

Title: A Firsthand Account of Writing as a Craft of the Liberally Educated Person

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While reading William Cronon's essay "Only Connect," it became clear to me that I recognized the importance of one of the ten factors that define a liberally educated person more than the others. Though I have been able to reap the benefits of most of his other points, one stood out to me as being not only a stupefyingly simple yet amazingly overlooked aspect of a liberally educated person but also one that I have seen help people succeed time and again in their endeavors. Cronon describes it as being able "to write clearly and persuasively and movingly. Educated people know the craft of putting words on paper." The importance of being able to write well has been emphasized much over the course of my academic career, but it was not until recently that I became aware of just how invaluable a skill it could be.

I made the transition from a two-year institution into a Bachelor's program five months ago, and I have never been so aware of the changing academic conditions that I now face. It is an entirely different process succeeding and being able to thrive in such an environment as this. While learning to function on my own has opened my eyes to the benefits of writing many times, I believe three instances stand out the most. Bearing this in mind, I wish to describe the events of those three experiences that I believe will, collectively, demonstrate how clearly I have become aware of the importance of what Cronon calls the ability "to teach, persuade, and move the person who reads [my] words."

First, a more recent and immediate example of the benefits of being able to write "clearly . . . and movingly." I have had the good fortune of being able to befriend a practitioner in the field of clinical psychology whom, I knew, would be open to allowing me to observe her work as an intern. This experience would hold much weight if I am to gain admission to a graduate program as I intend to do. However, my challenge in making this internship a reality was that I needed to approach an acquaintance of many years as a fellow colleague instead of as a friend. In order to do this, I had to compose a strong cover letter and an equally impressive resume. I could not rely on our friendship to secure this opportunity for myself, as I wished to be seen as an aspiring practitioner of psychology and

dealt with as such. Within the space of a cover letter, I had to make this desire known. I was also wary of seeming as if I wanted to nullify our friendship, as this was not my intent. This letter required the utmost skill in execution if I was to get the results I wanted. I was evidently successful in my attempt to communicate, as my plans for the summer now include an internship, and if anything, our friendship has been strengthened by my professional approach to this matter.

This is merely the first instance of me discovering the benefits of being able to write well. The second one took place over a longer period of time. When I enrolled in a political science course during the fall semester, I encountered a new class structure that had only been introduced a few years before. This structure had no tests and no traditional, multiple-choice quizzes. Instead, we students were required to write a one-page reflection paper every Friday and, every three weeks or so, a unit paper on a certain book that we had read. Quizzes consisted of prompts that I had to respond to in a couple paragraphs. Therefore, this was a class in which your grade was entirely dependent on your ability to communicate using the written word. My ability to do so not only allowed me to succeed, but also impress my professor and establish a good rapport with him. Because of this, I'm sure that in the future, if I should need a reference or letter of recommendation, he would be happy to provide one.

The last example I have of Cronon's skill of "writing as a form of touching, akin to the touching that happens in an exhilarating conversation" concerns itself with potential opportunities for higher education. As I have no intention of terminating my academic career once I receive my Bachelor's degree, it is important for me to choose a graduate school, and unfortunately, sometimes the materials I need to make an informed choice are not on the school's web site. It is necessary, then, for me to be able to know what to say, how to say it, and to whom I should say it if I send a request for information. By using the skill of writing that Cronon refers to, I now have a more comprehensive picture of the graduate schools I am considering applying to, and my initiative and ability to write may also pay off

when the admissions committee is reviewing my application. Not only have I received the information I was looking for, but I have also made a good first impression.

In review, Cronon's essay "Only Connect" outlines the ten defining characteristics of a liberally educated person, and I have had much experience with one of these qualities. My ability to write, and to do so "clearly and persuasively and movingly" has taken me far in my academic pursuits, and I don't believe I would be where I am now without it. Using what I know of the craft of putting words to paper, I have secured an internship, succeeded in a new class structure, impressed a professor, and made a favorable impression on a prospective graduate school. My academic future, at the present moment, will consist of gaining experience in clinical settings, working with professors on experiments, and writing and presenting a PhD dissertation. The ability to write has opened these prospects up to me, and I look forward to seeing how I can use it to acquire more opportunities in the future.