**Essay #1: Career Reflection**

(An imagining/visioning paper)

The essay “Look At Your Fish” or “The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz” by Samuel Hubbard Scudder offers you insight into how professors and students interacted at Harvard University during the 1850s. Professor Agassiz is depicted as almost completely absent as a teacher. He drifts away, doesn’t seem to explain much, certainly shows zero signs of offering up a syllabus or calendar for his student, and, if he receives the wrong answer from the student, he tells him to keep looking at that fish. That’s a brief summary of what Professor Agassiz does in the essay, and yet Scudder describes Agassiz’s teaching with the following words, “what I gained by this outside experience has been of greater value than years of later investigation in my favorite groups.”

Is he saying that the eight months that he spent working with Agassiz was “of greater value” than the years of work he spent on other topics and with other professors? It would appear so. What could possibly have been so important about looking at a fish? It is the practice of seeing the details.

Your work in WR 121 is also intended to help you focus on details as you also embrace the big picture. What’s the big picture for students in WR 121? Well, something that all students in this course should have in common is that they have plans and that they are heading deeper into the heart of their chosen career.

Imagine your life ten years from now. Where will you be and what will you be doing? What will be meaningful in your life? How will you impact your community in a positive way? Predict and discuss what your life will be like in ten years and how you are going to get there. Some of you, like Samuel Hubbard Scudder, may see yourself working in science. Some of you may envision a career in teaching, medicine, public safety or the arts. Are some of you interested in politics and law? The essay that you will soon write is an invitation to explore the clear vision of your future in great detail.

There is a **complete model** below and a **very specific example** that you can follow which will help you arrive at your final draft of this essay in a very simple and straightforward way. In fact, you will need to follow the example below to make sure that you structure and format your paper correctly.

*Discuss how you might get to where you may be in ten years*. What types of endeavors should you pursue to get to where you hope to be? What kinds of commitments might you make? What do you see as issues and critical conversations that will concern us? Which conversations will be important for you to enter? What do you see as your responsibilities and activities?

**The assignment:** Write an essay (about 800-1000 words, but you may exceed that number) responding to the above questions. Part of this paper, of course, will need to include a **description** of how you envision your life ten years from now and how you will get there. ***However, you need to make sure that a significant part of your essay includes reflection on why you will make these choices***: This is why our three example essays make connections with the past as the writers discuss their futures.

**Guidelines**:

* Begin with a brief, engaging opening. How can you begin in a way that makes readers want to keep reading? You might choose to put readers in touch with a situation from your childhood that influenced your interest in the career that you will be discussing. (1 to 2 paragraphs max.)
* Organize your essay in a way that is clear and easy for readers to follow. You might try a couple different approaches:
  + Create an introduction that lets readers know specifically what job you are aiming for. (1 to 2 paragraphs max.)
  + Then devote several paragraphs to helping readers understand how you have arrived at your decision to head in that direction. (Narrative reflection. See example below. 40%-50% of the paper.)
  + From there you should discuss the turning point moment, or influential person, that helped get you on the right path. (This will be a paragraph where you go from not focusing on your goal to focusing. Tell what happened to take you from not focusing to focusing. See example. Can you spot this moment in the example?)
  + From there you should discuss what steps you will need to take and why you will be taking them. It will be helpful to include specific examples from your field or community that will allow readers to understand why these are the right steps. (See example essay below -- 30%-40%.)
  + Possible audiences: Scholarship application reviewers. Or other people who might need help focusing on how they plan to become intentional about their next ten years.
* Craft an ending that provides readers with a satisfying sense of resolution. (Maybe a paragraph or two.)
* Edit carefully for unity, coherence, and grammar.
* Include a reference to at least one article about your chosen field, or topic, from our library databases. Integration of a simple citation and brief summary will suffice.
* Format your paper according to the APA guidelines.

Scroll down to the next page for an annotated example essay to examine.

EXAMPLE ESSAY WITH ANNOTATIONS

TO HELP GUIDE YOU TOWARD

WRITING YOUR OWN ESSAY

Drake Collins

WR 121

Committed To Stopping Sibling Abuse

For as long as I can remember, my brother Rocky has tortured me. I grew up in what most people call a normal family. I have one older brother and a mom and a dad who love one another. Our family owns a small farm in rural Oregon and that means we all worked pretty hard year round, rain or shine. What this meant for me as a child is that my parents were always too busy to really try to understand why I was constantly bruised, limping, or crying. In fact, they got so tired of me telling them what Rocky was doing to me, that they gave me the nickname TT which stood for Tattle-Tale. When people meet me, now that I am transferring as a junior into OSU’s School of Psychological Science so that I can become a Licensed Marriage Family Therapist, they often ask me how I discovered that I want to help families deal with sibling abuse. Each one of these moments gives me an opportunity to explain, with my own story, that sometimes the phrase “boys will be boys” can excuse endless torture and humiliation.

One of the worst abuse sequences that Rocky put me through began with his yelling at me, “You’re gonna ride that goddamn steer, Drake, or I’m gonna beat your ass.” I squirmed in his arms, struggling to break free. I didn’t want to ride that steer and I sure as heck did not want another ass beating. I had ass beatings all the time. Rocky was twelve years old and I was six. Somehow he felt it was his job “to turn me into a man.” What that meant to him was that he needed to beat me, hurt me, and torture me any time he came near me. He would always say, “This is for your own good. I gotta help you become a man.” I would show my parents the welts, scratches, and bruises that appeared on my body any time Rocky caught a hold of me, and they would tell me to stop my sissy crying and and “suck it up.” My mom often joked with her friends explaining that “boys will be boys.” To me it seemed like Rocky was trying to kill me.

I managed to break free of him and raced away from his friends and the penned steer that he was trying to throw me on top of. My legs pumped the pedals on my tiny dirt bike as fast and as hard as I could push them. Remember, I was only six-year-old. I made it about a hundred yards when I heard the wheels on our family’s pick up truck grinding over the gravel. He was after me, behind the wheel of his favorite lethal weapon. I burst into tears. He would catch me. I was sure of that. There was no way a six-year-old on a tiny dirt bike could escape a twelve-year-old behind the wheel of a Dodge Ram 50. If he did not run me over, he would scream up to me, kick me off the bike and beat the crap out of me like he always did.

He skidded up next to me, his eyes filled with rage, “Get in the goddamn truck!”

I stopped, but as soon as he started to push the truck door open I started pedaling away with all my might. I made it a measly thirty feet before he was on top of me, beating me with thunderous fists, my fingernails clawing at the hard dirt as I still tried to pull myself away from him even though the beating had already begun. He picked me up with ease, carried me back to the truck, and threw me in the cab.

"What the hell were you thinking?!" He screamed in my face. I could smell a strong odor of tobacco on his breath.

"I... I... I..." I managed to stutter between sobs.

"Shut the fuck up." He said and jumped into the driver's seat. We drove back to the steer pen in silence. He wanted only one thing: to put me onto that steer. I knew only one thing: that I was defeated and there was nothing that I could do about it. I had no allies. My parents would never listen to me. Even if I told my whole family, they would all just say that he was “just having fun” and that I should “tough up and be a man.” I was six years old and the injustice of it struck me as hard as any sock to the face I had ever received.

We pulled up to the corral and he grabbed me and dragged me down out of the cab. He wasn't going to risk having to chase me. He didn’t know that I had surrendered completely. I could see the young steer running around in the pen, bucking crazily, ramming itself against the wooden slats at the sides, trying frantically to escape. It was a baby steer, but it was easily twice my size and ten times as strong. Rocky grabbed me by the arms and hoisted me up onto the top slats of the pen. He had his friend grab the steer and guide it underneath me. They thought this was going to be the funniest thing in the world. He kept telling me it was to help make me a man, but all he wanted to do was put me in a position where I would get the hell bucked out of me and fall and maybe get injured. I didn’t dare say anything and risk more beating. Tears streamed out of my eyes. Rocky and his friends laughed and laughed. I felt such humiliation. I held on to the steer’s short hair knowing what was coming next.

Without any warning Rocky and his friend let go of the steer, who was terrified, uncomfortable, and angry as any steer you’d see in the rodeo. He was bucking wildly to get me off of his back. I knew I was going to die. I don’t know for how long I managed to stay on. Was it five seconds? Ten seconds? Thirty? One buck was followed by another which was followed by another and I held on with all of my might, but I was no match for the steer. With one final great buck he threw me off his back and on to the rock hard manure covered ground. Every bone in my body ached but I was free. Rocky and his friends were all still laughing. I knew I could go home even before Rocky looked at me coldly and said, “Get home before I beat the shit out of you.”

I told my mom. She didn’t listen to me. I told my dad and he told me that Rocky was just having fun and that I needed to man up and fight back. Rocky was twelve years old and twice as big as I was. He was also a sadist and no one seemed to care.

Scenarios like the one I just described were daily events for me. I got cigarette burns, paintballs shot at me from less than twenty-four inches “just to see what it would do,” and socks in the face out of nowhere and for no reason. He used to hide horrible things in food that he knew that I would eat. As Rocky became more abusive, I became quieter and more studious. I think subconsciously I believed that if he didn’t notice me, I would be safer.

I was of course angry at Rocky but my real anger was at my parents who refused, year after year, to stop him. I didn’t want him punished, or sent away; I just wanted him to stop hurting me. When I got to middle school, I told one of the counselors just enough about this problem so that no one would get into trouble, but I hoped I might get some advice. He said, “Don’t you worry about Rocky. He’s creating his own future right now. And so are you, what do you want to do with it?” I sat there and I really thought for a second, “I want to be the person who will make parents listen, because mine never do.”

My counselor smiled and said his usual catch phrase, “There’s a job for that!” And he turned to his computer and he showed me what a Licensed Marriage Family Therapist does and he showed me that if I was willing to travel, there are a lot of jobs all across the country for trained people willing to help families in crisis. I might work for a county health department, a hospital, or have a private practice where people come to my office and work with me one on one. We talked about the many kinds of jobs out there for people with the MFT license. And my counselor said, “It doesn’t have to stop there.” He told me that there are many people who travel the country telling their stories in front of large audiences to help people.

This is when he introduced me to the TED talks. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design (“About TED”). Even at twelve-years-old, I was very impressed by what I heard from speakers who had offered TED talks. They told their stories and they always offered some kind of hope, encouragement, or at least a good laugh. I check back with the TED website hoping to discover that there is a speaker who discusses sibling abuse like the kind that I suffered at the hands of Rocky. No one has told a story anything like mine at TED.

Using the Library Databases at Linn Benton Community College, I searched the term “sibling abuse” and was amazed to discover a research paper titled “The Relationship Between Sibling Maltreatment and College Students' Sense of Well-Being” written by Mandy Morrill-Richards and Stephen J. Leierer. Even though I only understood half of this paper, there was one line in this paper that spoke directly to my heart: “Survivors need help to address guilt, shame, and fear.” This paper spends five pages trying to define sibling abuse and the writers claim that it is a very complicated topic because sibling abuse can have varying degrees of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse (Morrill-Richards). The paper goes on to instruct college guidance counselors about the best way of helping students who have suffered at the hands of their own Rocky.

Ever since my middle school guidance counselor pointed me in the direction of getting an LMFT, I have been working toward a life that will allow me to help other powerless children in homes with an older brother, sister, or step-sibling who abuses them. The steps I am taking to achieve this goal include maintaining a 3.75 GPA in all my classes. I am only twenty-one and have already applied and been accepted to the School of Psychological Science at OSU. I will get my degree and my MFT license. I have spoken to several therapists who work for local hospitals. They connected with me on LinkedIn and they have shown me that if I look at their education and work history that I can discover what next steps I need to take. Almost all of them take what they call “stepping stone jobs” right after they get their degrees. Some work in group homes, community shelters, or county agencies in lower paid positions before they get better jobs where they can actually do one on one counseling.

In ten years I see myself running a community health organization that specializes in teaching parents how to identify sibling abuse and stop it. Corvallis has a small organization like this called the Parenting Enhancement Program. The people who run it have explained to me that their biggest hurdle is fund raising. As I continue to make myself an expert at helping families stop sibling abuse, I will also need to become an expert at raising money for my parenting education program. Getting parents to listen to me means that I will need to get more people to understand how dangerous sibling abuse is. And I plan on doing that by also making sure that I start to deliver talks to increasingly large audiences so that one day, before ten years have passed, I will be speaking in front of a TED talk to the whole world.

As people see how much success I am having and how driven I am to help families recover from sibling abuse, they always ask me how Rocky is. He’s in jail for assault and battery. He’s a dangerous person. I’ll anticipate your next question: I do not visit him and no, I do not care when he gets out. Perhaps my further education will help me find some compassion for him, until then, he’s on his own. My parents visit him. I don’t talk to them, either.

Works Cited

"About TED." *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading*. TED Conferences, LLC. Web. 7 Feb 2014. <http://www.ted.com/pages/about>.

Morrill-Richards, Mandy, and Stephen J. Leierer. "The Relationship Between Sibling Maltreatment And College Students' Sense Of Well-Being." *Journal Of College Counseling* 13.1 (2010): 17-30. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 12 Sept. 2012.