

Just Writing - Nothing More, Nothing Less by Alysa Xavier

Consider this. . .

- Where does Xavier employ figurative language to portray her experience for the reader? How does this help us understand her perspective? How does she use language and style to “get and keep readers’ attention,” since this is one of her goals within her writing process?
- How does Xavier’s explanation that she rarely re-reads her writing, but does rely on friends’ feedback of her work offer us a perspective of collaboration or peer response? What processes do you use or do you think should be used when composing writing with a specific purpose?
- What relationships and individuals have shaped your view of and approach to writing? How were these influences positive and/or negative? How might you reflect on the stories of these influences in your own response to Inquiry I?

Writer’s Reflection

Understand that I’m from a family of thirteen, so time spent with either parent was not something that was in abundance. Understand my attachment to my mother. “Our time” was every time I had an essay to write. Before I used to think this was awful that the only time I had with her was when I had to write but eventually I grew to love our time writing.

At first writing was a chore and it was difficult for me. When I would sit down to write my essay for homework I’d go blank in an instant, probably because I was reluctant to write. After all who liked homework anyway. I’d be sitting for forever it seemed and then I’d give up and ask my mother. For her this was far from difficult. For her, writing was like a release and this is what fascinated me. My fascination took away that reluctance to write and replaced it with urgency to write. I grew a very strong appreciation and liking for writing because this was what we did. This bonding through writing was new to the both of us. Our time together comprised mostly of me doing my own writing but she was always there to prompt me or give me ideas. The other times where she’d actually write the story, I think I treasured the most because I got to see the master at work or I should say at play because this did not look like work. Imitating her helped me to relax and focus. I found that when I did that ideas and thoughts would flow more readily than before. Overthinking on the topic was what blocked my thoughts from flowing. I would think of her and imagine the calmness she had when she wrote and I’d immediately feel a bit more relaxed. At this point I started practicing and trying to think the way she would. Forming ideas by myself, just writing about anything really. This helped improved my writing immensely and I enjoyed doing it more than anything else.

This story about my mother and I, when asked to write about my writing style and what made me into the writer I am today, was the first thing that came to mind. It was either this story or no story. Writing created the strong bond my mother and I now share. Through observation and guidance from my mother along with determination and practice I was able to create pieces that were worthy to read.

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Alysa Xavier

I cried out for help every time I had to write. Every composition assigned to me throughout primary school I ran to my mother. She sat with me each time and "What do you think you should write?" were always her first remarks. That irritated and unnerved me because I really had no clue what I should write...

I've always loved her stories, so I knew she was perfect for the job. She usually started my stories for me and had me finish them for myself, but when she helped me with the entire story it would be nothing short of a masterpiece. Her thoughts came so easily and most naturally that I'd secretly wish that I could swap minds with her so I could write a compelling essay like she did. I always told her that I'd ruin her starting paragraph if she didn't help me with the rest of my story, but that trick never really worked. "Use your imagination; I'm not going to be sitting with you during the exam. Just remember to make your first paragraph interesting so that the reader wants to continue reading". I didn't like pestering her because there were so many of us and we each needed her attention, so I thanked her for the push-start and tried my best to come up with something worth reading. I always thought, "If I were my mother, what would she write?" and I tried to mimic her patterns of writing: no sad stories, always something mysterious, comical, suspenseful, and adventurous, like the stories she'd tell us when we were kids that kept us at the edge of our seats.

I want to write like her someday. I remember watching her carefully as her hands maneuvered from left to right and then down and then left to right again and then down, forming words, then sentences and then paragraphs. All in one, steady motion. I watched in awe as her fingers played Picasso with pen, paper and words. It was beautiful to look at. She wrote as though she knew this story like the

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back of her palm. When she wrote, everything about her was somehow different. Her shoulders that were once at attention were now at ease, as if she had let go of something. The worry in her eyes drifted and she became lost in her own world: a world that I wished to enter every time she did. Maybe this was my reason for going to her every time. Maybe I wanted that feeling again that we shared. To me, this little time that we shared writing was like our little secret. This was our moment and I most happily treasured it. Her words stuck with me on to this day and every essay I write, I think, "Grasping first paragraph, get and keep readers attention". As I grew older I practiced my writing, I tried writing about anything, as often as I could. Every time I felt angry,

I wrote. Every time I felt sad, I wrote. I probably wrote in every one of my moods. Just writing - nothing more, nothing less - and I began to enjoy it thoroughly. It eased my mind. After writing through my different moods, I began to think about different topics or experiences and tried to write about them. I found myself sinking into writing moods; no matter where I was or what I was doing I'd go onto my phone and compose a new email and type. Some nights I'd be so tired and ready to fall asleep and ideas would randomly come to mind and I would be lazy and think "Oh, I'll remember this tomorrow", but the urge to write would get the better of me. It's as if it's saying, "Get up and write it" and I'd think, "Ok, ok, I'll write it down" and I get up most dreadfully to write it.

Nothing bothers me when I'm in my own little writing world. In it there's silence and calm and I completely zone out. All I think about is that story. And I begin to write or well type. I discovered at this point, "my way" of writing, or "my way" of telling a story, and by my way I mean *Freewriting*. Freewriting - freedom to write whatever you want, whenever you want, wherever you want. No editing, or backspacing, just writing. Maybe this was the place my mother would find herself in. The place as a child I wanted to find and enter with her. Maybe I finally found it. I learned to appreciate what my mother had done for me by letting me write my own stories. When my brothers or sisters needed help for their essays she would send them to me and I'd do the same thing she did for me, for them. Yep, they always had something to say, just like I did, but I knew it was going to be helpful later on.

My thoughts now flow effortlessly and my fingers play Follow the Leader—mimicking the speed of my thoughts—and this reminds me of her and how I wished to be like her. As my thoughts flow, my fingers would type. Writing-- is now a must for me; my craving. Presently, I no longer see writing essays as a task, but as an opportunity to write another story about something entirely different; almost like another adventure. My ONLY problem now—and it is weird—is this: after I finish writing, I don't look back at it. I find it hard to re-read my work. I feel as though if I read it over and I change the words then it wouldn't be Freewriting. It wouldn't be raw, and I like that part most. If there are mistakes I can live with that. Main thing is that I enjoyed writing it, and to me that is a great feeling. Hopefully it would have the same effect if someone else were to read it. Is it something that "gets their attention and keeps it"? I sure hope it is. I leave my good friends to be the judge of that and I let them badger me or criticize my work before I send in my essay, or after I finish writing something that's not being graded. Turns out I'm not that bad after all.

My want to be able to write a story as my mother could has led me to be the writer I am today. Our little secret place became my secret place and I go there to write. Over the years our relationship grew immensely, not just by sitting and talking about random thoughts, but more specifically by the stories we told and the feelings we shared through writing. These little moments impacted my writing. Her advice, the great stories she told and wrote, were for me—motivation and inspiration to write. That “writing” bond between mother and daughter is, and forever will be, irreplaceable.