Writer's Memo

By: Laura Leidy

As a teacher of writing, I often forget that I myself am also considered a writer. Throughout my education I wrote papers to reflect on readings and analyze what was happening in classrooms. Now as a teacher, I am creating models for the students to show them what I am expecting from their writing. This genre portfolio provided me the opportunity to write and revise two genres with which I was unfamiliar: argumentative & poetry. This experience has taught me to that the freedom to express myself through writing can be liberating and relaxing. In the article, "What Do We Do if We Don't Do Haiku? Seven Suggestions for Writers and Teachers," Laura Apol's statement about writing applies to my writing experience, "the process of writing can take you places you didn't expect to go-perhaps didn't even know were there…a writer needs to explore in writing the places a road can't find" (Apol 90). Writing poetry freely, not staying on the road, has forever changed the way I view poetry.

Writing these two genres proved to be a much different experience than I had originally anticipated. I had expected that writing Argumentative was going to be very easy and the less stressful of the two; however, this was not the case. Argumentative is a genre that I recently began teaching to my students, and I wrote my essay along a similar format found in *Teaching Argument Writing, Grades 6-12* by George Hillocks Jr. In this format the writer develops three types of arguments: "fact, judgment, and policy" (Hillocks 94). For each claim the students were presented in the book they had a piece of evidence, a warrant (explanation of what the evidence showed), and a backing (what the writer wants the reader to do or feel). For me, I needed structure to set up my argumentative essay, and Hillocks provided me with that structure.

My topic for the argumentative essay was something I think about often and that matters to me: is technology negatively impacting relationships? I find myself, as well as those around me, constantly checking Instagram and Facebook, but I always wonder if it is too much. For the genre of argumentative writing, Hillocks Jr. says, "the best problems for younger students are those in which they have some stake and therefore are more likely to take an interest in collecting and studying the data" (Hillocks 69). Thus for this genre, I researched something that not only interested me, but also for which I have a strong opinion. The genre of argument calls for a certain amount of passion in order to derive judgments based on the information researched and studied.

After writing my argumentative essay about technology, I shared my essay with my writing group on Google Drive so we could comment on each other's writing pieces. I found that it was helpful for me to read my work and my writing group's work out loud. While editing my essay, I decided to use a strategy that was discussed in "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers" by Nancy Sommers where it is "a process with significant recurring activities- with different levels of attention and different agenda for each cycle" (Sommers 386). For one of my readings I looked at the connotation of the words presented. I wanted my overall essay to illicit a negative emotion whenever technology was mentioned. For example, when I was discussing cyber bullying, I originally used "individuals" to describe those who were cyber bullied. After reading the essay aloud, I felt "victims" built a stronger emotional connection and better demonstrated my perspective on technology.

For my second writing piece, my unfamiliar genre of poetry, it was a surprisingly enjoyable experience. Before this assignment, the word "poetry" made me very anxious and nervous. Poetry

was this unknown genre that I did not enjoy reading–much less writing. Since I was a Poetry novice, I chose a topic that was more focused and gave me guidance on structure, "Where I'm From." In the article, "Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Public and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing" by Cheryl L. Rosaen, she discusses using the "Where I'm From" poem to "help students discover some of their personal attributes that makes their family special" (Rosaen 1454). After researching and reading the poem "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon, I took her structure and modified it to illustrate the small town in Tennessee where I lived until I was 17.

The questions Cheryl Rosaen posited were the jumping-off point for my poem where I was able to, "recall memories and details of their past and express them in a form of a poem" (Rosaen 1459). The original "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon looks at childhood as a whole, but I decided to focus each stanza on distinct aspects of my small town and my house. Rosaen included questions intended to spark her students thinking about this topic, and as a writer this was helpful to me; very quickly I was able to see a common thread running through my ideas: conformity. It brought back memories of feeling trapped: that I had to do and be and say what was expected of me. At the beginning of the poem, I first talked about the town, moving next to the outside of my house, and finally into my own bedroom, the only place I felt free.

Revision took my poem to a place I had not expected it go be able to go, artistically. After writing my first draft, I shared my writing with my writing group on Google Drive. One member in my group pointed out that I repeated the word "perfect". Typically perfect is a word that has a positive connotation, but the more I thought about the word, to me perfect holds a negative feeling and meaning. In the article "Cold Plums and the old men in the water: Let children read and write 'great' poetry" by Janine Certo, the author states, "the power of language to create new meaning…there can be multiple interpretations of a given poem because how children interpret something (e.g. a word, idea, statement) depends on their prior experience and current perspectives (Certo 267). With this in mind I realized that many readers might only see the positive and warm setting that I grew up in. Therefore I decided I wanted to hint and allude to the darker, negative side of my hometown. For my final draft, I looked for words that to me were "negative," and I decided to put them in italics to hint to readers those words had a similar theme or meaning. Adopting this structure, fashioned through the process of revision, allowed me to better land the message of my poem.

This writing experience has made me not only reevaluate how I write these genres, but how I teach my students these genres as well. For the argumentative genre, typically I have given my students a topic that I thought would interest them and given them articles to use to research their topic. In the future, I think I will present a few suggested topics and let the students either choose from those or find their own topic. I believe this will not only spark their interest, but also give them the opportunity to learn something about which they are passionate. When assessing this type of argumentative writing, I will evaluate their work based on how they explain what the evidence tells them: claim, warrant, backing. It is important that they can articulate what their research shows and how it supports their side of the claim. As for poetry, this experience has thoroughly changed the way I approach the genre. For me, it was helpful to be given a structure and the ability to adapt to meet the needs of my poem. When I teach this genre in the future, I think it is important to expose the students to a variety of poems, and then give them the freedom to write however or whatever

type of poetry speaks to them. Assessing poetry is admittedly a difficult task due to the openness of the writing. Who am I to judge if your poem shows your theme or meaning? I feel I would assess based on if they can explain the meaning of their poem. I would evaluate the students on a follow-up exercise, where they would reflect on their own writing of poetry and the experience itself. This Writing Portfolio project has not only altered how I write specific genres, but has forever changed the way I view the genre of poetry.

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        teachers. *English Journal, 91*(3), 89-97.

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Hillocks, G. (2011). *Teaching Argument Writing: Supporting Claims with Relevant Evidence and Clear Reasoning.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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Argumentative Essay- First Draft

Technology Negatively Impacting Relationships

Our world revolves around technology. It is everywhere you look, and everyone uses technology at least once a day. Our society has been able to communicate across continents and cure fatal diseases, but at what cost? Cyber bullying has negatively impacted so many lives. The practice of face-to-face conversation has been replaced by texting and emailing leaving out emotions. Dependence on technology is negatively affecting our society causing lasting impacts that will affect future generations.

In our society individuals use technology to communicate, but the way they communicate has changed. Texting each other has become the main form of communication due to its accessibility and directness, but this form of communication is lacking an important aspect of conversation. MIT psychologist Sherry Turkle is known as a leading researcher on how texting is affecting relationships. She believes the reason people prefer texting is because she says, "The complexity and messiness of human communication gets shortchanged. Those things are what lead to better relationships" (Kluger). This shows that texting is making relationships less personal. It is easier to send someone a text to apologize rather than calling them. Texting is causing a negative impact on the relationships individuals are creating.

Friendships are also changing because of social media including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. This was designed to be a way for people to connect to friends and forming online relationships, but these forms of communication are not providing the emotional support that comes from personal relationships. Dr. Kate Roberts is a Boston school psychologist who believes that technology is costing society interpersonal relationships. She believes what is lacking from online communication is, "When people aren't using face to face contact for personal issues, it doesn't fill the intimacy need. For all the strong reaction out there about Twitter and Facebook allowing emotional expression, it's not necessarily effective. You're not necessarily getting to resolution like you would (with another person)" (Johnson). This text shows what specifically is missing from online communication. There is not edition and intimacy that is needed for human relationships. Society is

moving away from forming emotional relationships. A future without any emotions is a frightening prospect for our society, but this is where society is headed due to technology.

Many people believe that bullying has always happened before the Internet, and the internet is not the cause of bullying. What this argument overlooks is the fact that the Internet provides anonymity because it is easy to act intimidating behind a screen. Technology and social media has provided an avenue for individuals to bully others. What makes Cyberbullying so debilitating is the fact that "Those who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behavior" (stopbullying.org). Technology is everywhere making this type of bullying almost impossible to escape. This is an example of a negative effect of technology in our society.

Technology is an unstoppable force in our society and has provided our society with many benefits, but it is negatively changing relationships. Texting is taking personal interactions out of relationships and taking accountability out of conversations. Our society is also communicating without emotions in relationships. If as a society we do not place value in face to face communication, then future generations will be emotionless and have the inability to form lasting relationships. Overall technology is negatively impacting our relationships.

Works Cited

Johnson, Chandra. "Face Time vs. Screen Time: The Technological Impact on Communication."
      Discrete News National. N.p., n.d. Web. 6 Mar. 2015.

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"What Is Cyberbullying." *What Is Cyberbullying*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Mar. 2015.

Robot Relationships

Our world revolves around technology. Everywhere you look, someone is tweeting, texting, Instagramming, and it is all at their fingertips, twenty-four hours a day. While technology has offered our society the ability to communicate across continents and cure fatal diseases, but at what cost? As the practice of face-to-face conversation is replaced with emotionless communication, such as text or email, cyber bullying is running rampant and negatively impacting numerous young lives. If this dependence on technology and lack of interpersonal communication continues, our society will not only be negatively impacted today, but we will also see its lasting effect on future generations as well. Dependence on technology is negatively impacting our society causing lasting impacts that will affect future generations.

In our society individuals use technology to communicate, but the way they communicate has drastically changed from previous generations. Texting each other has become the only form of communication due to its accessibility and directness, but this form of communication is lacking an important aspect of conversation. MIT psychologist Sherry Turkle is known as a leading researcher on how texting is affecting relationships. She believes the reason people prefer texting is because, "The complexity and messiness of human communication gets shortchanged. Those things are what lead to better relationships" (Kluger). This shows that texting is making relationships less personal. It is easier to send someone a text to apologize rather than calling them. It removes the fault and guilt from hearing the voice of a friend who you have hurt. Texting is hindering the emotional relationships we are creating.

Friendships are also regressing because of social media including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These were innovate ways for people to connect to friends and forming online relationships, but these forms of communication are not providing the emotional support that comes from personal relationships. Dr. Kate Roberts is a Boston school psychologist who believes that technology is costing

society's interpersonal relationships. She believes what is lacking from online communication is, "When people aren't using face to face contact for personal issues, it doesn't fill the intimacy need. For all the strong reaction out there about Twitter and Facebook allowing emotional expression, it's not necessarily effective. You're not necessarily getting to resolution like you would (with another person)" (Johnson). Her statement highlights what specifically is missing from online communication. There is not emotion and intimacy that is needed for human relationships. Society is moving away from forming emotional relationships. A future without any emotions is a frightening prospect for our society, but this is where society is headed due to technology.

Many people believe that bullying has always happened before the Internet, and the internet is not the cause of bullying. What this argument overlooks is the fact that the Internet provides anonymity because it is easy to act intimidating when you are safely behind a computer screen and not looking at another human being in the eye. Technology and social media has provided an avenue for individuals to bully others. What makes Cyberbullying so debilitating is the fact that "Those who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behavior" (stopbullying.org). Technology is everywhere making this type of bullying almost impossible to escape. Individuals will be frightened to turn on a computer with the looming threat of cyberbullying.

Technology is an unstoppable force in our society and has provided our society with many benefits, but it is negatively changing relationships. Texting is taking personal interactions out of relationships and taking accountability out of conversations. Our society is also communicating without emotions in relationships. If as a society we do not place value in face to face communication, then future generations will be emotionless and have the inability to form lasting relationships. Our world will be filled with robots simply crossing paths with those in our lives rather than forming emotional bonds that last a lifetime.

Works Cited

Johnson, Chandra. "Face Time vs. Screen Time: The Technological Impact on Communication."

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Argumentative Essay- Final Copy

Robot Relationships

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In our society individuals use technology to communicate, but the way they communicate has drastically changed from previous generations. Texting each other has become the only form of communication due to its accessibility and directness, but this particular vehicle for expression is lacking an important aspect of conversation. MIT psychologist Sherry Turkle is known as a leading researcher on how texting is affecting relationships. She believes the reason people prefer texting is because, "The complexity and messiness of human communication gets shortchanged. Those things are what lead to better relationships" (Kluger). This shows that texting is making relationships less personal. It is easier to send someone a text to apologize rather than calling them. It removes the fault and guilt from hearing the voice of a friend who you have hurt. Texting is hindering the emotional relationships we are creating.

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Technology is an unstoppable force in our society and has provided our society with many benefits, but it is negatively altering relationships. Texting is taking personal interactions out of relationships and taking accountability out of conversations. Our society is communicating without emotions. If as a society we do not place value in face-to-face communication, then future generations will be rendered emotionless and lose the ability to form lasting relationships. Our world will be filled with robots, simply crossing paths rather than forming meaningful, lifelong bonds.

Works Cited

Johnson, Chandra. "Face Time vs. Screen Time: The Technological Impact on Communication."

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"What Is Cyberbullying." What Is Cyberbullying. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Mar. 2015.

"Where I'm From"- First Draft

I'm from Tennessee
a small town in the Smoky Mountains.
I am from southern values
close knit community, born and raised.
Never leaving the bubble.

I'm from small
my grandparents down the street.
I am from the red house on the hill
red and maroon bricks arranged in perfect rows.
Perfectionists lived there.

I'm from tulips,
my Great Grandmother's ivory irises.
I am from a homemade tree swing,
splinters in my fingers.
Initials carved in the tree.

I'm from teapots
from Luzianne and Betty Crocker.
I am from southern cooking
fried okra, sweet tea and brownies
butter makes everything better.

I'm from my room
pale yellow walls, navy curtains.
I am from bookshelves lining the wall
Little Woman, *Harry Potter* and *The Notebook,*
can never read too many books.

I am from a place of warmth and love
always a southern belle at heart.

"Where I'm From"- 2nd Draft
Revisions Made in PINK

I'm from Tennessee
a small town in the Smoky Mountains.
I am from southern values
close knit community, born and raised.
Never leaving the bubble.

I'm from modest
my grandparents down the street.
I am from the red house on the hill
crimson and maroon bricks arranged in pristine rows.
Perfectionists lived there.

I'm from tulips,
my Great Grandmother's ivory irises.
I am from a homemade tree swing,
splinters pricking my fingers.
Initials carved in the tree.

I'm from teapots
from Luzianne and Betty Crocker.
I am from southern cooking
fried okra, sweet tea and Honeybun Cake,
Butter makes everything better.

I'm from escape
pale yellow walls, navy curtains.
I am from bookshelves lining the wall
Little Woman, *Harry Potter* and *The Notebook.*
Can never read too many books.

I am from a place of warmth and expectations
always a southern belle at heart.

"Where I'm From"- Final Draft

I'm from Tennessee
a small town in the Smoky Mountains.
I am from southern values
close-knit community, born and raised.
Never leaving the *bubble*.

I'm from modest
my grandparents down the street.
I am from the red house on the hill
crimson and maroon bricks arranged in pristine rows.
Perfectionists lived there.

I'm from tulips,
my Great Grandmother's ivory irises.
I am from initials carved in the tree
a homemade tree swing.
Splinters *pricking* my fingers.

I'm from teapots
from Luzianne and Betty Crocker.
I am from southern cooking
fried okra, sweet tea, and Honeybun Cake,
Butter makes *everything* better.

I'm from escape
pale yellow walls, navy curtains.
I am from bookshelves lining the wall
Little Woman, *Harry Potter,* and *The Notebook.*
Can never read too many books.
Escaping to faraway places. Freedom

I am from a place of warmth and *expectations*
always a southern belle at heart.