

Dear Portfolio Reader,

My struggle with writer's block does not begin the instant the class is being presented with a prompt. No, it is once the instructor hints we'll be writing papers throughout the course at the beginning of the semester. Yes, yes, I know, being in a university requires a lot of critical thinking and academic writing and yes, I know I'm a screenwriting major and I'll be writing all my life. But once I hear the instructor or a fellow classmate utter the word, "essay," my teeth clench and I suffer a panic attack in silence.

It's not that I despise academic writing or homework in general, it's just that I have many thoughts and ideas fumbling in my head which are constantly being thrown at me and I can't decide which ones to use. Once I miss the chance to catch one, they are long gone and I end up empty handed, right where I started. I especially found myself in this position at the beginning of English 115 when writing an in-class essay or an argumentative essay. I will present you this process in the format of a screenplay.

The Struggle and the Real Writing Process

Part One: Forming a Thesis

INT. OVIATT LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON

Kim writes down multiple factual sentences on a scratch sheet of paper.

KIM

Hmmm...now which one of these can I use as my thesis statement?

(bites her lip and stares at laptop screen blankly)

INT. OVIATT LIBRARY - HALF AN HOUR LATER

Kim crosses off a couple of sentences. She sets down her pencil and picks up cell phone.

KIM

(sets cell phone back down)

No. No. I've got to finish this. I'm not going home until I finish!

CUT TO:

Kim grips a rail tightly while standing squished in a ridiculously full bus.

KIM

(stares blankly out the window)

Dammit.

INT. DINING TABLE - NIGHT

Kim opens laptop, places the writing prompt and other papers on the table.

KIM

Okay, now to begin.

(deeply sighs and points finger at paper)

Eenie, meenie, minee, moe, which of these thesis statements will I use, though?

Part Two: Writing the Introduction

INT. DINING TABLE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Kim taps fingers on keyboard and stares blankly at the screen.

KIM

I need coffee.

Kim quickly writes down all her ideas on the scratch sheet of paper. SCRIBBLE. She begins to see the big picture. SCRATCH. She crosses off wordy sentences and unfinished sentences. Kim takes a big sip of coffee and continues developing her essay on paper.

KIM

Wait a minute. Gerard Jones' "Violent Media is Good for Kids" does make a point that children could use their superheroes as role models.

(taps fingers on keyboard lightly)

No, no, no. He lacks relevant sources!

Part Three: The Body

Kim pauses for a brief second.

KIM

Wait.

(rethinks her thesis statement)

Hmm...it looks lik a thesis statement.

Kim shakes her head and resumes typing. TAP, TAP, TAP. She mentions the counterargument. TAP, TAP, TAP. She connects the argument with relevant sources. TAP, TAP, TAP. She remembers to properly cite her sources. TAP, TAP, TAP.

INT. DINING TABLE - MIDNIGHT

PART FOUR: THE CONCLUSION

Kim rereads all she's written and stares blankly at her laptop screen once again.

KIM

Hold on.

(removes and wipes glasses)

I used to play video games as a child. In fact.

(puts glasses back on)

I used to play quite...violent video games.

(takes a sip of her third cup of coffee)

I didn't turn out so...violent...

FADE OUT :

THE END

It was not until my first visit to the writing lab where the tutor introduced me to a very common method students use when they are struggling to find their thesis. I was to take what I had written down on a note card and read it out loud; if it was assertive and stood my ground, I had succeeded. If it didn't, then I would have to create a new one. Also, my instructor encouraged us to use the word, "should," which immediately leads you to think of a solution for your argument.

All of my work in my portfolio reveals how much I've grown as an academic writer as each essay's material, writing style and use of sources improves on the length of this course. I have used all these techniques for my Art 100 class papers and will continue to for future courses as I progress as a college student. All I need to do is to work on my conclusions.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Villalba