

THE BROADSHEET



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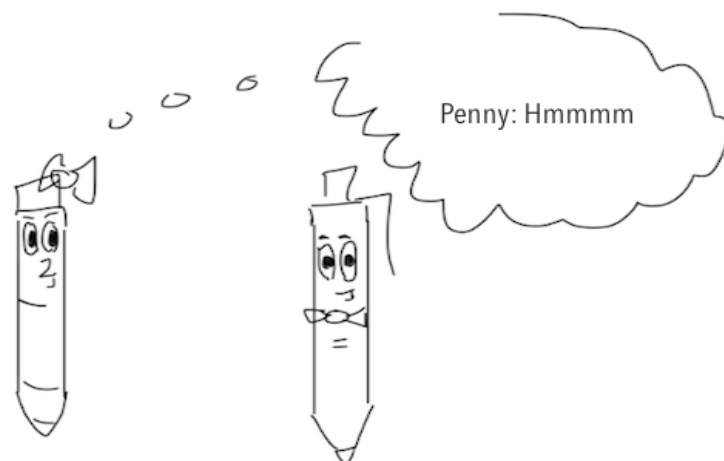
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BookTube: A New Brand of Literature Lovers

By: Rosemary Morton

YouTube, like other social media platforms, has grown and changed over time. As in ordinary communal life, niches form. Most of us have seen “vloggers,” or the day-to-day life video postings, reviewers, who are usually very funny, comedians who poke fun at social indiscretions, and local news or media outlooks. Additionally, popular talk shows such as *Ellen* and *Jimmy Fallon* develop their own YouTube accounts. Lately, a growing population of people known as “BookTubers” has begun to emerge. These individuals vlog specifically about literature.



Pendleton: Hey Penny... What can you actually do with a Degree in English anyway?...

An official publication of the Merrimack College English Department, The Broadsheet is published four times during the academic calendar year. Its mission is to celebrate the English Department's role in promoting the literary arts on campus, to acknowledge the accomplishments of faculty and students, to profile students and alumni, and to create a forum in which issues relevant to English studies can be discussed.

At first glance, it might look as though most BookTubers prepare the same kinds of videos. Many BookTube channels post videos including hauls, wrap-ups and TBR piles. Hauls are the amount of books that a person has collected during the month. Wrap-ups represent the number of books read during the month, usually accompanied by brief re-reviews. TBR (that is, To-Be-Read) piles consist of the number of books an individual wants to read next. Wrap-ups and TBR videos generally are posted during the same day. For instance, a BookTuber can post a video about what he or she read in November and have a follow-up video on what that individual wants to read in December. Most videos emerge monthly; however, some BookTubers do not follow this formula. Trends on this platform also include “book-tags” (lists of questions about book-related topics) and “readathons,” focusing on the number of books an individual can read at one time. Customarily, these events last an entire week. Because they do not occur often and some types of videos remain monthly, the rest of the time is dedicated to whatever the particular BookTuber wants to talk about. This attribute makes the BookTube community unique. Here are some examples of what I have come across:

PeruseProject

172,945 subscribers • 13,316,529 views • Joined Aug 21, 2013

PeruseProject refers to a BookTuber named Regan from Texas. Her videos are what I call traditional BookTube, because she rarely deviates from convention. However, she makes an impact on people through her book recommendations. Some of the books that I have read were recommended by Regan. Examples include *Night Film* by Marisha Pessl and the *Throne of Glass* series by Sarah J. Maas. *Night Film*, a mystery novel, is the story of a man trying to uncover answers following the suicide of a famed cult director. It is an extremely suspenseful and scary read, with news and magazine clippings integrated into the narrative. The *Throne of Glass* series is a young adult fantasy series about a young assassin named Celaena Sardothien, who is forced into a competition that involves executing other assassins. I found the series fun and highly entertaining. In fact, Regan has influenced me while I’ve been working for *The Broadsheet*. She was the first person I knew to review *The Miniaturist* by Jessie Burton, which made me want to read and review the novel. She and I have similar tastes in books, which also makes her fun to watch. Regan reads mainly historical fiction and fantasy, so her platform is perfect for those who adore these genres. She also appears to be obsessed with Russian history and much of the historical fiction she recommends has something to do with that nation. (Russia has also become the setting for a number of fantasy novels.) I also want to mention that her videos feature a cute pug that is always squeaking toys in the background, which I find amusing. However, despite her traditional literary inclinations, she is able to introduce new videos to her channel. Some examples include clothing hauls and a subscription service known as “Globe-In.” This service provides less-fortunate people from around the world (women especially) with an opportunity to make a profit from things they have made, such as jewelry and knitted baskets. However, most of the time Regan devotes herself to her passion for reading. Her current project involves evaluating book subscription services for her followers.

Ariel Bissett

96,938 subscribers • 5,718,219 views • Joined: Aug 24, 2012

Ariel Bissett is a Canadian BookTuber who recently moved to London to do an internship for a publishing house. Though her videos include information about her personal life, Ariel also brings a unique twist to BookTube by providing discussions on book-related issues, including such topics as readership qualities and such issues as “Are Video Games Literature?” One video titled “I’ve grown out of YA fiction” is interesting because Ariel, as so many BookTubers, used to focus on young adult literature. She explains why she outgrew the genre, though she never goes so far as to dismiss it entirely. Another video entitled “Am I a Proper Reader?” zeroes in on the BookTube community’s excessive need to read as many books as possible. Some BookTubers clam to read as many as five books a week and, like many BookTubers, Ariel finds herself greatly stressed by trying to follow this practice. However, this discussion opens up a relevant issue for Ariel: reading speed. She critiques this compulsion by questioning whether or not she is less of a reader because she only reads one book per month. Ariel is special to the BookTube community, because she supplies book-related discussions while also talking about books with a dash of vlogging. On top of this, she has started one of the biggest and most popular readathons called the Booktubathon, which involves a week of continuous reading with other individuals in the BookTube community. I highly recommend her videos.

Booksandquills

156,585 subscribers • 10,965,344 views • Joined Nov 21, 2008

Booksandquills refers to a BookTuber named Sanne, who originates from the Netherlands. Sanne is a non-native English speaker. In fact, Sanne was learning English while she was operating her BookTube channel. She is the oldest person in this group and the first BookTuber I encountered on YouTube. Today, Sanne is fluent in English and works for Penguin Random House in London as a Social Media Producer. Her job is important to mention because it often becomes the topic of discussion on her channel. In fact, my interest in publishing grew from watching her videos. For example, in one video she uses “publishing speak” to describe why she likes different covers by describing the processes by which they are created and to evaluate special features such as “raised fronts.” In fact, she produced an interview with one of her colleagues, focusing on how he became a cover artist for Penguin. Currently, Sanne is taking her career in another fun direction by experimenting with the art of translation, rendering English novels in her native Dutch. Her videos are among my favorites to watch, because she now engages other media, broadening her videos by discussing current popular music, movies, and T.V. Because of BookTube, Sanne was given the opportunity to interview cast members from the film *The Maze Runner*, based on a young adult fiction series. She described it as “one of the most nerve-wracking experiences” of her life. She also offers a considerable number of travel videos, including a recent trip she took to Norway and a visit to the *Jane Eyre* ballet. A longer history on this platform has enabled Sanne to cultivate her skill at producing videos. Her travel videos are especially delightful. I find them to be fluidly organized and easy to follow. Perhaps, surprisingly, she was one of the individuals who inspired me to become an English major. Let’s just say I found her videos in the nick of time. Her love for what she does, accompanied by her vibrant personality, makes her a must-watch on my list.

Jessethereader

179,187 subscribers • 12,454,565 views • Joined: Feb 20, 2012

Another popular book-tuber, Jessethereader, or Jesse, not only produces videos. He also participates in many events, such as conventions and author interviews. At book conventions he has sat on panels to discuss the BookTube community, and because of his popularity, Jesse has contributed to a new novel coming out next year that has been co-authored by BookTubers. I find Jesse an addictive person to watch because he is full of vivacity. Excitable, he provides extremely funny material that makes book lovers laugh at themselves. For example, the video “Reading in Public” contains two jokes that make me laugh. The first joke occurs when he explains why Waldo’s life is extremely sad. Jesse says, “He has to live in a book and wait to be found. He is surrounded by people and has to wear the same outfit every day. #saveWaldo.” Another joke appears in his main video when he discusses the stereotypical readers viewers see in public. The one that always makes me laugh involves readers who read out loud. Jesse sets up this joke by reading something from an essay written by J.K. Rowling. He ends this sketch by saying, “Did everyone on this bus hear that? J.K. Rowling, the queen, has spoken. Let’s praise. Hallelujah. Amen.” When I am having a bad day, I often watch his videos because I find his humor delightful. He also offers an interesting array of books in his collection. He focuses on comics and children’s books, as well as conventional adult literature. Some of his videos have included other BookTubers, demonstrating how large and closely-knit this community is. One of his most noteworthy and more emotional videos reviewed *Oh, the Places You’ll Go* by Dr. Seuss. This is not an average review because Jesse does not merely evaluate it in conventional style; he delivers a nice interpretation. He confesses not to know where life is headed for him, but that’s okay. We will all have good and bad days. Jesse encapsulates the substance of his channel in his final message: Just Live.

Little Book Owl

164,498 subscribers • 10,230,176 views • Joined Jun 27, 2011

Little Book Owl, or Catriona (Caz), hails from Australia. She is a college student and her status enhances her credibility with young adults watching her channel. Though she does read Young Adult fiction, Catriona's reading preferences include middle-school and adult fiction. She is also another BookTuber who will be collaborating with Jessethereader on the new work scheduled for release next year I mentioned earlier in this survey. One of the most interesting qualities is that she often incorporates what she is reading as part of her course work into her discussions. Many BookTubers, I find, try to create separate piles. Pile one: books for pleasure; pile two: books for courses. Catriona resists such distinctions. Some viewers might find the timing of some of her videos disorienting, because she posts her material from the southern hemisphere. For example, it might be the middle of the summer in the U.S., and you find her discussing course texts or talking about the demands of her academic program keeping her away from video-making.

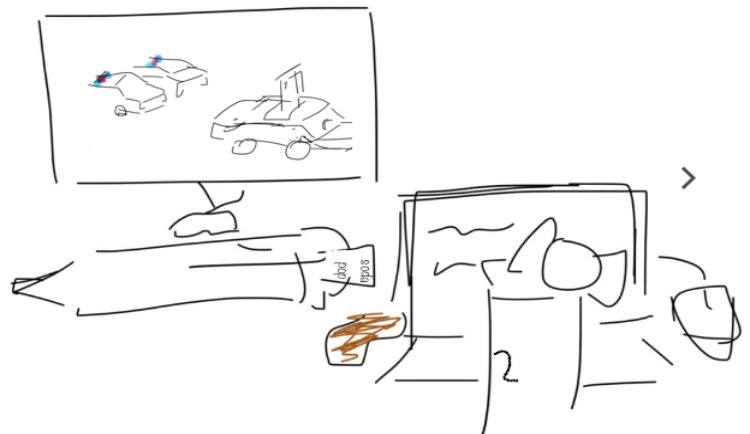
.....

Pendleton: I just don't get it. I swear all the coding is correct! Why can't I win?



Penny: Hmm, I see; I think I know the problem.
The narrative organization is flawed.

Pendleton: What do you know about programming? I thought you studied English in college.



Penny: I did; that's how I became the CEO of PennySharp Games.
Maybe you should have paid more attention to narrative patterns in your coursework, Pendleton!

It is interesting to watch someone from another part of the globe, because I feel that we forget sometimes that some countries have different academic schedules and different seasons. One of Catriona's most interesting videos involved a class trip to a printing house. In addition to this video, Catriona's channel offers an array of different options, including author Q-and-As, a catalog of materials you get in a book subscription box, a list of new Australian novels, and an introduction to writers' events, such as the Sydney Writers' Festival.

THE BOOKTUBERS I'VE HIGHLIGHTED here represent just a small sampling of a growing community. In fact, many countries are adapting to this style of book blogging, especially nations in which English is not the official language. Something else I want to mention concerns the incipience of group-BookTubers, consisting of romantic couples or combinations of friends, for example, who sponsor a channel together. One such group consists of two friends who decided to go to different colleges. BookTube provides them with a way communicate with one another during the school year. I personally find this style of blogging interesting, and more authors are taking part in this practice, among them author John Green. BookTube is a great way to open yourself to a new reading marketplace while also making connections with booklovers from around the globe.

Dr. Vogel's New Course: The 80s: Literature, Film, and Culture in the Blockbuster Era

Interview Conducted by Rachel MacKelcan

How will you make popular culture media and literature from the 80s relevant to your students (considering many of them were born a decade later)?

From what I've experienced with students, it's already a decade they are very interested in. This may be due in part to the fact that its influence is ubiquitous in contemporary culture, from music, to movies and TV series, to fashion. One example of this is the *Stranger Things* series on Netflix, which is not only set in the 80s, but draws on a range of 80s texts and movies, including Stephen King, Steven Spielberg's *E.T.*, and *Goonies*.

How have the iconic works from that decade influenced you?

Well, a great deal. I was born in 1981, so I was young in the 80s, but it all had a huge influence on me, especially the music. It was really a golden era for music with artists like Michael Jackson, Madonna, Prince, Springsteen, U2, the Police. It was the birth of synth pop, new wave, and hip hop. And, of course, the movies were incredible. Not only the blockbusters, but the more challenging stuff too, like *Blade Runner*, *Stand By Me*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, and *Do the Right Thing*.

Why take time to analyze works and media that a lot of individuals consider to be designed to be entertainment?

I've never put much stock in the sharp division between art and entertainment. Entertainment is not always compelling art, but it certainly can be, whether it comes in the form of a novel, a movie, or a TV show. The 80s has a reputation for being superficial — for being all about spectacle — and to be fair, that is partly true. But I think there is more to the story. The stuff we'll be looking at rewards closer analysis.

What decade from before you were born intrigues you and what would encourage you to study it if you had the opportunity?

I'm fascinated with the 1920s and the 1950s. I've done a great deal of research into both of these decades. In fact, at some point I may do a class similar to this one on the 1950s. There were so many interesting, transformative things happening in that decade, and so many great texts, from *Catcher in the Rye*, to *Invisible Man*, to the Beats, to Brando and James Dean and *Rebel Without a Cause*, to the birth of rock n roll and suburbia and the civil rights movement.

For this course specifically, what medium excited you most (visual arts, film, literature, etc.)?

Probably film. Although I'm also excited to introduce students to some great novels they may not have read or heard of.

What works didn't make the cut for your course?

There were many important books that came out in the 1980s — for example, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* — that I didn't include, because I wanted books that spoke to the period in which they were written. Others were set in the 1980s, but there simply wasn't enough room, like *Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Neuromancer*, and *Bright Lights, Big City*.



Penny: In the 80s I used to be a real cool cat. Now, with my degree in English, I run my own business and still visit the disco, where I was inspired to moon-walk... down to the patent office.

Assistant Professor Emma Duffy-Comparone: Introduction to Creative Writing

Interview Conducted by Rachel MacKelcan

When did you begin writing fiction and why?

I get really jacked up about nature. There are things that bring me to actual tears. That first crocus punching through old snow. Cherry blossoms. Lilac Hill at the Arboretum, peonies bowing after rain, a bee in a poppy. Sunflowers and peaches at a roadside stand. Chestnuts hatched fresh from their burrs. The sound of a snowfall when I'm shoveling at night. The ocean every day of my life. We are so immensely lucky to walk around on this planet. When I was in college, I wanted to do everything I could do to protect it, because a lot of people are interested in, well, not protecting it. Clean coal? Ha. Ha. Picking up litter wasn't cutting it. So I declared Environmental Conservation as my major. I was going to become a lawyer. But I was a wreck in the science courses. While my lab partners crouched in the woods dutifully measuring fledgling maple trees, I was off taking pictures of bluebells. I didn't know the shape of a white oak leaf from my eyebrow. Geology didn't exactly turn me on. I didn't care whether and why certain minerals broke in little clumps or flaked like filo-dough, or had streaks or flecks or chicken pox. I didn't want to measure them. I just thought they were cool looking. My lab reports came back with marginal comments like, "this is lovely, but has nothing to do with your findings" or, more to the point, "do you have any findings?" or "writing poetry, are we?" Maybe I was. So I switched into English, where I could read and write all the poetry I wanted. But that semester, because the poetry class was full, and because, like most of us, I loved books, and wouldn't have minded waking up one day A Famous Bestselling Author, I took a fiction writing class instead, found myself with a staggering crush on a guy I met there, and wrote my ass off so he'd notice me. The two stories I wrote for that class I later published in *The Sun*, and I just kept going. Which is all to say that I stumbled upon fiction writing, more or less. But what made me stumble in that direction was, it seems, a kind of relentless sensory delight in the world around me.

What is the value of having students practice writing in all genres?

All good creative writing, whatever the genre, encourages—requires—the same attention to detail, the same engagement with the world. But each genre gives us variations on those tools. They give us different ways to express what it is we need to say. Poetry allows us the kind of economy, the imagery, the swift gut-punch a short story often can't. The essay gives us the freedom to tell the truth or some blend of it, or a platform from which to make our case. Short stories are their own wonderful and maddening business, a whole fictional world carved out of twenty pages. I think a class like *Introduction to Creative Writing* can be helpful because it not only gives students a chance to experiment and figure out what they like, but also because anything learned or practiced in one genre is pure gold for another. A paragraph of a short story is often a poem in its own right; poems can say more than whole novels; memoirs can be stranger than fiction, and fiction more honest than memoir. Each feeds and informs the other. The point is just to get ink on the page.

As a fiction writer, what is your position on the growing trend in education to remove narrative fiction from the school curriculum?

Teaching writing is ultimately about teaching creativity, which is hard to do. What you can do, though, as Julia Cameron says in "The Artist's Way," is teach people to let themselves be creative. We all have the latent ability, in other words. It's just that sometimes, it seems as if the very act of growing up means we must divorce ourselves from the parts of us that used to have a bit more fun. So I would be disappointed and alarmed to hear that there's a trend to excise any kind of creative writing from school curricula, narrative-based or not, especially middle school and high school, because I think we should be getting more acquainted with our creative selves, not less. I think writing classes aren't just important for craft's sake—I'd go so far as to say a lesson in good writing becomes a lesson in good living. In learning to better capture the human experience, we first have to better see and feel that experience. We first have to observe, put down our cell phones, and tune in. Plus, writing, whether narrative or not, fictional or not, is a powerful tool for catharsis, and writing classes can be a safe and privileged space in which tell our stories. Art is so damn important, whatever the genre. It gives us an outlet, a voice, a saving grace. So yes, I hate to hear (although I'm not surprised) that we're moving away from these kinds of classes.

What piece of your published fiction are you most passionate about? What about stories you have yet to publish?

Honestly, the minute a story of mine comes out in print and arrives in my mailbox, I can't even look at it. I just throw all the copies in this clear plastic case with a zipper (I think sheets or curtains once came in it) that I keep in the back of my closet with the winter hats and mittens. So I can't say that I'm particularly passionate about any of them now, although while writing them, I was. I think you kind of have to be--if you aren't passionate about it, why would anyone else be? And more to the point, why are you writing it in the first place? But I guess I have sentimental favorites. There's this story, "Plagiarism", that I wrote in college (I revised it and published it later on) that I'm fond of, even though I know it has all sorts of problems. But I had fun writing it.

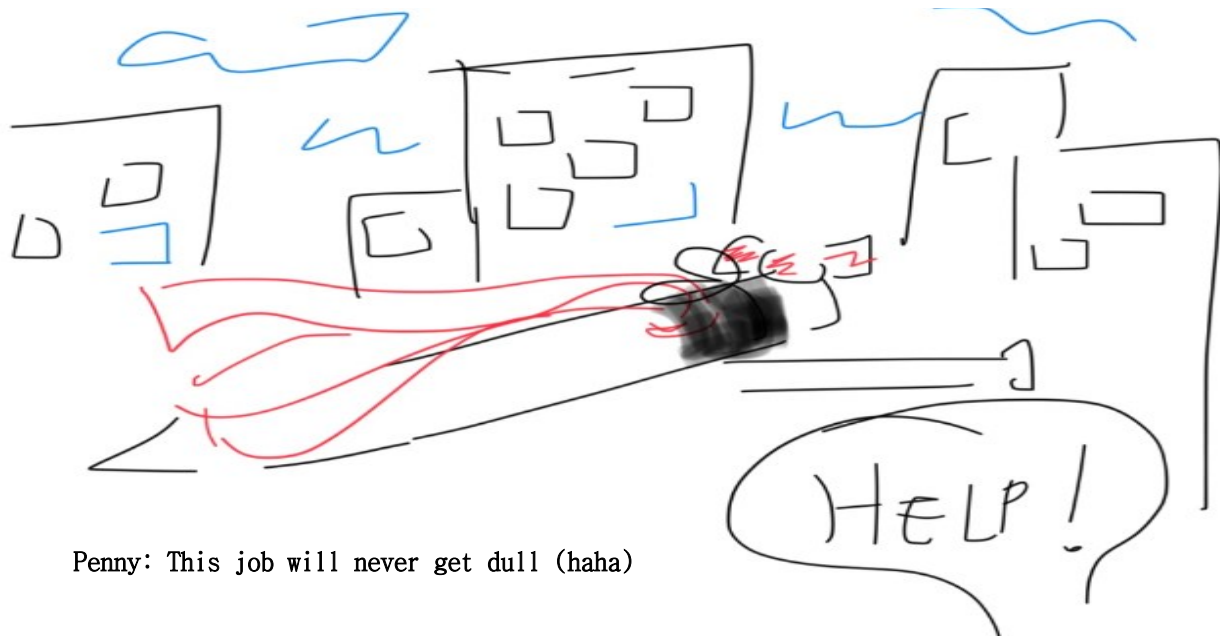
You have received numerous awards and honors for your writing. Which one are you most proud of?

The Pushcart Prizes, I think. It's pretty humbling to see my work anthologized among the work of writers I teach in class.

How will your role at Merrimack cultivate the creative writing community here and promote a love for narrative?

I hope by having the opportunity to take more fiction and other creative writing classes (I'm open to suggestions and requests, as I begin to add to the offerings), students will have a chance to spend more time writing and experimenting with different genres, and to let their fiction writing inform and inspire their work with other forms (like poetry and creative non-fiction.) We're all lucky to have The Writers House with Andrea and Danielle at the helm, so this school has all the foundational support any writer could want (and, frankly, more than most students have). So my goal is to expose students to as much great literature as possible, to help them think and read like writers, and to allow a safe space in which all students have permission to play, learn, take risks, lie, tell the truth, and most importantly, to tell their stories. Writing is fun. As far as promoting a love for narrative? That would be a lovely outcome, but it doesn't have to be the only one. George Saunders once said that fiction writing is "love for life taking verbal form." Whether students end up pursuing advanced study in writing, become published writers, or never write another word again, my hope is that they might take that love, whether in written form or not—because there is a hell of a lot to love—wherever they go.

SUPER PENNY VS. HER ARCH NEMESIS...THE SUPER SHARPENER



Penny: This job will never get dull (haha)

A Day in the Mind of an English Major

By Dakota Durbin

OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS I HAVE INTERVIEWED a small number of Merrimack College English majors in an attempt to highlight their personalities, perspectives, and passions. Each of these students possesses an important quality I have found typical in so many English majors, and that quality is their individualism. While all of us share a passion for literature and literary studies, our interests often differ greatly. Those differences become the breeding stock for new ideas, creating a dynamic culture within our program. The following interviews provide a glimpse of that individualism.

Brianna Wickard: Sophomore

What is it like to participate in an English course discussion? In what ways does it compare to discussions conducted in other classes?

It is a lot more involved to participate in an English course discussion. Maybe it's because I've found that the majority of my English courses have had fellow English majors like myself present.... People are more eager to respond, because they're involved with what is being discussed. This is in opposition to many of my other classes that, even when discussion is the main part of class participation, are attended by a majority of students who are only taking the class to fulfill a general education requirement, and therefore aren't as invested. However, and this may be because I'm partially biased, I just find that the discussion in the English classroom is much more intriguing because of the depth of its source and how passionate other students are about their interpretations and building that knowledge base with other people's opinions.

How do the skills you are acquiring in your English major impact your performance in other courses and in your personal life?

I'm such a nerd; it's a lot of Shakespeare jokes (and if you really know me, they're mostly *Hamlet*-centered). I find that being an English major gives me an edge in other classes that are heavily based in discussion and/or writing, as I have a strong foundation in that. The fact that a great part of my studies work to improve these skills and also challenge me to interpret and bring together various aspects of any piece to draw conclusions [about] also helps me in other classes. I find it funny that English majors are seen in a humorous light, as a major apart from other majors.... [If] you have our sort of background you're well-equipped to tackle the college classroom in the sense that a key challenge of said classroom is to learn to communicate within a given field, and to build complex ideas from a variety of inputs.

Have your studies as an English major influenced the way you read/view/interpret books, movies, TV shows, or any other type of hobby or activity that you enjoy? In what way? Do you still enjoy these activities?

I still enjoy reading, watching plays and films, all that jazz. But I wish I had the time to read novels outside of class! I hesitate to say "to read for fun," because as I've already written, I'm a huge nerd. If I'm reading *Hamlet* for the tenth time, then I'm reading *Hamlet* for the tenth time. I still love it. But I do miss not having a deadline to finish what I'm reading. Interestingly enough, I also find that I have a difficult time writing for fun now. I'm too focused on essays, so I haven't quite found my way back to personal writing. Being an English major has only enhanced the way I read books. I'm drawing conclusions and asking questions that make the experience a lot more meaningful for me.

Is there anything that your English studies have introduced to you (a book, author, theory etc.) that you were surprised to find you really liked or enjoyed? Is there any challenging material to which you were introduced that you might not have liked but later found it beneficial to learn about anyway?

I actually really enjoy Renaissance Drama! I was excited to study Shakespeare, but I'm really fascinated [by] the history behind the plays we're reading. The larger context behind each piece is a very interesting way to approach [a work], and I've found that lens very exciting. It helps remind me why I've chosen this course of study.

Frankie Weeks: Sophomore

What is it like to participate in an English course discussion? In what ways does it compare to discussions conducted in other classes?

English class discussions, I have found, make me think more deeply. I feel like English majors tend to analyze more and have the ability to find deeper meanings in things. Other class discussions seem more fact-based, while English class discussions push the limits a bit, and force people to dig a little deeper.

How do the skills you are acquiring in your English major impact your performance in other courses and in your personal life?

I think the experiences in my English courses have helped me become more in-tune with myself. They've taught me to have more of a voice and be more confident in that voice, because the classes tend to be much more dialogue-based than others.

Have your studies as an English major influenced the way you read/view/interpret books, movies, TV shows, or any other type of hobby or activity that you enjoy? In what way? Do you still enjoy these activities?

I wouldn't really say that my English courses have [influenced] the way I interpret things in my everyday life. I still tend to take things very literally, and at first glance see purely what's on the surface. The only thing I would say is that the discussions I've been involved in have taught me to be a bit more understanding or open-minded toward other people's opinions on things.

Is there anything that your English studies have introduced to you (a book, author, theory etc.) that you were surprised to find you really liked or enjoyed? Is there any challenging material to which you were introduced that you might not have liked but later found it beneficial to learn about anyway?

I never liked poetry before the English courses at Merrimack. Actually, I despised it. I didn't understand why everything required so much analyzing. Coming from my second major, which is Biology, I was used to things being very straightforward and factual. After working with poetry, though, and after learning how to dig deeper to find meanings to things, I came to really enjoy it. It was challenging; it stretched my mind, and forced me to think outside the box a bit more than I was used to.

Catherine Tenore-Nortrup: Senior

What is it like to participate in an English course discussion? In what ways does it compare to discussions conducted in other classes?

Discussions in English courses are different from discussions in other classes in that they are more open, both in the way that students interact with the professor and the way they interact with one another. Other courses are more rigid; the professor gives you the information you need; you take notes, maybe ask some questions, and then you take a test a few weeks later. In English courses there's room for discussion, time to talk over how a certain piece of literature has been analyzed, or argue over interpretation.

How do the skills you are acquiring in your English major impact your performance in other courses and in your personal life?

The skills that you learn as an English major are definitely useful in just about any course you take, especially the way you are taught to write and analyze information. I can't tell you how many classes I've been in where people get stuck because they've never been taught to analyze articles, both literary and scientific. My second major is Psychology and I can't tell you how much easier it is to [evaluate] research because of what I've learned in the English classes that I've taken.

Have your studies as an English major influenced the way you read/view/interpret books, movies, TV shows, or any other type of hobby or activity that you enjoy? In what way? Do you still enjoy these activities?

The way that I read books and watch movies has definitely been affected, but probably movies have been affected the most. I still enjoy them like I used to, but now they seem much more complex than I would have given them credit for before. Instead of just the basics, now I pay attention to the setting, the shot angles, what the focus of the scene is on, the list is endless. I'm also fortunate enough to have a brother that's really into film, so I get to discuss a lot of different perspectives and interpretations with him at home.

Is there anything that your English studies have introduced to you (a book, author, theory etc.) that you were surprised to find you really liked or enjoyed? Is there any challenging material to which you were introduced that you might not have liked but later found it beneficial to learn about anyway?

Honestly, I remember coming here freshman year and everything surprised me. I was so used to classes being a chore, or only focusing on one side of the narrative, that when I got into college English classes I was surprised to find that I not only liked most of the poems and books that we read, but also that we could discuss different interpretations. I remember being surprised when I learned more about Robert Frost's poetry, as well as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, because while I had read them in high school I had never been introduced to their different meanings and complexities. I remember taking my first poetry class and thinking that poetry and I had never gotten along (and never would), but although I found it challenging to understand at first it has become one of my favorite things to read and analyze.

IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR TO INTERVIEW my peers about their experiences as English majors at Merrimack. Each student provided wonderful insight into what being an English major means to him or her and how coursework has shaped their academic and personal lives. Interviewing them has inspired me to share some of my responses to these questions. Deciding to become an English major has been the best decision I have made in college and it is a decision that has helped me grow and define myself as a person.

What is it like to participate in an English course discussion? In what ways does it compare to discussions conducted in other classes?

An English course discussion is a class discussion like no other. The reason I became an English major, the reason that I even had the idea, was because of how interactive, thought-provoking, and stimulating the conversations were that I was having in my courses. The beauty of it comes from the fact that we are not trying to prove something right or wrong but from the fact that we are exploring. English majors embrace the challenge of delving deeper into works of literature, movies, music, and pop-culture and try to pull out any sort of relevant or important ideas, beliefs, and ideals that contribute to enlarging our views and perspectives on society and life. I never want my English course discussions to end, because I feel as though everything that everyone says contributes to my learning experience—not just in the course but in my studies and life in general.

How do the skills you are acquiring in your English major impact your performance in other courses and in your personal life?

The skills I have acquired have been invaluable to my success and performance in other courses. I have grown stronger as a writer, a reader, an analyst, and most importantly, as a questioner. I have learned to question and to continue expanding upon ideas and areas of my mind that I was not even aware of. This carries over to my personal life as well, because I have found new enjoyment in my hobbies, interests, and aspirations. For example, I am a huge fan of the musical artist Marilyn Manson and greatly interested in a particular trilogy of his earlier albums called his "Triptych" by his fan base. Before I was an English major I never would have thought to scrutinize the lyrical content of the albums to discover a complex narrative packed with symbolism and theatrics, exploring themes of isolation, alienation, drug-abuse, disillusionment and finding social satire. I have since been considering working on a paper exploring these features of Manson's work, particularly their relevance to the narrative (*continued next page*)

and auto-biographical elements in his lyrical and musical compositions. What I have been learning in my studies has carried over into my personal interests and allowed me to shine new light on ideas which I never could have seen without the inspiration from the work I do here.

Have your studies as an English major influenced the way you read/view/interpret books, movies, TV shows, or any other type of hobby or activity that you enjoy? In what way? Do you still enjoy these activities?

Most certainly, my English training has completely changed the way I view and interpret my hobbies and no, my major does not ruin these activities; in fact it makes me love them even more. I adore books, movies, T.V. shows, music, and videogames. What were originally just simple-minded hobbies of mine have evolved into areas of great interest that I now consider to be potential avenues for study. These media seemed to become more complex once I began to develop as an English major. The program has helped turn these seemingly innocent or purely entertainment-based activities into works deserving deeper thinking and analysis. In every way, my enjoyment of these hobbies and activities has increased because of what I am now able to do with them. For example, when I watch favorite movies, like Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* and Kevin Smith's *Clerks*, I feel as though I can enjoy them in a more intellectual way, exploring what makes these films not just entertaining but relevant and valuable.

Is there anything that your English studies have introduced to you (a book, author, theory etc.) that you were surprised to find you really liked or enjoyed? Is there any challenging material you were introduced to which you may not have liked but later found it beneficial to learn about anyway?

Everything that I have been introduced to in our English program has surprised me by how much I enjoy and can connect to the material. If you had talked to me before I had taken the courses that I have, I would never have said that I love Shakespeare. I would never have said that I truly enjoyed *Paradise Lost* by John Milton. I certainly would never have said that I find beauty and comfort in the poetry of Wordsworth and Keats. Every step along the way, my studies have introduced me to new authors, novels, and poems that I had never even known about, let alone have an opinion about. I have found that if you give any piece of literature a chance, then it will have something that you can connect to, learn from, or appreciate. I might not have loved every single thing I have worked on during my time here as an English major, but I can say that everything that I have worked on was relevant, and eye-opening, and worth exploring. The education that I have received and am continuing to receive in the Merrimack English program will no doubt continue to shape my experience for the rest of my life.



AN ENGLISH MAJOR ATTENDS THE ANNUAL O'BRIEN CENTER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RETREAT

By Kileigh Stranahan



We all remember what it was like to be a senior in high school. You're incredibly excited, but extremely anxious about the future and stressed out about that next phase of your life. When you're a college senior, you experience those same feelings...but on steroids.

Instead of just worrying about what college you are going to attend after high school, you find yourself dealing with anxiety involving your entry into the workforce, worrying about how to carry yourself when you get there, and obsessing over how to prepare yourself for that move. Some of us are applying to graduate programs, a prospect that creates its own breed of anxiety. Whether we are filling out applications or hunting for jobs, we must equip ourselves with updated resumes, knowledge regarding how to conduct ourselves during interviews, and detailed, articulate personal statements and cover letters. It can all feel very overwhelming.

Myriad options await English graduates, and it's a privilege to have many opportunities, but it can be tough to identify the best direction in which to point yourself. I found myself facing a moment of indecisiveness at the beginning of this academic year, so I decided to apply to Merrimack's second Professional Development Retreat, which was scheduled to be held on November 3rd.

Thankfully, I got accepted and learned quickly that I was the only English major in the group.

While I found my position *slightly* intimidating, I am so thankful I went on this retreat. Going into it, I wasn't sure if I was going to get much from it. I originally applied because I wanted to explore some different options and learn how professional interviews are conducted and how networking operates. I figured the event would cater to Business majors and wouldn't really offer much to me. However, when I arrived I realized just how beneficial it was going to be, especially because I'm pursuing an English degree.

Prior to the retreat students were instructed to fill out a "Strengths Finder Assessment." After taking the test, I found it interesting that my personal strengths coalesced with my training in the English program. The exam identified "Analysis," "Adaptability," "Harmony," and "Connectedness" as my strong suits. English majors learn how to read closely and discover through analysis the function of linguistic and organizational patterns. However, a huge part of being a close reader involves possessing the ability to adapt and look at a scenario or a complex text of any kind in many different ways.

When we arrived, organizers from the Merrimack O'Brien Center for Student Success placed us in groups and began discussing the ways in which our Strengths might prove to be assets in the workplace. One thing I began to notice was that not many people shared the same qualities that I have. The testing profiles of others placed them in such categories as, "Competition," "Maximizer," and "Focus." I realized then that skills you gain as an English major set you apart from those who receive training in some other fields, especially those outside the liberal arts. I also understood that such a distinction didn't necessarily mean that I am not focused or competitive, only that I excel in other areas.

After this session, students joined a networking lunch, during which Merrimack alumni representing a variety of fields were placed at different tables for 10 minutes or so to meet with students. During this hour we would talk about our majors, share aspirations for life after graduation, and they would offer knowledge from experiences they thought we might find helpful. One alumnus sat down at our table and asked me about my major. When I told him I was majoring in English, he said, “Wow, you’re lucky. You can do anything with that.” I can’t tell you how refreshing it was to hear that comment from someone outside of our field. I have heard alumni panelists speaking at the English Career Night and English faculty offer that same perspective, but it’s often hard to believe they are telling you the truth. However, when somebody from outside the English community makes the same observation, confirming that your degree will afford you an abundance of opportunities, it really lifts a weight off your shoulders.

Later on that evening we were invited to attend a networking cocktail hour at which we would get a chance to meet CEOs, CFOs, and owners of different businesses. While I was walking around, the owner of a company stopped me because he saw that my nametag identified me as an English major. He began telling me stories about how he often finds himself yelling at his employees for not being able to write well. He confessed that at certain points it got so bad that he has thrown things at them! He looked at me and told me that I will always have a job because the world desperately needs individuals that know how to write well and speak clearly.

This retreat and the O’Brien Center, in general, really helped me learn how to capitalize on my strengths and even strengthen my weaknesses. Even before the retreat, I attended the O’Brien Center’s walk-in hours to enhance my resume and the staff was more than happy to offer up its time, sit down with me, and work through my entire resume to make it the best document it could be. This retreat provided me with knowledge regarding how to perform an “elevator pitch,” a strategy for presenting yourself during an interview sufficiently and confidently. Basically the “elevator pitch” consists of what you would say to a potential boss or somebody you may work with in the future if you ever found yourself in an elevator with them. It’s the quick narrative you create to explain who you are, what your strengths are, and what you can offer this individual. So each of us stood up in front of everybody at the event and practiced our personal pitch to shake out any nerves or reservations we might have had. That way, when we enter an actual interview, we know exactly what we are going to say and are prepared to deliver it calmly. We learned this, along with the proper meal etiquette for a professional dinner, how to introduce yourself and others at a networking event, what topics of discussion are acceptable to bring up, and how to step politely away from a conversation—all of which I had been unaware. The Professional Development Retreat ultimately teaches undergraduate students the little but extremely necessary skills and provides those bits of knowledge that often fall through the cracks and aren’t directly addressed in the traditional academic curriculum.

At this incredibly beneficial retreat, I attained the ability to translate the skills I use every single day in my English major to skills that not only will help me in my career, but will benefit any company I may work for in the future and will therefore make me stand out in an applicant pool. This event reassured me that my English degree will allow me to pursue a career in any area of work I would like and as English Majors, we are going to do just fine after our time here at Merrimack. So the next time someone asks you, “What are you going to do with an English degree?” you should look at them and answer, “Anything I want.”

An “Elevator Pitch...is the quick narrative you create to explain who you are, what your strengths are, and what you can offer this individual.”

Goodreads Review: Bringing Social Networking into Reading

By Jessica Bruso

I discovered Goodreads by accident when I believed I had thought of the best way to manage and track my reading. One day, I was thinking back on all the books I had read in my life and thought to myself, “What if there was an app that could track all of this for me, like an online library?” I believed that I had stumbled upon the greatest, most creative idea I’d ever conceived. I immediately pulled out my laptop to do research on whether or not this tool had already been invented. It had, and it went by the name of “Goodreads.” I was far from upset that the idea had been taken because I discovered the most useful reading tracker I had ever seen.

Goodreads is an app for book lovers that provides book tracking, book reviews and recommendations, reading challenges, lists of similar books, and a unique form of a social network for users to scan their friends’ reading habits. To begin using the app, you create an account and start entering and rating books that you have read into your “Read” books. It will then recommend books that it believes you have not read or would enjoy. There is also the option to add books as “Currently Reading” or “To-Read.” After going through this process, the app recommends books based on the books you have read and the ratings that you have given them. You can add books by looking them up by name or by author, but my favorite feature is the barcode scanner. Your phone’s camera can scan the barcode of the books you have read or are currently reading and it will automatically read the code and then add them to one of your lists. I find this feature particularly helpful when I buy a new book and add it to my “To-Read” list so I do not forget about it later.

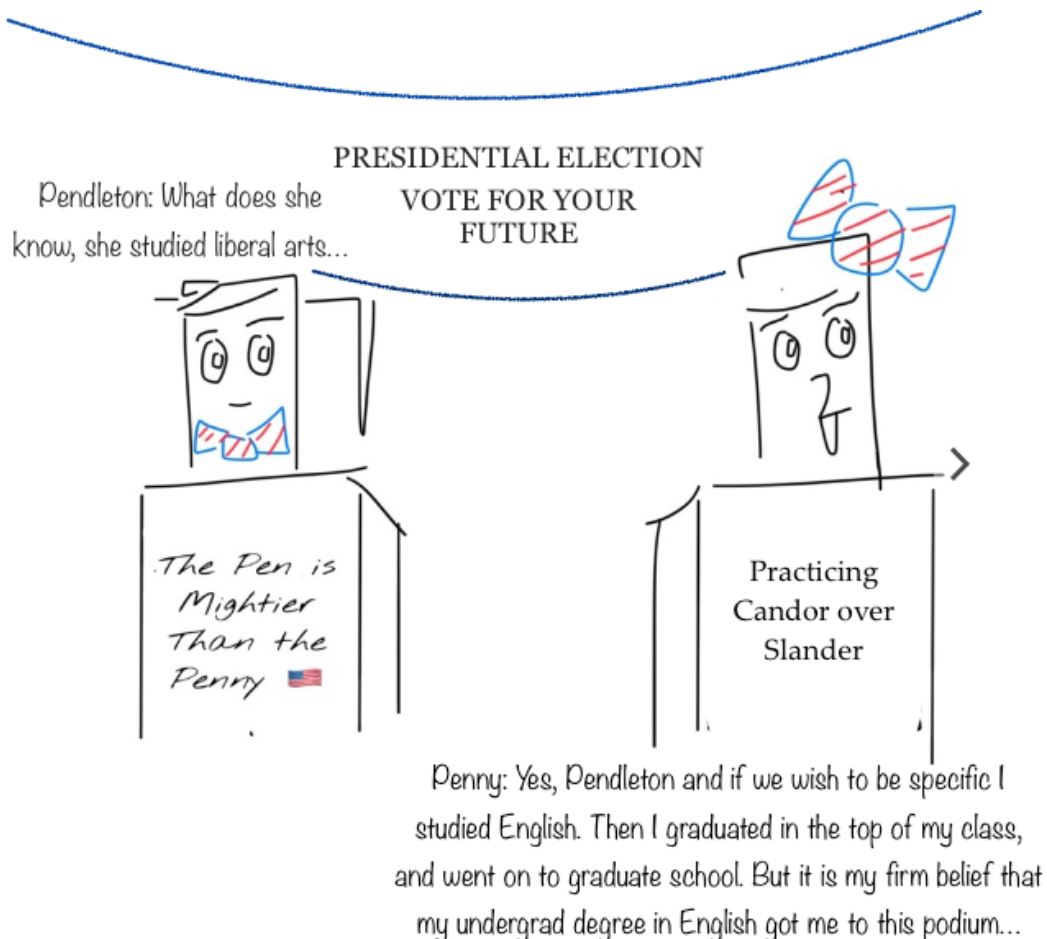


My “To-Read” list is constantly expanding and I can hardly keep up. I placed several books on this list, including *Scrappy Little Nobody* by Anna Kendrick, *Where Am I Now?* by Mara Wilson, *Brooklyn* by Colm Tóibín, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom, and *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee. I have chosen these books based on Goodreads reviews, friend recommendations, and recommendations based on authors I have read (for example Mitch Albom). I often add books when I see that my friends have added them under their lists in Goodreads, so I can discuss the books with them later. Being able to have a pseudo-social network for reading is a book lover’s dream come true.

The Goodreads app also has a “Reading Challenge” feature. At the beginning of each year, users can set a goal specific to the number of books they want to read by the end of the year. I took advantage of this feature last year by establishing my goal at 25 books and ended up completing the challenge. I had been determined throughout the entire year to reach the goal I set, but unfortunately in the last couple weeks I was behind by about three books. I read continuously until December 31st and was able to complete my challenge at the last minute. This year, I added five books for a total of 30, 22 of which I have completed. Hopefully I will not be stuck in the same situation as last year, but I believe that the last few weeks of December 2016 will provide me with more than enough time to spend with my nose in a book. This application has proven to be extremely useful for me, because it keeps track of when I read certain books, how much I am reading for entertainment, and the different kinds of books I have read over the year.

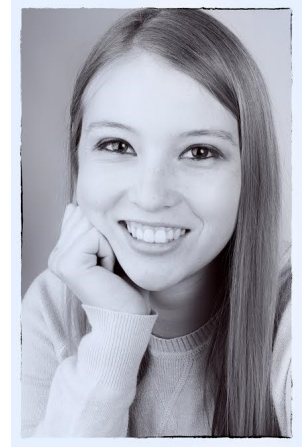
One of the most unique and interesting aspects of this app is the social networking component. You can connect your Goodreads account to your Facebook account and follow your friends to see what books they add to their lists, how they have rated and reviewed books, and how they are doing on their Reading Challenge. I love using this part of the app, because I am able to get book recommendations from friends automatically and see what they are currently reading.

I would highly recommend this app to anyone. Whether you are an avid reader or are just trying to read more, it is a great way to learn about new books and see how much you are reading at a glance.



National Novel Writing Month 2016

By Bridget Kennedy



National Novel Writing Month has become an internet subculture consisting of fiction writers from around the world that celebrate November by accepting the challenge to write 50,000 cohesive words in 30 days. The process of signing up for NaNoWriMo is simple: just go to the website, create an account, and set up your story with an excerpt, summary, and title. The user profile will keep track of as many stories as the author posts. Writers can link their NaNo account with other writers, a feature called Writing Buddies, to increase competition and support. Writing begins November 1. Other features include: individual word-count updates starting that day, a novel-stats-chart breaking down average words submitted per day (also reflected in a graph), the number of words needed to reach the 50,000 total, an estimate of the number of days it will take to reach the goal, and average total reached per day. Watching the chart go up and the day count grow shorter provides motivation to compete against prior performances and match, or perhaps surpass, the goals set up by the site.

Novel planning for some begins about a month in advance. My roommate and I began outlining and brainstorming in late September, so when November arrived we could hit the ground running. Stylistically, all of my friends and I have different methods of planning, which I firmly believe reflects our personalities. One friend researches characters extensively and creates a profile, complete with pictures and gifts, to capture the personalities of her characters. Others just start without a plan and see what happens. Personally, I fall somewhere in the middle of this. I create background for the story itself and scenes, but for the most part I only plan the setting and write the characters as they fit into the background. I set up three separate documents to work with individual sections and a splash page earmarked for ideas I want to remember. I write in puzzle pieces. Some pieces are bigger than others, but the extra file space stores the segments until I am ready to put them together.

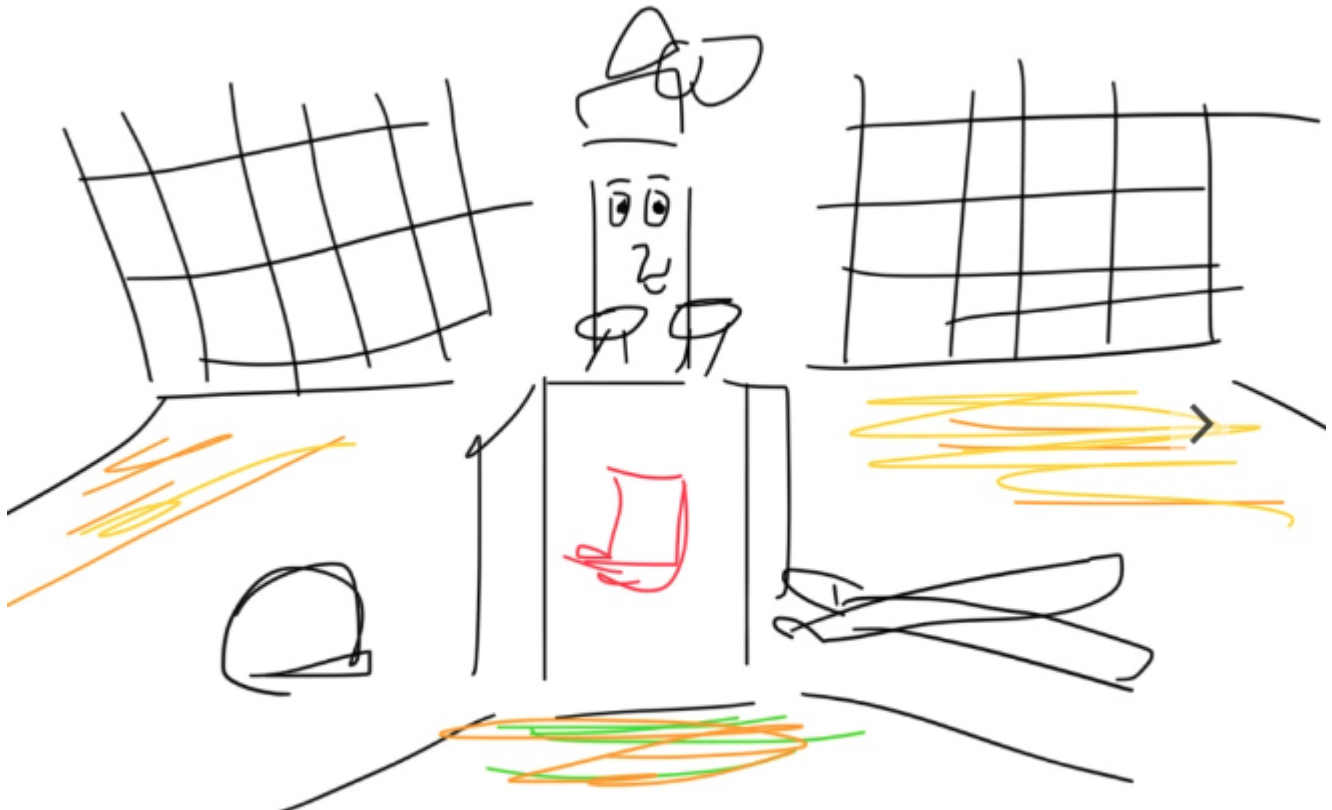
My story this year is based on my experiences as a theme park worker. I have participated in NaNo for three years, the same amount of time I worked at the park, and since I left that job I knew this was the year I wanted to start recording all the crazy things that happened there before I forget them. I hoped to create characters worthy of the diverse and interesting people I met and to have them relive a fictionalized version of that adventure. When I actually started to write, the story ended up becoming an extremely introspective and emotional story about my personal journey—what I learned about the world and my place in it while at the park. This year became more non-fiction than anything else. I have heard from many writers that people write the stories they need to hear, and I guess I needed the reminder that the craziest three years in my working life were also some of the most important. Last NaNo season, I had been desperately scrolling through Pinterest for something to break down the writer's block and I came across a quotation by French novelist Gustave Flaubert that resonates with me when I write, especially for this story: "The art of writing is the art of discovering what you believe." Deep down, writing this year's story as my story reminded me that it didn't have to be a perfect story; it just had to be authentic.

This year I started strong on November 1st, meeting my day one word count goal of just over 1,500. The next few days were encouraging, and I reached almost 3,500 words. Unfortunately, writer's block hit me early this year and mixed with heavy competition to catch up with or complete course assignments. By the middle of the second week, the word count plateaued and the end date stretched into April 2017. I wrote nothing for the novel for a week-and-a-half, which is a dangerous thing to do in the throes of NaNoWriMo, because that temporal week-and-a-half is the equivalent of about 25,000 words. Time is word-count in this challenge, and my word-count was in critical condition.

The block broke around the end of the third week of the challenge, and I actually made it to 5,000 words. As I am writing this article, there are still a few days left and I could make it as high as 8,000 before November 30 if I write every day over Thanksgiving break. I am one hundred percent sure that my word count would be higher if November were not one of the busiest months in school. I have a higher word-count for papers and projects this year alone than all three former challenges of NaNoWriMo combined. Even though I have not yet made it to 50,000 NaNo words and have yet to complete a novel, I will keep participating in NaNoWriMo because I love challenging my writing abilities and myself. NaNo provides me with motivation to write not as an obligation but for the fun I experience in creating something.

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Penny: In college my friends all thought I would be a teacher because of my English degree; boy were they wrong...



(First round pick for Boston)...After college I served the organization as Director of Media Relations. Then scouts saw I could hit, too!

Reflections on English Career Night from The Broadsheet Staff

OPTIONS IN LIBRARY SCIENCES by Bridget Kennedy

Every year I attend English Career Night, and every year it gets closer to the point at which I might find myself returning to



Chris Mosher and Tony Rossetti

Merrimack as an alumna in order to share my work experiences with majors still enrolled in the program. I've noticed that each year more alumni have entered the field of Library Sciences as their post-graduate career path, and I have been getting a better sense of what I want to do when I complete my English degree next year. I liked that Jenn Tierney created a position for herself as a Corporate Librarian at a company in Boston called Crimson Hexagon. I also learned from Brad Wall (who I knew before he graduated) that there are different concentrations one can pursue after entering a graduate program in Library Science--academic, general, and archival. This was probably the most useful thing I have ever learned at a Career Night since the first one I attended freshman year. I still have not decided exactly what kind of librarian I want to be, and honestly I think I would be content anywhere, but this new knowledge prompted me to start thinking more closely about the types of education needed for each branch of the Library Sciences. I am also aware now that I will need to research the opportunities within each branch and determine which option might make me happiest. The information I gained from Career Night this year feels more important than ever before, not just because it is a lot more detailed and more sharply focused, but because it came from a friend who is doing the same thing I want to do. This also came at a great time for me, as a junior, to start concentrating more on graduate school and take relevant career opportunities seriously.

REASSURANCES by Rosemary Morton

Being a senior, this was my third English Career Night. Regarding my career, I have decided (perhaps) to pursue a career in book publishing or journalism. However, as more and more alumni come back to share their work experiences, I find it harder to isolate exactly what I want to do. Luckily for the wary freshman or new student to the English program, the fluid nature of

possible outcomes means one has the option to explore many different career options. As soon as I arrived, I ran into two former classmates: Erin and Victoria. I was happy to see them and glad that they got jobs after college. Previous Career Nights have not featured many younger graduates on the panel. Younger panelists this year made me realize getting a job is not an impossible task. Both of them are in their first jobs and it was interesting to see which careers they got into because of English. As a theater person myself, Erin's comments about her job in box office management and sales sparked my interest. The occupations I am striving for might be difficult to enter; however, the first step through the door to a new job seems less scary because of the way the alums described their experiences. Overall, I enjoyed English Career Night this year—from the panel presentation to the discussion afterwards. Frankly what will happen after college intimidates me; however, I feel that I am ready to face whatever happens next with my English degree at my side.

TEACHING NOT THE ONLY PATH by Kileigh Stranahan

Upon entering the Merrimack Club, where the 2016 English Career Night was to be held, I was greeted by many of my current professors, my classmates, a few familiar faces from previous years, and some total strangers. Our love for the Merrimack English program and for English studies in general brought us together. Each one of us spent our time here at Merrimack developing our writing skills, learning how to read closely, and practicing speaking well and clearly. However, while half of the room was wondering how these abilities would translate in our futures, the other half was already using its talent and skill in everyday life.

In addition to the five panelists scheduled to present, many other alumni attended. Once the panel presentation was complete, Professor Scherwatzky asked the other graduates to tell the group what they were doing now, whether in the workforce or, in some cases, in graduate school, and to talk about how they use the skills they developed as English majors in their careers. Some have gone onto careers in law, government, social media, museum curatorship and of course teaching. Each of these individuals explained to us the importance of being an English major and how the abilities we develop, such as close reading, attention to diction and nuance, knowledge of rhetoric, and appreciation for the centrality of narrative, are transferable to the workplace, perhaps in ways with which no other major can compete.

One panelist in particular really stuck out to me. Laura Dupre, who is now teaching at a private school in Lawrence, spoke about the journey she went on to arrive at her current job. Like myself, she wasn't sure that she wanted to go into teaching. She earned an Education minor (also like myself) but was not absolutely certain it was the right fit for her. Laura experimented with marketing and other types of jobs before landing her position at a school and has loved it ever since. One thing that really caught my interest was Laura's willingness to explore other fields before deciding on Education. It wasn't until attending Career Night that I became aware of just how versatile we are. Evidently, English provides its students with an impressive number of options for the future, rather than limiting us to only one path.

CONVERSATIONS THAT CULTIVATE PERSPECTIVE by Rachel MacKelcan

In every English course I have learned the crucial importance of one thing: being an English major is not about reading lots of books, saying something smart, and then dropping the microphone to accept grand applause. It is not about "being smart" or "knowing how to write" or "growing up and becoming a teacher." It is about starting a conversation. English Majors do not strive to be "smart;" we aspire to be brilliant. We do not want to "be able to write well;" we dare to write in a way that captures some provocative insight, and we do not just want to be "teachers;" we want to be educators—of our students, of our readers, of our employers, of our community.

Since my freshman year, Career Night has provided a forum for exchanging information and perspectives about career paths and professional opportunities not limited to Education or the Library Sciences. And while I mean no disrespect to those among us who chose those incredibly daring and challenging paths, I have simply never felt that I was fit enough to place myself in either of those roles. Career Night makes clear to the undergraduate community that the training individuals receive in the English program outfits them for career opportunities beyond the traditional avenues.

Despite the exposure to new possibilities the event consistently supplies, its greatest value comes from the conversation that develops between graduates, undergraduates, and professors—individuals functioning not merely as spectators but as collaborators with a common purpose. Professor Scherwatzky tirelessly organizes the event each year and serves as master of ceremonies. He makes the magic happen. The entire room joined into the conversation, as one by one he encouraged everyone to share their stories, and this included a candid discussion of the pros and cons of pairing the English degree with Education. It is now one month after the event and I still remember sitting in my chair amazed. I had never seen any other group or department conduct a conversation characterized by such honesty and, because the conversation flowed so organically, I learned so much more than I could have imagined going into it; for that I would like to thank Professor Scherwatzky.

It might be true that English majors have evolved. It seems to me that so many of us no longer fit the stereotype of the "dorky kid" sitting in the library with her head buried in a book. (I'm not saying I don't enjoy burying my head in a book; I am saying it doesn't define me.) We are the ones that walk into a classroom and respond and when we have something to say chances are we know how to say it clearly and well. Our study of language and dedication to effective expression enables us to do many things well. And no matter what we choose to become, it all starts here, with this conversation. And I for one could not be more proud than to say I am a part of it.

ONE COMMUNITY, ONE PASSION by Dakota Durbin

This has been my second time at our English department's Career Night since declaring the English major and it is one of my favorite events on the Merrimack campus, because it represents the one time when the faculty and students of the English program can meet and bond outside of the standard classroom setting. While attending Career Night I am reminded about what this event truly means, not only for the Merrimack community at large, but specifically our community of English majors and its supporters. The alumni testified that the professors in our department have positively influenced their personal and professional lives through the years, not only by helping them develop skills in communication and analysis, thereby improving their academic and professional performances, but also by instilling in them a passion for literature. This night is about bringing together an eclectic group of people who love what they do and are enthusiastic about their studies in English and literature. It is a night to chat and mingle with former classmates and professors, as well as make new acquaintances who are sure to share similar interests and passions. Career Night is a time when like-minded lovers of English can sit among friends and be reminded that our studies are not meant to be performed alone in a dark corner but in the company of others who challenge our thinking, support our ideas, and appreciate the importance of what we love and do.

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