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Introduction and Portfolio Philosophy

Welcome to ENG010. Suffolk County Community College (SCCC) is pleased to sponsor this portfolio based writing course. Your work this term will help you become a successful college writer, and we—the professors behind this course—hope you grow to appreciate writing in a much larger context in life. Writing, we feel, is a continual process of practice and discovery.

We have designed a required, final portfolio of writing so that you can showcase your best work. This portfolio consists of three distinct parts, with each part designed to measure a different writing ability:

1) **A Reflective Letter.** We would like you to introduce your writing, and your thoughts about writing, to us in a reflective letter. This letter will give you the chance to tie together your experience in this class and give us some more insights into you as a writer;

2) **Revised Essays.** We feel that good writing comes from revision, and we endorse the idea of multiple drafts, rewriting, and rethinking of all revised writing assignments. Revised writing also involves collaboration and an awareness of a larger audience for your thoughts and ideas, and so we encourage you to seek feedback on your writing throughout the course in order to learn how others react to your work;

3) **In-class Writing.** We have also included an in-class piece of writing so you can show us what you can write in a controlled classroom environment—a kind of writing often required in college courses.

Feel free to talk to your professor about this portfolio. We want to see you improve as a writer this year.

Portfolio Requirements

**FORMAT**

- The portfolio must contain four separate pieces of writing, arranged in this order: one reflective letter (this must be typed), two revised essays (these must be typed, double-spaced essays), and one in-class timed essay.

- Take care to produce a clean and tidy portfolio. If handwriting the in-class essay write as neatly as possible and present the reflective letter and revised essays without professor comments or editing marks.

- Your name and your professor’s name must not appear anywhere in your portfolio. Type or neatly print your student identification number and course reference number (CRN) on the cover of your portfolio folder and on each piece of writing in the portfolio (your professor will give you the CRN for your class).

- Submit your writing in a simple paper folder with pockets to secure the writing in place.

**THE REFLECTIVE LETTER**

- The reflective letter should give your reader a clear sense of you as a writer and your thoughts about writing. Your letter may address your strengths and weaknesses as a writer, expectations and experiences in this course, growing awareness of (or struggles with) your writing, past writing experiences and future writing goals, and changes you made with particular essays in your portfolio. Your professor will likely offer suggestions on how to construct such a letter.

- Our expectation is that students at the end of ENG010 should be able to construct a well-developed reflective letter that is at least 250 words (one typed page or more) long.

**REVISED ESSAYS:**

- These compositions must be sufficient in length to insure that the purpose of the composition will be fulfilled and thoroughly developed without including anything irrelevant or redundant.
• Each essay must differ in subject matter and in kind of writing. In the past students have included the following kinds of revised essays in their portfolios (these serve as examples of the different kinds of writing we are looking for): a descriptive essay showing the importance of a past experience and a persuasive essay calling for a change in school policy; an analysis of a poem and a researched essay detailing the writer’s exploration of a career; an essay that compares high school to college and a narrative story culminating with a lesson learned. As you can see, each of these essay pairs shows the author’s ability to write different kinds of essays with different goals and purposes for his or her audience. We would like to see this kind of variety in each portfolio.

• Our expectation is that students at the end of ENG010 should be able to construct two well-developed essays at least 750 words (three typed pages or more) long.

THE IN-CLASS ESSAY:

• This composition will come from topics or guidelines given by your professor and show a clear sense of organization, development, and thought. The time limit for the in-class essay is one hour and fifteen minutes.

• We do not have a specific length expectation for the in-class essay. We do feel, however, that students should take great care to develop a thorough essay within the allotted time.

STANDARDS USED FOR EVALUATING PORTFOLIOS IN ENG010

All writing must:

• be a culmination of work already seen by your professor;
• have a title;
• be organized around a clear or implied main point;
• have an opening that clearly and effectively introduces the main idea of the writing and/or draws the reader into the writing;
• contain paragraphs that serve a specific purpose relating to the main idea of the entire piece. Paragraphs must also be developed thoroughly utilizing appropriate and specific details, examples, and/or reasons;
• contain smooth transitional elements connecting ideas and paragraphs;
• be well copyedited for grammar, spelling, usage, and typing errors. Consistent, repeated errors will result in a failed portfolio;
• have a reason for existing on the page. Make sure that your writing is serving a purpose—ideally a purpose beyond just completing an assignment for class.

REMEMBER! All students must submit a complete, final portfolio on time at the end of the semester. Be sure you are well aware of all final deadlines in your course. Contact your professor if you have any questions about due dates or your portfolio.

The Evaluation Process for Final Portfolios

Your final portfolio will be evaluated by at least two professors: your own classroom professor and one other ENG010 professor at the college. These professors, utilizing the criteria outlined in the previous section, will score each portfolio either “Pass” or “No Pass.” In the case of a split score (one professor passes the portfolio and one does not), a third professor will read and score the portfolio and break the tie.

A “Pass” score on your portfolio means that you are eligible to move on and take ENG101 (3-credit Freshman Composition) at SCCC. However, this placement is not automatic. Your classroom professor will make the final decision on your readiness for SCCC’s college-credit writing course. If, for example, you did not meet
other course requirements as outlined by your professor (such as attendance in class, performance on exams, adequate participation, etc.) you might not pass ENG010 even though you received a “Pass” score on your portfolio.

A “No Pass” score on your portfolio means you must repeat ENG010 at SCCC and successfully pass the course before moving on into ENG101. In the case of a “No Pass” score, no other extra credit or additional work will make you eligible for placement into ENG101 at SCCC. With this in mind, take care to produce your best writing for the portfolio.

**A Statement on Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the act of using someone else’s words, writing, or ideas and representing them as your own. We expect each student to do his or her own writing in this course. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense that could subject you to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from this course or from school. Please refer to the SCCC Student Handbook for the college policy on such matters.

**Some Common Questions about ENG010**

**Why am I not getting credit toward a degree at SCCC with this course?**

This course has been designated a “developmental” course, and such courses (according to New York State guidelines) cannot offer credit toward a degree program. Instead, these courses are designed to help students prepare for, and be successful in, degree-credit courses. For any number of reasons, many students enter colleges and universities less than prepared for the level of work expected at these institutions. Here at SCCC we take very seriously the instruction in this course and feel it will help students do well in ENG101. Therefore, although initially you may feel some frustration over your placement in this course, we feel ENG010 will help your future academic work by introducing and reviewing many of the skills needed for successful college writing.

**Why do you require a portfolio of writing? Why not simply give us a test?**

Our experience as teachers and writers shows us that writing is a diverse activity that, in most cases, takes place over a lengthy period of time. During this time writers make tremendous efforts to think, write, rethink, rewrite, seek help, rewrite, etc. While objective tests or timed writings evaluate a portion of the writing process, they do not allow the writer to show the kind of work that goes into most personal, college, and career writing. With the portfolio we would like to simulate, as closely as possible, the kind of writing you will most likely attempt throughout your life.

**Who decides what writing should go into my portfolio?**

Ultimately, you make all decisions regarding what writing goes into your portfolio. We would hope, however, that you seek out as much feedback on your writing as possible (from your professor, classmates, peers, tutors) in order to gain a better understanding of how others react to your work. By continually receiving such feedback throughout your writing process you certainly will gain a greater feeling for the pieces of writing that would best make up your portfolio. Also, through this process of listening to your audience, you will become a more aware and confident evaluator of your own writing.
I’m nervous about the final portfolio evaluation. Do many students receive “No Pass” scores?

Our experience shows that most students pass the portfolio evaluation. This favorable passing rate undoubtedly comes from the hard work and seriousness with which most students tackle the course. Those who don’t pass may have underestimated the amount of time it takes to revise and assemble an acceptable college-level portfolio or may simply need some more time to develop their writing skills. We feel that even students who do not pass the portfolio evaluation have gained valuable experience that will help them become successful college writers.

Sample Student Portfolios with Evaluations

Following are photocopies of recent student portfolios submitted for evaluation. We’ve included a portfolio our readers scored “No Pass” despite its strengths and three portfolios our readers scored a clear “Pass.” From these portfolios you likely will get a sense of the writing we expect from students in this course.

After the “No Pass” portfolio you will find a brief narrative comment that explains some of the thinking behind the evaluation of this writing collection. The final three portfolios are here for you to enjoy and perhaps to serve as inspiration for the kind of writing we like to see come out of our ENG010 classes. Although they are not perfect in every way, we are sure you will see the strengths in these final two collections. You and your classmates and professor may want to talk about other writing elements you notice in these student portfolios.
This is my third time taking ENG010. Each time I learn more and more about the way I write. I feel that I have learned enough to go on to the next level. The two writings that I have chosen to write about, I think were my best writings that I did this past semester.

The Best Day of My Life

There are many days of my life that are great and I will always remember, but my best day came on November 2, 1996.

That day was my last football game that I would ever have on our home field. To top it all off it was my schools homecoming game. It was going to be a big game because we were playoff bound, and also there were about four thousand people watching. I was very excited.

As gametime came closer I was practising my long snaps to the punter. When the officials called the captans to the center of the field, I was on pure energy. I was waiting for that to happen my whole high school life. After winning the coin toss we elected to receive the ball. As I went on the field getting ready for the first play, the whole stadium was cheering and it was very loud. On our first drive we marched about seventy yards for a touchdown and were leading 7-0, things after that started to go downhill. We went into halftime trailing by the score of 12-7.

Things didn’t change in the third quarter because by the time I knew it we were losing 18-7 with about five minutes left in the third. The offence came together and we were told that the line had to make something happen if we wanted to win. Our next drive lasted about five plays, going over sixty yards and scoring and
making the game 18-15 with the two point conversion. Central Islip scored on there next drive and then put us back to a twelve point game with the score 27-15. We got the ball back and start to march down the field on big pass plays and great blocking. We scored that drive with a hand-off to the right. The extra pint was no good so the score was 27-21 with about four minutes left in the game. The defence held C.I to four plays and so we got the ball back.

With our last drive inside our thirty yard line, winning meant we had to score a touchdown, and also make the extra point. Big third down plays helped keep the chains moving and giving us a fresh set of downs. We got to the two yard line and the play was for a handoff to the right. Our coach told our quarterback if he sees an opening to just dive in himself. We broke from the huddle and the Q.B. grabs me and told me to clear a path because he was going right behind me. I snapped the ball and he just walked in. That tied the game at 27 with the extra point to follow. Last time I snapped it to low and we missed it. I knew this meant the game. I snapped it back and waited to see the ball fly over the goal post. When I saw it cross over all the people went crazy, and we won our homecoming game and also my last home game 28-27.

Some days have been good but that was my best day so far
Lost and Found

I can remember a time when I lost something that meant the whole world to me. When I was in sixth grade the only thing that I wanted for Christmas was a new bike. My old one had a banana seat with pedal brakes. It was not up to date with the new BMX bikes that were around back then. It was the only thing that I wanted.

On Christmas morning when I went to go see my new bike in front of the tree, it was not there. When I thought I didn’t get my bike, my parents told me to look out the window. There on the front porch was my new bike with a red bow on the seat. It was the greatest gift that I have even received. I kept that bike looking like new for the next two and a half years. When ever I went somewhere I chained it up. The one time that I left it unlocked, it was stolen right in front of my friends house. I couldn’t believe that someone could take it because I was only there for a few minutes, but it was gone. I walked home that night in tears. When I got home I thought that my parents would be mad at me for being irresponsible for not locking it up. They told me not to worry and to just go to bed and that we will find it tomorrow.

A few months have past and no sign of the bike, it was impossible to find it now after all those months. I was now riding around on a bike that I put together with spare parts from my brothers old bike. During the next summer I went over my friends house where we would ride dirt bikes all day. When we went to fix one of them I went behind his shed to get something and I thought I saw my bike. I went back for a second look and there it was, the same way, with the same lock wrapped around the seat. When I asked him where he got it from he told me that he stole it from some kids house. When I told him that it was mine he told me to take it and that he was sorry.

When I got home, my dad asked me how I found it and I told him that it didn’t matter. I didn’t want to start anything between my parents and my friend. Still today I have it and ride it from time to time.
Never To Late

When I was younger I always wanted to learn how to play the piano but never found the time or had the money. I always watched people play or just play around on one when it was not being used. When I took music in high school we did a two week lesson on the piano and he told the class that if anyone wanted to learn how to play better to come during the free period. Just to see what it was like I went during my lunch period. When he asked me what I wanted I told him that I would like to be able to play the piano better. He thought I was joking around because I was a football player and a wrestler and wouldn't even like the piano. He told me if I was serious about it to come after school. I couldn't go after school because I have practice so I asked him if I could come an hour before school. He said sure.

For the rest of the year I showed up and started out slow. First learning the notes and the sounds that it makes. About after one month I was able to play with other instruments and did pretty well. I still had a long way to go before I could play with a whole band. Since I am not interested in playing with a band I still never have. One thing I have noticed was that my fingers would start to cramp, so I would have to train them and make them
Although the writing in this portfolio shows promise and some involved thinking on the part of the author, our readers scored this portfolio “No Pass.”

You’ll notice that the writer does show clear involvement with each topic he or she writes about and also structures each essay around a main idea. Our readers were pleased to see the specific information this writer often incorporated into the essays, such as when he or she tells the audience “[b]ig third down plays helped keep the chains moving [while] giving us a fresh set of downs.” Finally, the writer shows a sense of paragraph structure and organization that makes it easy to follow his or her line of thinking in each essay.

The entire portfolio does, however, fall short of our expectations in a number of areas. First, although the two revised essays are written about different events, they both fall into the general category of “personal experience narrative” (or stories about the writer’s past). Portfolio readers would like to see more variety in the types of writing each student includes in the portfolio. Also, the writer’s cover letter is very brief and doesn’t give us a clear sense of his or her thoughts about writing. This writer should follow up statements such as “[e]ach time I learn more and more” and “I have learned enough to go on” and “I think [these] were my best writings” with much more detailed explanations as to why he or she felt these things. Another comment readers expressed was that the revised essays lacked development around the main point of each essay. Although the author does well to provide details about each event, these essays are really about the author’s feelings and emotions (the author’s best day and the author’s favorite lost object). Each essay could be developed more fully by providing the audience with details about the author’s emotions, thoughts, fears, etc. Finally, the writing contains a large number of surface level errors (run-on sentences, wrong words, incorrect punctuation, spelling/typing errors) so that the writer’s meaning in each piece becomes clouded and unclear to a reader. Because students have the entire course to seek out help and work through such concerns, we expect clearer, more readable, final revised essays in the portfolio.
Dear Portfolio Reader,

Enclosed in this portfolio are my two essays and one in class timed writing. The first essay that I selected, “Journey to Pain” is about a personal experience that remains significant to me today. This piece of writing reflects a tragic accident that has changed my life drastically. I chose this essay because I felt a lot of my energy could be focused on such a horrific event and I knew I could supply first rate details to show why that accident was significant to me. The second essay I chose is an opinion/analysis paper on the biography “Into the Wild” by Jon Krakauer. I had to state if I admired or did not admire the main character Christopher Johnson McCandless. I enjoyed writing this essay because I really thought the novel was well written and filled with excitement.

Throughout the semester, our writing class has learned various ways to improve our writing techniques. Some different types of writing methods were focused free writing, using our five senses, exploring arguments, drawing comparisons, description, humor, and many others which helped me become more of a complete writer. We also completed a couple of in-class essays to help our time management towards future writing sessions. These in-class essays helped me not to panic because as long as you organize your ideas and time frame, you should be able to tackle and write assignments with no difficulty.

Another key element that helped me become a better writer was our course journal. This journal was broken into several different sections so that we could express ourselves
Weekly every week. This journal helped me to diversify and be a lot more creative as a writer.

When I first started EG10 my writing consisted of many errors such as run on sentences, grammar, and punctuation. I found that writing groups was a little bit of a help to me but the writing center is what really helped me correct my mistakes. The writing center tutors helped me identify these mishaps by them just telling me to read my paper out loud and to see if I can hear my mistakes. This was definitely a good tool to help me with my revisions. I found that the writing response sheet given to me by my professor was helpful. This sheet was important to me because he would check what he was looking for in different areas. You had to be approaching a very well score in order to pass the final portfolio so I would just compare my essays and see were I could improve.

My overall writing has tremendously improved from the first day of class and I definitely feel that I can move onto the next level, which is EG11. I can say from the first day till now, I have gained many writing tools that will lead me to a successful college life.
Journey to Pain

On July 12, 1997 it was a beautiful summer day. It was about 85 degrees and it was that time of year when the sun was slowly lowering into the horizon to rest until another day. I can remember I was with my two friends Mike and Dan at the time and we were riding our bicycles all throughout our town just basically going from friend’s house to friend’s house enjoying the comfort of the weather.

After my two friends and I left a fellow companion’s house to go eat dinner at each of our houses we started making our journey through the many hilly and windy roads, which kind of reminded me of the journey in which cyclists torture themselves in the bicycle competition called the Tour de France in the rugged mountains of France. We are all simultaneously peddling up and down hills constantly changing gears from high to low to make life easier while riding. All you can hear is the chain links catching the crank and the wind whistling like a sea shell being put up to your ear.

Once we finished the mountain stage of our course home we headed onto Broadway Street which is a road that consists mostly of all the little business shops, pizza parlors, bars, etc. We then hanged a left onto Prince Road which is the road that mine and Mike’s house is on.

As we were riding, Dan and Mike were jumping the street curbs on the sidewalks as I was trailing them doing the same thing, and then, bang, all I remember is waking up in an ambulance tasting blood and lying down in the most uncomfortable stretcher making my way to John T.
Mather Hospital.

As I came to find out later, the reason why this event occurred was because when I landed the bicycle was in a nose dive position and when the bike made impact with the pavement the shock suspension on the forks of the bike, which holds the front wheel, snapped in half. When this occurred my body was forced forward with my head being the first part of my body to hit the rugged pavement. The type of mountain bike I was riding was a very popular bicycle not designed for a novice rider but for an experienced or expert rider. The bike was called a Raleigh M 60 full suspension all terrain bicycle, meaning it consisted of both front and rear shocks and 24 different gears so you could always adjust the type of riding you want to do.

The injuries I sustained in this horrific event was a grade three concussion, road rash to the whole right side of my face, broken shoulder, abrasions to my arms and legs and puncture holes through my lips because of my braces at the time. These pieces of metal were the only things to save my teeth from getting knocked out. I can remember laying in the emergency room for three hours and the nurse sucking blood out of my mouth and picking pebbles out of my face. I couldn’t feel my face because basically all the nerves ripped out from sliding on the rough pavement.

I stayed at Mather Hospital for about six hours and then they sent me home. The next day my face got infected and my parents took me to St. Charles Hospital in Port Jefferson where I stayed for the next five days. During my stay at St. Charles I saw at least two specialists a day ranging from plastic surgeons, eye specialists, neurologists, orthopedists and so on. The one thing I had to hear from the plastic surgeons was that I most likely will have a discolored scar near my eye on the right side of my face for a good portion of my life and that plastic surgery operations would be many because it was in such a difficult area of the face to fix in one shot. Since the date
of my accident I had three plastic surgeries and two laser surgeries, which have helped considerably, but I still have a discolored scar on the corner of my eye.

The reason why this event in the past still has a great significance to me today is because every day when I wake up and take a glance in the mirror at myself and notice the blemish to the edge of my eye it reminds me of what happened on that beautiful summer afternoon. Throughout the next six years of my life it would affect me in a positive and negative way.

I remember when I first came back to school and how self-conscious I was about my facial features. Being a 14-year-old in junior high, I was afraid everybody in the school would be gossiping of some sort. Gradually through the years I started caring less and less because everybody I knew became used to seeing my scar. I still hear people I don’t know making comments such as, “Look at that black eye!” or “Who beat you up?” It slightly bothers me a little bit because I’m constantly repeating to myself, telling people about my accident of the past.

What I can say about this horrible event that happened to me that makes me really remember this day is that since the front shocks on the mountain bike snapped, my family and I decided to make a lawsuit out of it. If you really think about it, this mountain bike is supposed to withstand mountain conditions, and this bicycle couldn’t even tackle a street curb. The shocks should have never snapped in half the way they did.

I sued the Raleigh Bicycle Corporation and they sued Rocky Point Cycle for improper installation of the bike. The law suit took about three years to settle. After all the years of waiting for the results of the settlement, surgeries, healing and restoring my conscience, on June 1, 2001 I settled for $200,000. This is a considerable amount of money which I think I deserve because of all the pain, suffering, and distress I’ve gone through. Now I would say a scar and an ATM card reminds me every day of what happened on that one horrible summer day on July 12, 1997.
Admirable or Not?

In the last couple of weeks my EG10 class has been reading and discussing the biography "Into the Wild" by Jon Krakauer. Krakauer talks about a young man Christopher Johnson McCandless (a/k/a Alexander Supertramp) who went on a deadly expedition around the United States. He secluded himself from civilization but, most importantly, his family. I do not admire McCandless because he lived his life with selfishness in which he did not care for anybody but himself and that, in turn, led to his death.

One of the reasons McCandless was not an admirable person was because he had a tendency to abandon his family many times throughout his short existence on earth. He's what you would call a loner and was always doing and keeping things to himself. To me, family should be a foundation for you to live off of because your family is the only people that really care for you and will always be there for you. McCandless took this for granted and would constantly put up a wall between him and his parents.

On McCandless' graduation day, his parents offered to buy him a car, but his stubbornness would not allow them to because he already "had purchased the secondhand yellow Datsun when he was a senior in high school. In the years since, he'd been in the habit of taking it on extended solo road trips when classes weren't in session, and during that graduation
weekend he casually mentioned to his parents that he intended to spend the upcoming summer on the road as well. His exact words were ‘I think I’m going to disappear for a while’ ” (pg 21). From this excerpt you can see that McCandless is acting independent because he purchased his own vehicle without his parents’ help, but I strongly stress that his selfishness kicks into high gear. As you see, McCandless made it a habit to forget about his family frequently and disappear for extensive periods of time, which is unfair to his family who cared very much for him.

Another way you can see that McCandless did not care for his family was when he attended Emory College. He slowly diminished his contact with them. They grew increasingly worried about McCandless. His mother stated, “‘You have completely dropped away from all who love and care about you. What is – whoever you’re with – do you think this is right?’ Chris saw this as meddling and referred to the letter as ‘stupid’ when he talked to Carine” (pg 124). Carine McCandless is McCandless’ little sister who was the only family member, to the smallest degree, to receive contact from him. From this quote, it blatantly states that he distanced himself from them and that he just couldn’t recognize his immaturity towards his loved ones.

When McCandless started his journey to Alaska he did not come prepared for the road blocks that would slow him down. Sooner, rather than later, he would die from his stubbornness. What really caused his death was that he was overconfident. To be confident in life is obviously a good characteristic trait. It is admirable, but to be overconfident can lead to a misconception of oneself. In McCandless’ case, his overconfidence made him believe that he could survive in the artic temperatures of Alaska. He must have been crazy.
When McCandless first got picked up by a fellow Alaskan named Jim Gallien, Gallien noticed that McCandless’ backpack looked very light with a .22 caliber rifle sticking out of it, "which struck Gallien -- an accomplished hunter and woodsman -- as an improbably light load for a stay of several months in the back country, especially so early in the spring. ‘He wasn’t carrying anywhere near as much food and gear as you’d expect a guy to be carrying for that kind of trip,’ Gallien recalls” (pg 4). This quote tells me that if an Alaskan native can notice that McCandless’ camping load did not meet the standard requirements for his prolonged trip in the unforgiving wilderness, he should have not made the attempt to risk his life beyond Denali National Park. Shortly after leaving the park, he would never reappear to see his beloved family. He simply did not belong in an area where even experienced hunters and woodsman dared to travel, unless they are well equipped with the necessary survival tools to withstand such overbearing conditions.

Gallien was still concerned when McCandless “admitted that the only food in his pack was a ten-pound bag of rice. His gear seemed exceedingly minimal for the harsh conditions of the interior, which in April still lay buried under the winter snowpack. Alex’s cheap leather hiking boots were neither waterproof nor well insulated. His rifle was only a .22 caliber, a bore too small to rely on if he expected to kill large animals like moose and caribou, which he would have to eat if he hoped to remain very long in the country. He had no ax, no bug dope, no snowshoes, no compass. The only navigational aid in his possession was a tattered state road map he’d scrounged at a gas station” (pg 5). Again, here it talks about McCandless being unprepared in every aspect of camping and hiking, but most important of all, to live.

So far I have discussed some unadmirable characteristics of McCandless, but another clear unadmirable way of living that does not appeal to me is that McCandless is a repugnant
liar. Throughout the course of the book, he lies about many different things, such as his
biological name, where he lived and his parent’s existence to strangers on his journey. Lying to
somebody is a serious mishap that usually leads to bad things in the future. You cannot connect
fully to somebody else because you’re living a tale in which you are a complete fake, like
McCandless.

McCandless first lied about his name when he met Jim Gallien when McCandless
“swung his pack into the bed of the Ford and introduced himself as Alex. ‘Alex?’ Gallien
responded, fishing for a last name.

“Just Alex,’ the young man replied, pointedly rejecting the bait” (pg 4). This is just one
instance with McCandless lying about his name.

Another time McCandless refers to himself as Alex is when “on December 2, he reached
the Morelos Dam and the Mexican border. Worried that he would be denied entry because he
was carrying no identification, he sneaked into Mexico by paddling through the dam’s open
floodgates and shooting the spillway below. ‘Alex looks quickly around for signs of trouble,’ his
journal records. ‘But his entry of Mexico is either unnoticed or ignored. Alexander is
jubilant!’” Here is where McCandless starts lying to himself by calling himself by his
mythological name.

All throughout the book, McCandless journeys through North America and inscribes the
fictitious name of Alexander Supertramp into various trees. To me, this sounds like he wanted to
be discovered sooner than later. He probably thought it was time to go home. These little
scriptures date back to his journal, as well. I think in some way he wanted someone to catch
onto his path and save him from his suicidal journey.
My personal connection to Christopher Johnson McCandless is that I used to have a best friend that I could relate all these unadmirable characteristics to. This supposed friend I had was a compulsive liar to the extent where he believed his own lies. I stopped admiring this friend because he was unprepared for the future steps of growing up and becoming a man. He headed towards another direction that led him into a pathetic downward spiral. The most unadmirable thing he did was abandon and forget those who really cared for him. I considered myself family to him, but his bad decisions caused the ultimate downfall for him.

It's not only a young man like McCandless that falls down and can't pick himself back up, but there are many other people in the world today who have led similar lives of selfishness and immaturity of his nature, like my ex-best friend. This behavior only leads to dysfunction, unhappiness and loneliness. The only way you could help people like this is to give them a better sense of direction in life in a positive way. But in some cases, no matter how hard you try, they will still do what they want. This man was ambitious and determined, but that is what led to his ultimate demise.
Ten years from today I will be in the medical field making good money with a wife and maybe a kid. The reason why I see myself in the medical field is because I like to help people out with whatever they need. That could be helping a sick person or even help them rehabilitate an injury. My plan is to have those goals set by 2014 but a career change may always pop up from the horizon.

I am currently attending Suffolk Community College as an Liberal Arts major. I picked Liberal Arts as a major because I just wanted to get my general areas covered and also if I wanted to change my major, most of the credits I will obtain can be transferable. I think that I most likely will obtain my Associates Degree within a two to three year gap. I also plan to play soccer while I am attending the college but not until academic wise if I can balance school, work, and soccer.

After I graduate from Suffolk College, I plan to go to Stony Brook University because they have a very prestigious medical program. I would like to either become a orthopedic surgeon or a physical therapist. They are both very paid occupations with excellent
benefits. I can help many people with their injuries and help them better fulfill their lives with better bones or bodies. As I stated before, that I am a sport lover and I know how frequently athletes get injured, so I could also see myself as a sports trainer for professional athletes. These would all be fun jobs but I know it takes lots of hard work, time, and dedication to exceed to these high expectations.

After I receive my degrees I would like to buy a home on Long Island and start a family. I do not want to rush into family life before I accomplish my goals for right now. It takes lots of hard work and also money to live a comfortable life with family, especially the standards of living on Long Island is very high. I figure in ten years it will all become a reality instead of a dream that I am living now.
Dear Portfolio Reader,

In my portfolio I have chosen to put my memoir entitled “Why Am I Here,” my analysis of a poem entitled “The Quest” By Sharon Olds: The Search For Evil” and my timed in-class essay called “Kathy”. I chose my memoir because I feel that through “Why Am I Here” my writing has improved more than it ever has. I never thought that a piece that I wrote could sound the way that this piece does. I also chose to include the analysis of the poem because I personally had a really rough time writing it, but I feel that in the end “The Quest” By Sharon Olds: The Search For Evil” is one of my best pieces of writing.

I chose to write the story “Why Am I here” because it was an experience that completely changed my life. I felt it was inspiring and hoped readers would be touched by it. Looking at my first draft and my final copy, I can see that all time I spent revising it and improving the variety of sentences made a real difference in the quality of my paper. The final copy was clearer, more expressive, and more interesting through my use of different writing techniques.

I chose to include the analysis of the poem because I found the poem to be extremely hard to analyze. Because I found it hard to analyze, it was hard to write the paper. I spent quite a few hours working on this paper and put a lot of effort into making it flow together and make sense. I believe this effort paid off, and even though the analysis was one of the hardest papers I have had to write, it made me a better writer.

When we did the timed in class essay, I chose to write about a person who made a huge difference in my life. This person was a woman named Kathy. In the essay I tried to make readers understand what an amazing woman she is by using the different styles of
writing that we learned in class. I feel that my writing skills were truly tested through this essay because I did not have time to revise it or make any corrections on it, but the knowledge I had gained in class helped me to make the story a success.

When I started this class, I dreaded writing papers because I didn’t feel that I could express myself correctly through writing. Now after being in the class for only this short amount of time, I am already more confident and don’t feel ashamed of what I am writing. I have learned many valuable writing skills that will follow me for the rest of my college career and after I am through. The practice sheets we did in class about the different writing techniques, the feedback given to me by my classmates during our group discussions in class, and the ideas and corrections my professor gave me helped me greatly improve my papers and my writing.

I feel this course has not only helped me improve my writing, it has also given me a greater confidence in expressing myself. I know that I will use these skills in my future choice of career. I hope that you enjoy my papers as much as I have enjoyed learning how to improve them.

Sincerely Yours,

Susanna
Why Am I Here?

My heart was beating as loud as the engine of the plane. The faster we went down the runway, the harder the tears streamed down my face. As the plane was landing, my crying became more hysterical. I stepped outside into air so heavy and humid it was hard to breathe. I followed the other passengers into a small overcrowded room. It was so loud in this room from people yelling about all kinds of things I could no longer hear the sound of my own sobbing. From there we got into a small truck and started driving down a dirt road headed out over miles of absolutely nothing. Where were all the people, the houses, and the shopping malls, I started questioning why I had agreed to come to this place. Why had I agreed to leave my life, my friends, my comfort zone to come to this strange and desolate place? I thought I needed a change but looking around I wasn't so sure this was where I wanted to find it.

After what seemed like the longest ride of my life, the truck stopped. It was now dark out and the only thing visible were the outlines of small buildings. I was led into one and a lantern was lit. My tears started again immediately. “Are you kidding me?” I was standing in the middle of a hut, grass roof, wooden walls and a dirt floor. “This is where I am going to be spending the next six months of my life?” I laid down on what was supposed to be my bed and cried. Why did I decide to come here? This was the kind of place I had only read about in National Geographic magazines. I heard something move then so I looked up. I screamed! Scurrying across the floor was the biggest roach I had ever seen in my life. Jumping up, I grabbed my mother.
“I changed my mind, I don’t want to stay! Don’t leave me in this filthy disgusting place!”

“Don’t worry this will be a good experience. I know you will learn a lot from being here! I have to go now or I will miss my plane.”

Then she turned and left.

The sun streaming through the grass roof awoke me in the morning. I had cried almost all night and was completely exhausted. I got up and stepped outside. As far as the eye could see there was nothing but grass. I was standing in the middle of a small village with strange people. All around me they were going about their daily activities and speaking in a language I had never heard before. I felt completely lost and alone.

Startled by the tapping on my shoulder, I turned around. There stood the missionary I was going to be staying with, a short, husky man, clad in dirty khaki shorts and hiking boots that were caked with mud. His face was dark and leathery as if he had spent many years in the merciless sun. He looked as if he hadn’t shaved in days and his hair was long and messy. He extended his weathered hand to me and said, “Welcome to Belize. Would you like to see the village and meet the children?” He took me around the village on the bumpy dirt road and introduced me to everyone. I was blown away by the poverty. There wasn’t even electricity! “How can these people live like this?” I wondered.

Everything from what they ate to how they dressed to how they treated a complete stranger was different from what I was accustomed to. Even in the midst of their complete poverty they were more than thrilled to have me over for dinner or to hand me a soda when I was passing. The children were amazing! I could hear their laughing voices as the sun rose and they were doing their chores. Later in the day they would run through the
grass in their clothes that were torn and unmatched, kicking around a soccer ball that was hardly filled with air. I didn’t understand how they could be happy in their situation. They were warm and loving and took me right in. They made me feel at home.

While I was there I spent a lot of time with the people of the village. I helped them with small daily tasks like lugging the heavy water pails filled with water from the stream to their houses for their wash, and helping them dig up their diminutive gardens to plant seeds, the whole time wondering how they could be happy, how they could keep their sanity in such a grimy place.

But they also took me hiking through the luxurious rainforests, snorkeling in the crystal clear water, and swimming in pools at the bottom of roaring waterfalls. And one day while I was sitting there looking out the window, I saw this place through different eyes. I no longer looked with eyes filled with disgust and regret. I looked with eyes that saw nothing but beauty. Nothing had changed about my surroundings, but I had changed. I had the chance to meet many amazing people and start lifetime friendships. I was shown that true happiness doesn’t come from what you have or where you live or what you are wearing; it comes from deep inside.

And when the time came to leave I no longer looked out that window seeing endless fields of grass, or the dirt roads or the filthy grass huts. I saw the glorious sunset accented by the exotic flowers and the glistening steam. I no longer saw the mismatched and torn clothing the people were wearing. I saw beautiful people that are truly happy and know how to show their happiness. I saw a place I had come to love that was welling up with beauty. I no longer saw this place as a small filthy village. I saw it as the most beautiful spot on earth.
The day my girl is lost for an hour,
the day I think she is gone forever and then I find her.
I sit with her awhile and then I
go to the corner store for orange juice for her
lips, tongue, palate, throat,
stomach, blood, every gold cell of her body.
I joke around with the guy behind the counter. I
walk out into the winter air and
weep. I know he would never hurt her.
never take her body in his hands to
crack it or crush it, would keep her safe and
bring her home to me. Yet there are
those who would. I pass the huge
eockeysed buildings massive as prisons,
charged, loaded, cocked with people.
some who would love to take my girl, to un-
do her, fine strand by fine
strand. These are buildings full of rope.
ironing boards, sash, wire,
iron cords woven in black-and-blue spirals like
umbilici, apartments supplied with
razor blades and lye. This is my
quest, to know where it is, the evil in the
human heart. As I walk home I
look in face after face for it, I
see the dark beauty, the rage, the
grown-up children of the city she walks as a
child, a raw target. I cannot
see a soul who would do it, I clutch the
jar of juice like a cold heart,
remembering the time my parents tied me to a chair and
would not feed me and I looked up
into their beautiful faces, my stomach a
bright mace, my wrists like birds the
shrike has hung by the throat from barbed wire, I
gazed as deep as I could into their eyes
and all I saw was goodness, I could not get past it.
I rush home with the blood of oranges
pressed to my breast. I cannot get it to her fast enough.
“The Quest” By Sharon Olds: The Search for Evil

The poem “The Quest” by Sharon Olds is a very disturbing poem. In this poem the narrator is writing about herself, explaining how she was abused as a child and now, as hard as she tries, she can’t decipher between good and evil. Throughout the poem the narrator is on a quest to find the evil in the human heart. As she is on a trip to the store and back, she searches for evil in everything she passes but she can’t seem to find it.

In the beginning of the poem, the narrator is going to the store to buy “orange juice, for her daughter’s lips, tongue, palate, throat,/ stomach, blood, every gold cell of her body.” I believe that the orange juice symbolizes nourishment and healing, things the narrator didn’t seem to receive herself as a child. Probably because her parents punished her by depriving her of nourishment.

While at the store she talks to the guy behind the counter. She is thinking to herself that she knows he would never harm her daughter; “never hurt her, never take her body in his hands to / crack it or crush it.” The fact that she believes that by looking at someone you can tell what they are capable of doing shows that she is very confused and does not know how to judge a person’s character from his appearance.

On her way home the narrator describes the buildings she passes as “massive as prisons.” It is very sad that she looks at these buildings as places to be locked in, places to be kept in confinement. She also describes them as being “charged, loaded, cocked with people,/ who would love to take my girl, to un / do her, fine strand by fine strand.” This part was particularly unsettling. The way she used the words “charged, loaded and cocked,” made it seem like the people could at any second “go off” on her and “un-do”
her. When the narrator used the word “un-do” she wanted to symbolize several things, un-do her like break her down in anyway possible, sexually, mentally, and physically.

Starting in line 18, the narrator says, “These buildings full of rope, ironing boards, sash, wire, / ironing cords woven in black-and-blue spirals like / umbilici, apartments supplied with / razor blades and lye.” This implies that common, everyday household items can be used as weapons. This quote makes you think that possibly these items were used to abuse the narrator when she was younger which is why she is afraid of them now.

As she continues to walk home, the narrator is looking in everyone’s face trying to discern any evil, but she cannot see evil in anyone. The narrator is then “remembering the time my parents tied me to a chair and / would not feed me and I looked up / into their beautiful faces.” The narrator then says, “I gazed as deep as I could into their eyes and all I saw was goodness.” After all the abuse her parents put her through, when she looked at them she saw goodness. This shows that you cannot discern evil by looking into someone’s eyes or by looking at their faces and this is how she believes she can find evil.

In this poem I believe the narrator feels as though her innocence was lost. She is struggling to heal herself from all the evil that has been done to her in the past, and to keep herself safe from any evil that could be done to her in the future, which is why she is searching for evil. She is searching for evil in the faces of people and in buildings and in objects, and possibly realizes that through these things she will never find where evil lies. I believe this frightens her and causes her to be paranoid and want to stay in her home where she can be safe from all the evil that exists in the world.
I looked up and there she stood at the door of my classroom. Her warm eyes that were usually filled with laughter, were instead filled with tears. Jumping up, I handed the crying two year old I had been consoling to my co-worker, and ran into her arms.

She was a large woman, her frame towering above mine, with short clark hair. Love radiated from her eyes and her smile, and touched everything she looked at.

"Why are you leaving me?" asked, tears now welling up in my own eyes.

"What am I going to do without you?"

"You're going to be fine baby!" She replied in that deep, soothing voice that had seemed to solve all my problems for the past two years.

"It's not like I'm falling off the face of the planet, I'm retiring! I still have a phone!"

From the first day I started working at daycare she made my days pleasant. It seemed as though her smiling face was what made the job tolerable. Everyone looked up to her for advice, she had been there the longest and seemed to know the solution for every problem that arose. And for some reason; she decided to take me under her wing like a mother hen does with
her chicks. Every problem I had I went to her. It didn't matter whether she told me I was right or wrong, just talking to her made the problem seem better. She would just hear me out, let me blabber on and on, cry if I had to, and then when I was done she would take my face in her hands like she did with the little kids and tell me everything would work out. Then in that soothing voice, offer her advice. When I thought my world was ending, that advice made me realize it wasn't.

This went on for two years. I grew closer and closer to her and then the bad news hit. "I'm leaving, daycare honey!" she told me one day. "I'm going on that long vacation to Florida I've been dreaming about." I felt like my world was shattering. But her soothing voice again made me realize it wasn't. I looked up to Kathy more than anyone in my life. She made more of an impact on my life in those two short years than anyone has in my whole life. She was always there to lend an ear or some advice no matter how busy she was, and gave her love unselfishly all the time. I hope that one day I could make an impact on someone's life the way she did in mine.
Dear Portfolio Reader,

Enclosed in this portfolio I have my two essays: “What is home?” and “Is Photography for me?” It was easy for me to choose these topics because I knew exactly what I wanted to write about. Although they were easily thought of, they were not as simple to put on paper.

When I first started these essays, I practiced some free writing to get all my thoughts down on paper. Later I organized these thoughts. Also when writing “What is home?” I went to a friend who had been there for me during the time my story took place. I asked him if there were any detail I was leaving out or any words to harsh. Finally I typed them out and used what I prepared so far as a rough draft for our writing groups. I got great feedback from my peers. They made comments on how they could relate. This made me feel good to know that it made an impact on them and that they understood my essays. After getting my peers opinions it was time to write my final draft. I made all my grammar and spelling corrections, along with a few other corrections. Overall I didn’t change my rough draft too much.
I am proud to say that my professor was pleased with both my essays, but did make a few corrections in my grammar. I suppose it was one of the few I had missed. I tried hard in making these papers my best and I believe I have succeeded well.

I have never thought of myself as a good writer, but the outcome of my story has changed my mind. I look forward to taking another writing course next semester to improve my writing to its fullest.
What is home?

Two years ago I never would have thought I'd be where I am today. It's amazing how one decision you make can change your whole life. That one decision I made did. You don't realize what you have until it's not there anymore. Just imagine living somewhere for 17 years of your life, and then suddenly being torn away from the only place you knew as home. This is what had happened to me in the summer of 1997.

I was born and raised in Staten Island, N.Y. My parents have been divorced since I was very young. From 1982 until 1997 I lived with just my mother and brother, who is two years older than I am. As my brother and I grew older and became teenagers, our relationship with our mother slowly began to deteriorate. We just couldn't see eye to eye. A simple disagreement would end up turning into an ongoing battle.

One hot summer afternoon I had been very lazy, as any teenager is, and had not done my chores. My mother was furious, this was not the first time I was reluctant in doing my chores. The argument grew extremely intense and I needed to get away. As I went to walk out the door to cool
down, my mother said that if I left not to return and to go live with my father on Long Island. I had enough of the fighting. As I stood in the doorway I said to myself; "my mother and I would have a better relationship if we were apart." It was at this moment when I picked up my whole life and left. I spent the rest of the summer hanging around my new house wondering if I had done the right thing. I knew it would be hard. Staten Island was the only place I knew, to me it was home.

Unfortunately I had to change schools for my senior year of high school. I went from a graduating class of 900, to a graduating class of 54. It was a difficult adjustment. In my old school I saw new faces every day, but in my new school I saw the same old faces day after day. I made friends, but they just couldn't compare to my friends in Staten Island. Not only was the population change difficult but the family change was too. I was use to visiting my father and stepmother once in a while on the weekends, living with them was a totally different experience. There were rules that were never there before. They expected so much more from me than when I came for the weekend. I discovered that everything wasn't as perfect as it seemed.
My relationship with my mother over the past year has improved tremendously. Sometimes I contemplate going back home, just so I could be happy again. I know that if I had decided to do such a thing it would hurt my father greatly. Once again I am stuck with an important decision to make, but this time I know to take my time and think it through. If I had to do it all over again my decision might have been different. In making this crucial decision I must ask myself, what is more important, not disappointing my father or for the first time in a while be truly happy.

Do you ever wonder what a certain situation might be like if you had made a different decision? There isn't a day that goes by that I don't wonder how my life would be if my decision had been different. Would I have gone to college? Would I have graduated High School? Would I have been happier? These are the questions that I will always wonder about, however no matter how long I think about them they could never be answered.
Is Photography for me?

Last year in high school I had to choose some electives to fill in my schedule. One of the electives that I chose was photography. Not knowing anything about photography I figured I would give it a shot. It turned out that I loved the class. It was fun taking pictures and printing them out myself. When the class was over I wondered if I would ever have the chance again to learn more about it. Now I have decided that I am going to research photography with the chance that I might even make it my career in years to come.

Not knowing when to begin, I wondered “Who could I talk to, to find out if this career was right for me. So I went to old reliable AOL. I looked under members’ profiles for anyone who was a professional photographer. I typed up a general letter asking questions about the career. For example: “What was it that originally drew you to photography? Is it a well paying job? Is work hard to find? What type of photography do you do? Do you enjoy it? Are you glad you chose this as a career?” Now all I had to do was wait for a response.
The very next day I only received one letter from a married couple from Alabama, Steve and Darlene. They wrote: "It is hard work and you have to have people on the phone getting business for you, it is very competitive. We seem to work 13 to 14 hours a day sometimes, this summer we didn't even have time to take a vacation. Then there is dry times when there seems to be no money. Kind of like actors/actresses. We have been in business for 10 years. The pay is good when you get work. We have to spend a lot of money on props and cameras. You have to be a people person. You have to love children and we are finding children to be really unruly lately. I want to encourage you though. If you live in a big city you could seek different areas of photography. We don't do any form of porn and people want you to do that. Our values won't allow us to. If you would risk doing that, it seems to sell really well, but we value real beauty more like a beautiful smile."

Overall their letter was quit helpful to me. I now know how difficult it can really be but I might be willing to take that chance. Now it was time to get another opinion. The only other person I could think of to talk to was my old photography teacher, Mr. Kruscheski. (We called him Mr. K., because that's what he preferred.) So I did
just that. I went down to my old school around lunchtime and found him eating his lunch in the old shop. That room brought back some great memories. I greeted him hello and gave him a great big hug. I explained to him why I was there and he agreed to help me out by answering a few questions. For example:

**Me:** How long have you been taking pictures?

**Mr. K:** I have been around photography all my life. My uncle use to be a photographer and I learned everything I know from him. When I first started getting into it I think I was about 12 years old.

**Me:** Why did you choose photography as a career?

**Mr. K:** I chose it because I knew a lot about it and I enjoyed it as well.

**Me:** Do you enjoy teaching it?

**Mr. K:** Yes, I do enjoy it very much. I love teaching kids photography like my uncle taught me.

**Me:** Have you ever done any other work with photography besides teach it?

**Mr. K:** No, not really. I started teaching right out of college.

**Me:** What college did you go to?

**Mr. K:** I went to SVA (School of Visual Arts) in the city.

**Me:** Do they have a good photography program?
Mr. K: Yes, excellent.

After I was finished I left the school. On the ride home I thought to myself. "Did that the interview really help me?" Maybe it did a little, but not much. I do know that SVA has a good photography program though, so that could come in handy.

Now that I know more about photography as a career I plan on taking some classes in it. If I am any good at it maybe someday I will be a professional photographer. For now I think I will keep learning more about it and just maybe I will succeed.
In my four years of high school, I can honestly say that I have never had a real English class. When I was choosing my classes for my freshman year, I had decided to take an English/drama class. This class was a combination of the two. I took that class for the next two following years as well. For my senior year I had switched high schools and was scheduled for a regular English class.

Between all four years of these classes none of them provided proper English education. In my English/drama class we practiced mostly drama with a little bit of vocabulary to cover the English requirements. When I switched schools I was a bit nervous that I wouldn't be able to keep up with the work. Boy
was I wrong? This class was pathetic. Our teacher was a Spanish teacher for starters. The hardest work we ever did was cross word puzzles. To top it all off, for my final exam I had to put together my own children's book. The project took me a total of 20 minutes. Nevertheless I received a 98 on that project.

Now here I am in remedial English class. Why? I ask myself. I think we all know why. If I had gotten a better English education in high school, I might have had a better chance. For now I struggle through the work, but one day I will catch up with the rest.