

Write Something New

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Genre: Poetry

To view art and recordings: <https://sites.google.com/msu.edu/stacimaulepoetry/pieces>

Free Verse Poem

Freedom- Draft

Validation through the words of others is where I have always found my solstice.

An avid people pleaser who forgets to please himself.

Clinging onto the list of expectations since birth just no longer makes sense.

For freedom, unexplored is a life unlived.

Trying to break down the walls and create something unique is a challenge.

A challenge featuring limited parameters and no examples gives time to explore.

A small place between expectations and autonomy.

I always wondered if I could get there.

Breaking down the walls and creating something unique.

Limited parameters, no examples, just time to explore.

I've heard there's a small space between predetermined expectations and autonomy.

I always wondered if I could get there.

Look at me now, loosely jotting notes down, worrying if these sentences are fragments.

But no one cares, not even the person who made the boxes.

The boxes have been left unmarked and unread.

I always wondered if I could get here.

I am free, for freedom explored is a life well-lived.

Boxes (Formerly known as "Freedom")- Final Copy

I grew up an avid people pleaser who, somewhere along the way, forgot to please myself.

Validation through the words of others is where I have always found my solstice.

But clinging onto the list of expectations set by others just no longer makes sense.

For freedoms unexplored is a life unlived.

Breaking down walls and leaving boxes unchecked haunted me for far too long.

It never mattered how *I* felt about the piece.

It is long overdue, but maybe I leave the boxes unchecked this time.

In this small place between expectations and autonomy, I always wondered if I could get there.

Look at me now, loosely jotting notes down, worrying about sentences fragments.

But the truth is no one cares, not even the person who made the boxes.

The boxes have been left unmarked, unread, and unaccounted for.

For freedoms explored is a life well-lived.

With limited parameters and no examples, just time to explore.

Words flow through my brain into my fingertips and appear one by one on the screen.

This is freedom; messy and loose.

This is me unbothered by the unchecked boxes.

Sonnet Poem

Draft One

A father at sea when a child is born
A mother alone in her hospital bed
The ultimate sacrifice leaving with tears shed
A family left torn

Growing up here and there, hell, it was everywhere
The military is not a job rather a lifestyle
We will be gone in a while
New places, new friends, it wasn't fair

There are two types of people those who get good at making new friends
The others well they make few
One only cling onto two
Both know these friendships will end

Draft Two

A- I was born into a military family, my unasked-for reality
B- I am not saying it was inherently bad
B- But I am saying I missed my dad
A- You see, this lifestyle was more like a mentality

A- My dad's life was filled with confidentiality

B- Serving his nation and never complaining if anything, he was glad

B- Between work and home, he was quite the super dad

A- Our world was centered around our nationality

C- You see, I grew up here and there.; to be honest, it was everywhere

D- Maryland, Michigan, and Rome

E- All before the age of nine

C- New cities, new houses, it all wasn't fair

D- Every three years, a new home

E- Been here for a while now; I guess it was all fine

My Unasked-for Reality- Final

I was born into a military family, my unasked-for reality.

I am not saying it was inherently bad,

But I am saying I missed my dad.

You see, my lifestyle was more like a mentality.

My Dad's life was filled with confidentiality.

Serving his nation and never complaining, if anything, he was glad.

Between work and home, he was quite the super Dad.

WRITE SOMETHING NEW

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Our world was centered around our nationality.

You see, I grew up here and there; to be honest, it was everywhere.

Maryland, Michigan, and Rome

All before age nine.

New friends, new schools, it all wasn't fair,

Every three years, a new home.

Looking back, it wasn't easy, but now everything's fine.

Slam Poem

Draft One: Quick Brainstorming

I grew up in a rural town. Everyone looked the same. Nothing ever happens here. Until it does, you see, all, because you are one of the lucky ones, doesn't mean bad things aren't happening. I was a lucky one; I have wonderful parents.

Draft Two: The real draft (Bolded words are where the emphasis is placed when reading)

“You are the only person who ever loved **me.**”

Were the first words that a child ever spoke to **me** that brought me to my **knees.**

You **see**, I am an educator for all, not just the rich kids, not just the Hallmark card **families.**

And let **me** tell you **something**; There will **be** times all you do is cry,

While you wonder how to set them **free**

and the truth is sometimes you can't; there are no **committees** for these horrendous **realities**

Five years old; beaten, broken, bottled up, and outbursts **daily**

but let's **be** honest, so would **we.**

If **we** went home to what they did, I don't think **we** would make it, can't we all **agree**.

There has to **be** an answer, for our classrooms are becoming **sanctuaries**

The only hope is to build a **community**

Where they feel valued and **carefree**

Able to speak their minds and be at **ease**

Now, there is no **guarantee** that this will **be** their **clarity**

So, for now, we cling onto hope, for that's all we have left for this **reality**

Draft Three: Final (Bolded words are where the emphasis is placed when reading)

"You are the only person who ever loved **me**".

Were the first words that a child ever spoke to **me** that brought me to my **knees**.

You **see**, I am an educator for all, not just the rich kids, not just the Hallmark card **families**.

And let **me** tell you **something**.

There will **be** times all you do is cry; while you wonder how to set them **free**,

and the truth is sometimes you can't.

There are no **committees** for these horrendous **realities**.

That child; Five years old; beaten, broken, and bottled up, has outbursts **daily**,

but let's **be** honest, so would **we**.

If **we** went home to what they did, I don't think **we** would make it.

Can't we all **agree** that there has to **be** an answer,

Because in **actuality**, our classrooms are **slowly** becoming **sanctuaries**.

The only hope is to build a **community**.

Where they feel valued and **carefree**,

Able to speak their minds and be at **ease**.

Now, there is no **guarantee** that this will **be** their **clarity**

So, for now, we cling onto hope, for that's all we have left for their **realities**.

Poetry Genre Memo

I chose to explore poetry for several reasons: I have not studied much poetry in my adult life, but I am an avid reader of this genre. In addition, the thought of writing poetry was somewhat stressful to me as it can lack barriers and be more of an emotional piece.

Furthermore, as described in my free verse piece, I have spent most of my life ensuring that my work aligns with the expectations set forth by others; however, with poetry, there is more room for creativity, thus allowing me to focus on the content over the set-up. Finally, the audience I intended my poetry for was adults. Therefore, the content on which I wrote the poems was emotionally deeper than what I would read to my students. In my free-verse poem, I went for more of a general audience, not just adults; so, this is one I would share with my students if it was warranted.

The revision process I took for this genre looked different from my typical process because the pieces were much shorter than the typical papers I write, I could examine the words closely and think about the composition. My initial writing of each poem was fairly quick, and I focused primarily on putting my ideas on paper; then, I waited a day before touching them again. Waiting before editing and revising is not my typical process, but I wanted to take a break and come back with fresh eyes. I tried not to look at too many examples' pieces as that was the point of this exercise; however, I did some preliminary research surrounding each style of poetry and tried to base my poems on just a few pieces of information from each. For my free-verse poem, the style follows a nonrhyming style, relying heavily on the words chosen by the author. For my sonnet, I had to focus heavily on the ABBA ABBA CDE CDE pattern, which at the beginning

was challenging; however, I think I hammered it out, and I am proud of my final piece. Lastly, my slam poem; slam poetry relies heavily on dictation, so I read and reread the piece repeatedly. I also would record myself and listen back to it just to hear it without speaking simultaneously- if that makes sense. Each piece brought its own challenge, whether it was word choice, style, or the overall content.

After writing in this genre, in a broader sense, I am now interested in seeing what my students would do with fewer parameters. I am not overly sure that I want to implement a lot of poetry because, to be honest, I am not sure I have the time to do it properly, but I want to try and do at least one poem with my students this year. More importantly, I learned that I want to allow my students to express their thoughts and not get overly caught up with them, achieving all my expectations with this experiment. I was able to tap into a deeper emotional connection with my three poems, which fostered more ownership, and in the end, I created writings that I was proud of. As mentioned before, I love reading poetry and find poetry healing during times of distress and relatable, so it was an interesting experience being raw and honest with an assignment. I also was unaware that there were so many variations within the umbrella of the poetry genre and all with such broad styles. In the end, I learned a lot about myself through these poems and about the genre; I look forward to implementing some of the things I learned throughout this experience.

Genre: Letter

Draft One

Dear Nana,

It has been ages since I wrote anything with your name on it, oddly healing writing and seeing it again. I have had ample time for quiet introspection over the past three years, but I still

have an ache that bellows inside me. As I sit writing this, today, July 23rd, is the day I lost you. You probably don't remember your final days, but I do, and I hold onto them. In many ways, your death was the most challenging time of my life, and in ways, it continues to be. You were inspiring to me in so many ways. You faced every challenge with a smile and loved endlessly, you were selfless, devoted, and above all, you were the best nana anyone could have ever asked for.

Your memory faded well before July 23rd. I will never forget the day you transitioned into the memory care facility. I wheeled you in with my eyes wide open, terrified of the other residents yelling and playing with dolls; I couldn't make sense of any of this- how could something like this happen to you. We sat for a while as I showed you family pictures, and I was overwhelmed with emotion, and tears fell down my face. At that moment, my heart was shattered, but you looked at me and, for the first time in weeks, spoke to me as nothing had happened, and you told me you could never forget me and asked me not to be sad for you. That was our last real moment before everything slid down the massive hill that would be the next two weeks. After that, I came by almost every day, we would talk, or I would speak. You asked my dad multiple times about his baby and if she was sleeping through the night, but I was her. I tried to remind you, but you were insistent. We met with hospice often, and they gave us a book on grief. It's hard to remember those details now, but I do remember that for weeks, every time the phone rang, our hearts would stop, and a lump would grow in our throats until that final call came in.

You passed away late at night, that late summer night. We rushed to see you and walked in to see you lying there- you were so beautiful and at peace. From that moment on, life has been different without you. I am "hanging in there"; that's what one is supposed to say...right? So

much has happened in the past three years- I graduated from Central Michigan University, got my first real job, began graduate school, and learned a lot about myself. My life is still as busy as ever, just with more focus and purpose. Next school year, I will be teaching in the town where you lived your whole life and raised your family. I am teaching down the road from where Dad went to elementary school. So, it will be slightly somber driving past your house every day, but I will have to manage. It is funny how this happens so often- you are popping up in my life in one way or another. In my last district, I drove by the last place I saw you every day; that drive was harder.

I should apologize for not coming to see you more often. I could list a number of excuses, but the fact of the matter is I do not like going there and seeing your name carved into the cold metal plate. It is a stark reminder that you're gone. We had so many memories there too, and you're not with me anymore, so I just prefer to avoid the place altogether. Anyways, there are so many questions I still have for you that I wish I could have answers to, especially surrounding my father's adoption. I wish I would have been more interested in this topic when I was younger, but it didn't seem to matter then. Since then, I have developed a strong interest in finding where I originated from. I am in no business to find his birth mother or any other family for that matter; however, I would like to know geographically where we are from. My dad sees no value in this, but you know him- stubborn. I also wish I could hear the story about when you met papa. I regret not asking more questions, and I apologize for that. As the youngest grandchild (by far as you know), I struggled to find my place that was not at a kids' table. I was always worried you viewed me as a child, and I shouldn't ask too many personal questions.

With Love,

Staci

Final Copy

23 July 2021

Dearest Nana,

It has been ages since I wrote anything with your name on it. Yet, it is oddly healing writing and seeing it again. I have had ample time for quiet introspection over the past three years, but I still have an ache that bellows inside me. Today, July 23rd is the day I lost you three years ago as I sit writing this. You probably don't remember your final days, but I do, and I hold onto them. In many ways, your death was the most challenging time of my life, and in more ways than one, it continues to be. You were inspiring to me in so many ways. You faced every challenge with a smile and loved endlessly, you were selfless, devoted, and above all, you were the best nana anyone could have ever asked for. I wish I could rewind time and experience it all over again. I still have so many questions for you that I wish I could have answers to, especially surrounding my father's adoption. I wish I would have been more interested in this topic when I was younger, but it didn't seem to matter then. Since then, I have developed a strong interest in finding out about the situation. To be fair, I am in no business to find his birth mother or any other family for that matter; however, I would like to know geographically where we are from and maybe the story. My dad is worried I will find someone, and they will replace you somehow, but rest assured, that would be impossible. There is only one you, and nobody could ever come close.

As a young child, I took for granted your significance in my life. I will be honest; as you know, you were older grandparents- much older. I didn't think you were fun because you did not have the energy to run around with me, it took me a while to understand your value, and I

apologize sincerely for that, as I later learned that I could not be more wrong. You brought wisdom and stories to the table, and most importantly, you cared. It has taken me a long time to realize just how much you cared. I took for granted that you were not going to live forever. I do still wish you were younger or got to live longer as I would have loved to have had you in the stands at my graduation; but that is how life works. While I am apologizing, I should also apologize for not coming to see you more often now that you are gone. I could list a number of excuses, but the fact of the matter is I just do not like going there and seeing your name carved into the cold metal plate. It is a stark reminder that you're gone and not coming back. We had so many memories at the church as well, and now you're not with me anymore, so I just prefer to avoid the place altogether.

I am not sure if you remember your final days as I do; you see your memory faded well before July 23rd. It all happened so fast. You forgot my name one day, the next, you forgot altogether. You asked my dad multiple times about his new baby and if she was sleeping through the night, but I was her, sitting across from you. I tried to remind you, but you were insistent I was someone else. Dementia was such a cruel thing to happen to someone so pure. Once the diagnosis was made, Dad picked out your new home, and I will never forget the day you transitioned into that memory care facility. I wheeled you in with my eyes wide open, terrified and confused about the other residents yelling and playing with dolls; I couldn't make sense of any of this- how could something like this happen to you. We sat for a while as I showed you pictures of family, and I was overwhelmed with emotion, and tears quickly fell down my face. At that moment, my heart was shattered, but you looked at me and, for the first time in weeks, spoke to me as nothing was happening, and you told me you could never forget me and asked me not to be sad for you. Thank you for that, as I still hold onto that memory. That was our last real

moment before everything slid down the massive hill that would be the next two weeks. After that, I came by almost every day, we would talk, or should I say I would speak.

Soon after, it was determined that you would need to transition into hospice; I remember feeling betrayed; how can you die and forget me? We met with hospice often, and they gave us a book on grief. It is humorous that during the most challenging moments of someone's life, all you get is a dumb book. It became a badge of honor; you see, if someone is walking around with that book, everyone knows what's coming. Nurses were in and out all day long; the pastor came in and asked if we wanted to pray, but I was too broken and upset. For many days that followed, I felt helpless and hopeless.

It's hard to remember all the details now, but I do remember that for weeks, every time the phone rang, our hearts would stop, and a lump would grow in our throats until that final call came in. You passed away late at night, that late summer night. We rushed to see you and walked in to see you lying there- you were so beautiful and at peace. I know it is what you had wanted for years. You always wanted to go and see papa and your other children, but it was hard to let you go. From that moment on, life has been different without you. It truly feels like something is missing, especially around the holidays. You loved the holidays; I hope heaven is beautifully adorned with decorations and celebrations.

I am "hanging in there"; that's what I am supposed to say...right? So much has happened in the past three years- I graduated from Central Michigan University, got my first real job, began graduate school, and learned a lot about myself. My life is still as busy as ever, just with more focus and purpose. Next school year, I will be teaching in the town where you lived your whole life and raised your family. I am now teaching just down the road from where my dad went to elementary school. It will be slightly somber driving past your house every day, but I

will manage. It is funny how this happens so often- you popping up in my life in one way or another. In my last district, I drove by the last place I saw you every day; that drive was more complex. It often feels like you are intertwined in my life; please keep doing so. One day (far from today), I look forward to telling my future children about you; your selflessness, bravery, resilience, and love.

Goodbye for now,

Staci

Letter Genre Memo

Such a simple idea; the idea of a letter- beautiful and simple. I chose this genre because my grandmother (nana) loved receiving mail; I think of her when I think of mail. Unfortunately, she passed away a few years ago now, but honestly, I don't think I will ever get over it. It was sudden, she was old, but it still doesn't make any sense to me. My audience is her, of course, but no reason others can't read it, and in fact, she will not be reading it- So maybe the audience is myself. I found inspiration to speak to my grandmother through music, some of my favorites being *Dancing In The Sky* by Samantha Harvey, *Unraveling* by Liz Longley, and *Loved Me That Way* by Lauren Duski. Each song created a strong emotion and reconnected me to my feelings when everything first happened.

My revision process is fairly typical for me in this genre. I usually edit as I go, and although I did do that, I also took a day in between copies. This project has reminded me that Rome was not built in a day and that I should slow down and give myself a break before revising. I like the flow of the second draft much more, as I feel that sequentially it makes more sense. In addition, when I wrote my initial draft, I was emotionally charged with it being the anniversary of her death, which allowed me to be more vulnerable but messier. Once I gathered my thoughts and feelings, I examined the writing and improved overall readability. In addition, I wanted the style to remain informal because I would not have spoken to her academically or professionally; because of this, I followed an informal criteria list. I decided to add

the date and not the address for a few reasons: she doesn't have one, and I would have placed this in an envelope. I learned that initially getting your thoughts and feelings out makes for a better and more connected letter.

I am absolutely going to complete letter-writing activities with my students this upcoming year. It is a fun way to communicate and, along the way, develop a writer's voice. I found myself just speaking and writing without overthinking and planning, which in my opinion, made the piece stronger. I would love to hear my student's voices while they write a letter to someone they love- what a special gift for a child to give. Also, I would love for them to free write a letter and then teach them the revision process through letter-writing because it is non-academic. I have found that when academics are pressed, my students' work looks robotic, whereas, if I allow them just to write, they come up with magical storylines and powerful pieces. I believe this will enable them to gain confidence in their writing and hopefully lead them toward loving writing in the same ways I do. I will show them various openers and closing statements; however, I want them to be creative and express their thoughts how they would like to. I potentially would consider choosing their audience, such as, write this letter for a family member; however, that would not be every time.

Something I am taking away from this experience is that I want to write more letters to those I love. This experience was healing in many ways; I have used writing in the past to heal from situations; however, I never wrote a letter or wrote to a specific person. In addition, I learned that there are several formats to writing letters and that it relies heavily on the chosen audience which format to select. I am looking forward to implementing letter-writing with my students this fall.