The Sand in the Glass: A journey through the writing process

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Methods

Syd Field, screenwriting guru, talks in his book about “resistance.” He doesn’t believe in writer’s block, only internal and external forces that make us resist sitting down and writing. It didn’t matter where I tried to write: my room, the library, a coffee shop—I always felt resistance. It didn’t matter what time I tried to write: 9 am, early afternoon, midnight—I was constantly facing resistance. Sometimes I tried writing by hand and transferring it to the computer, and that worked well, but I didn’t always follow through with this method. The semester’s workload, my fear of missing out on fun, my self-doubt, and the overwhelming emotion of putting real experiences into fiction made me not enjoy the writing process. In turn, I did not complete my goals, but this does not mean this experience was all for naught.

Real Outcomes

The most important thing I gained from this experience, was self-realization. I don’t like sitting down and cranking out pages for a deadline. I don’t like putting down my deep thoughts on paper for all to see. I realized my priorities were skewed—I was more interested in my social life, working for money, and what the future held, rather than the semester I had at hand. I did not reach my 40 page goal—instead I reached about 20. I was not able to produce a query letter because of how short my writing wound up being. However, I did journal, and I did produce a reflective essay in order to gain an understanding of my writing process. I had high expectations that were way off course (I thought I would write more than 40 pages). I faced challenges of time and a large workload that forced me to learn how to balance myself. My previous honors project taught me how to collaborate with another writer and to complete an idea on paper. This project taught me how to work with myself.

“I’m not worried I’ll get the product done, I’m worried I’ll hate the product I’ve come up with.”

—March 31, 10:45 am, journal entry

“Through life we are kind of just gathering followers, fans, those who believe in your life, care about it’s outcomes and will miss you when you go.”

—Cullen Hue, page 6

Introduction

Ever since I was a little kid, I wanted to be a storyteller (I have the stories to prove it). By the end of my higher education, I wanted to have a tangible product I could be proud of—thus, for my second honors project I wanted to start a novel and make strides in revising and learn the querying process. The novel would be entitled, The Sand in the Glass. Little did I know that this title would have double meaning, as this project became more than just writing a book, but it became a learning process about time management and prioritizing. When I first began the project, it had three parts: write 40 pages of a novel and revise them, journal my experiences, and produce a query letter at the end of my project. The main goal was to learn about my own writing process, further explore the querying process, and to use writing as catharsis since the topic was quite personal. Since I have been screenwriting for a few years now, I also strived to learn more about prose, and to compare and contrast these two modes of storytelling.

“The amount of mourners you have? Through life we are kind of just gathering followers, fans, those who believe in your life, care about it’s outcomes and will miss you when you go.”

—Cullen Hue, page 6