would say. Yeah, I think I'm confident.

Interviewer: What makes you confident in your writing?

Interviewee: I think the fact that most of the time I'm able to have some freedom with what I choose to write about or how I choose to write about it. Then I can usually find something I'm interested in and have an opinion in.

Then when I care about what I'm writing, I think I'm more comfortable with it and more confident I can say something worth saying. Yeah. If it's not something I can grasp as well or I'm not as interested in, then I'm a little bit more worried about it, I would say.

[*Pause 15:27- 15:34*]

Interviewer: How about your experiences in and out of the classroom? What kinds of experiences in and out of the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: [*Pause*] In the classroom, discussions and stuff, I think, helped me to develop ideas and—I dunno—I guess give me inspiration for what to write about out of the classroom. I'm a peer tutor for writing, too. I think talking with other writers a lot has affected how I write, especially since—I dunno—I'm supposed to help people see their papers—be more objective about people's papers and how to communicate things more clearly. I think that definitely probably affects how I'm doing my own writing, too.

[*Pause 16:49 - 16:54*]

Interviewer: You said that in tutoring you have to look at other people's writing more objectively. Does that influence the way that you read or revise your own papers?

Interviewee: I think so. Granted, now I'm a senior, so I probably don't put as much work into my writing right now as I have in the past, but I think it definitely helps me see through a reader's eye more when I'm looking at my papers sometimes to make sure if I didn't know anything about this paper, would I still know what I'm talking about. I dunno. I guess just a different way to look at it.

[Pause 17:44 - 17:49]

Interviewer: Any other out-of-classroom experiences that affect your writing?

Interviewee: I'm trying to think. *[Pause]* Not really. I like to read. *[Chuckles]* I think that affects how I write.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: How does reading affect your writing?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* I really like reading narratives where I feel like there's a definite voice of whoever is telling the story, like I can tell they have their own certain style. If I'm writing something that that's appropriate, then I like to have my own voice, my own nuances in it, I guess, which isn't always appropriate, but sometimes I think that applies.

Interviewer: In your major, are there very different kinds of writing that you do?

Interviewee: I'm trying to think. It depends. I've taken a lot of literature classes, and I think those are pretty similar, but I've also taken a few exploring the language of English. Those are a little different.

Sometimes those are more research-based or approaching a topic for writing about a word or something. That's not like you're doing a close reading of something. Sometimes those will be more persuasive or more like a newspaper article or something.

Those, I guess, are a little different than a lot of the literature ones. Those are pretty fun, too—just to have something different that's still—cuz I'm still interested in that type of topic, like language. I still enjoy those, even though they're different.

Interviewer: Has your writing process changed as a result of all of these different writing experiences?

Interviewee: I think so. In high school, I didn't have much of a process. I might do two drafts if we were required to turn in a rough draft or something.

I at least try to start a little earlier so I can do more of a brainstorming process, and talk through it with professors or GSIs, and do at least more than two drafts of things, and look not just—I dunno—looking at how it's conveying everything, like the organization of it and are there holes in what I'm saying. I guess looking at it again with a more critical eye rather than just revising about whether my grammar works or whatever.

Interviewer: Sure. If I use the term "reflective writing," what does that mean to you?

Interviewee: Reflective writing.

[Pause 21:39 - 21:46]

Interviewee: I don't know if I usually use that term, but I guess— [pause]—it would make me think of looking back on something and more like meditating on what it means to me and writing about it. It sounds like something more personal. I don't know if that's right or whatever, but that's what I would think of when I hear that term. More like me thinking about ideas and more personally thinking about it, I guess.

Interviewer: Based on that idea, have you used reflective writing in your own writing processes, either assigned or voluntary?

Interviewee: I've done writing like a nice letter to somebody, I think. I don't know if that's—that's not really like formal writing or something, but I enjoy doing that and reflecting on a relationship with someone or something, to write a nice letter, which I enjoy doing. I like doing that.

I feel like that's something I do if I'm applying—like, I applied for vet school. I think that was more reflective when I was trying to think of what to write in my personal statement. That, at the same time, did have added pressure of, "I need to write to get into school," but I think there was some of that.

When I was applying for college, I wrote about—I was in this book club for ten years. I didn't mind writing a personal statement for that because it was something that I really enjoyed and liked thinking about and how it affected my life. If it's something really personal to me like that, then I like reflective writing that way, I guess, if that's what reflective writing is.

[Chuckles]

Interviewer: Sure. Have you have had experiences working with other writers in your courses?

Interviewee: In my courses?

Interviewer: Or in other contexts.

Interviewee: *[Pause]* I'm trying to remember if I have much in courses. There have been a few classes where—like in a discussion session, I think we'll maybe talk to one other person about our paper and what we're writing and stuff, not necessarily that much in depth, but just maybe to talk about ideas.

Then I tutor for writing, so then I work with a lot of different writers. That can really range from what we talk about, cuz some it's a lot of ideas and thinking about how to convey things. Then there's a lot of people that want me to help with their grammar, which we're not really supposed to do. I guess it's a wide range of experiences with that.

Interviewer: *[Pause]* Have you done workshopping or peer review in any?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* Yeah. In some of my English classes, I think the GSIs will have us do a draft for a certain day. Then in our discussion section, we'll meet up with a few other people, and we'll go through each other's papers and try to workshop them. That's all of my classes, but I've had a few where we did that. It wasn't something required of the class, but I think GSI took liberty to do that sometimes.

Interviewer: Were those experiences helpful at all?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. It wasn't that much time to get through everything, but it was still helpful talking to other students, I would say. *[Pause]* I think if we had more time or had the papers beforehand more. Also, sometimes you don't put your best effort into your paper for workshop day, but I think they can be helpful, depending on if you take it very seriously or not, I guess.

Interviewer: What can make those experiences helpful?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* Cuz those peers are in the same class and learning the same thing, so it's different than if you're just having a friend read it who may not understand the content of the paper. Then sometimes the discussions of ideas in your paper then can be more constructive because the other person has more of a basis to go off of. You can look more at what you're saying rather than just how you're saying it, which is just different than maybe some other peer review.

Interviewer: In your tutoring experiences, are you attending to both? The what and the how you say it?

Interviewee: Sometimes. If someone comes in with an engineering paper or something, which I don't actually know anything about engineering, it's harder for me to do as much of the technical stuff, I guess. I think if there seems to be—I'll ask questions that I feel should be addressed that I can't understand from just reading their paper.

I think that kind of gets at the what but not as much as maybe in the workshopping with people in your class. We're supposed to be more looking at it as readers who don't know anything about the paper.

Sometime other writers that will come in to tutoring will give me background information and stuff about what they're writing about. Then I can be more helpful with whether I think that's coming through in their paper, too.

Interviewer: Have you done any group or collaborative writing projects?

Interviewee: I haven't in a little while, but I have in the past. I think I did one freshmen and maybe since then. It was kind of strange because we were each supposed to write part of a group paper. It all had to fit together.

I dunno. I didn't really enjoy it just because some people weren't doing their work as much. I don't really understand the purpose, I guess, of group paper as much. Not that I don't like working with other peers, but if other people aren't doing what they're supposed to do, then it's stressful.

Interviewer: Was there anything gained from that collaborative project?

Interviewee: I just didn't really understand the purpose of that, honestly, because it just seemed so strange to be putting our portions together. It was harder to figure out how to make it flow together more, I thought.

Interviewer: What was the final project? What did you have to do for that?

Interviewee: It was a group paper—I think it was a group research paper. I think it was for my Jane Austen class. We had to research a topic, like education or something during that time and then just compile it all together.

I dunno. I think it turned out well in the end, but it was strange to try to figure out how to put different people's writing together. I dunno. I just didn't think that it would all flow as well than if just one person did it. I'm not trying to say that I don't like writing with other people.

[Chuckles]

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: It was just a different type of experience, I guess. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: Would it have been easier to write solo?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* Potentially. Part of it was just because some people weren't as committed to it as I think—they were leaning on some of the other group members more so, which made it a weird balance of work. I think if everyone was committed to working on it, I don't think it would necessarily be a harder thing. I think it could be a successful experience that didn't have to be super stressful.

Interviewer: *[Pause]* If you were gonna give someone advice about writing, what are some of the things they should think about as they begin writing a paper?

Interviewee: As they begin. *[Pause]* I feel like I'm gonna represent myself as a bad tutor if I don't give a good answer to this.

[Chuckles]

Interviewer: These are cold 00:32:38 questions.

Interviewee: *[Laughter]* Just finding something that you think you can say—finding something that you actually find interesting to say in your writing and that's not obvious. You don't wanna—if you find a topic that you don't really care about—it's hard if you don't care about the class.

Writing about something you don't care about as much is—I think it comes across in your writing. I think it's important to keep brainstorming and talking through ideas with people until you can find something that you're actually at least somewhat interested in, which is harder for some classes than others. I think it's also helpful to talk through ideas with other people even if they're not in the same class as you.

Not immediately thinking about what grade you're gonna get on it before you even start writing cuz I think that just slows down the process and makes it scarier to start. I guess that's the main ones I would say.

Interviewer: You suggested to talking to others even if they're not in the same class. Why might that be beneficial?

Interviewee: I think a lot of times when you're—I've noticed in tutoring at least, when I talk through ideas with people, they say things that they don't write down for some reason. Then a lot of the times that's when it comes through the most clearly what they're talking about. I think by talking through that, it become more

obvious what they wanna write about a lot of the time. Even if the other person isn't in the class, they can still ask you questions about your ideas and work through things. Yeah.

Interviewer: Have you had any experiences with new media writing, like writing for blogs or websites, using sound or video, or even PowerPoint?

Interviewee: Not a ton. I did do a little bit of blog writing for my [Writing course] and [Writing 300 level course], which is to become a tutor. I felt like in those I didn't consider much my structure or making it super formal.

It was just more my opinion, I felt like, so I just wrote and then—I would just start with a small idea and then keep writing and see what happens, more so, which was kind of fun. I didn't feel like it was super stressful or anything. I just wrote what I thought without much filter—a little bit of filter but not a ton scrutiny. I've done PowerPoints. I don't know if I've done a ton of writing [fading voice 36:06], I guess. [Chuckles]

Interviewer: For the blogs, what was the purpose of writing a blog for your [Writing courses]?

Interviewee: It was more just for the other tutors in the class to read, I think, and the teacher, too. I think it was more just to throw around ideas. I guess that's why I felt like it could be more informal cuz it was just to my classmates and just saying what I thought.

Interviewer: Was it something you enjoyed?

Interviewee: Yeah. I guess I didn't stress much about it cuz it was just—I dunno—like if I were to propose something in class, even, so I didn't feel like it to be super brilliant. Maybe it would be, but—I dunno—I just kinda wrote.

Interviewer: Have these experiences using new media writing affected you as a writer?

Interviewee: [Pause] It makes you see writing as enjoyable—not that my other experiences don't, but I like having more freedom where I can just say what I want and not being as worried about it—I dunno—which sometimes I can do in my more formal writings, although those are more restricted. [Laughter]

[Pause 37:57 - 38:04]

Interviewer: You've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive in CTools [learning management system].

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: How has that process been for you?

Interviewee: [Pause] I can't remember exactly which pieces I put now. It's kind of interesting looking back at my old ones, though. It's weird cuz at the same time, I'm, like, "Oh, I don't remember writing this."

Having to pick through them was strange. I dunno. It's hard to see which one represents me best as a writer cuz I don't know if just a few pieces can do that, necessarily. It's was fun going back through my old stuff, I guess.

Interviewer: What did you end up choosing?

Interviewee: I think I had to do one for the freshmen year, so it was one of my—I think it might've been my final one on something for group 39:23. I can't remember what book it was about, but I think it was a close reading of a passage in one of those. I don't remember a ton about it other than that, though.

Interviewer: Can you remember why you chose that piece?

Interviewee: Mainly because I thought—I think there were only two big papers and two journals in that class, and I think the second one I felt like I had improved from the first one, so I just put that one, I guess. [Chuckles] I should've looked back on it before I came cuz I don't remember a ton of that. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay. Do you remember any other pieces that you chose?

Interviewee: [Pause] I don't actually remember which one it was. I'm sure it was for another English class, though. I don't know which one. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Let's see. Is there any other writing that you do in class, out of class, that we haven't talked about?

[Pause 40:47 - 40:54]

Interviewee: I don't think so. No. [Chuckles]

Interviewer: Anything else that you want to say about your experiences as a writer or yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: [Pause] I dunno. Just that I like—I do enjoy it. Sometimes I forget how much I enjoy it until I really get into it. I think I just hope that I can find another way to write some when I'm done with college. I think I definitely learned that it's important to me through my classes and stuff. I think I had a pretty good experience here.

Interviewer: Do you envision yourself writing in veterinary school or in your future career?

Interviewee: As a vet and stuff, you can make newsletter and stuff for your clinic, so I guess there's a little bit of writing there that I think I'd like, but I don't think I'd be doing much—I don't plan on doing much of the research side of it, so I wouldn't be publishing papers, necessarily, but more just on a smaller scale to clients and stuff. That could be fun, too. *[Chuckles]*

Interviewer: Thank you so much for spending time with me to talk about your writing.

Interviewee: Yeah. Of course.

Interviewer: I hope you have a good holiday weekend.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interviewer: Best of luck in applying to school.

Interviewee: Thanks.

[Chuckles]

Interviewer: I was good meeting you.

Interviewee: Yeah. You, too. I hope my answers—

[End of Audio]