

Mr. Werthner's English Classes

Student Work



Here is a selection of writing from students in various courses. One of the best things for me about teaching is the inspiration and satisfaction I get when reading original, creative writing from my students. These are great minds at work. Note: Students have chosen to use pen names.

Response to e.e. cummings' poem

"since feeling is first"

Then I am alone
To feel nothing
Being one sided is not a virtue
It is a curse
Feeling shall go without thought
Instead of infliction
Freedom should be present
To feel is not to be influenced
It is to be alone
Another poem
Looking through the glass
No feeling is present
Due to the lack of shared emotion
Feeling is touching
You can't truly know what they feel
Unless they let you in
That takes trust
This in your words means trickery
Take my life
But let my soul be free

- Texas Bones

Blank

I'll try to be someone but I'm not sure how
Silent hourglass of falling sand
If I am no one, then it's over now

Permanent canyons of isolation upon my brow
Among blurring faces still I stand
I'm trying to be someone but I don't know how

Connection societal hearts will not allow
Shattered minds and ready hands
If I'm still no one; is it over now?

Eternal vows of love or mere love of vows
Broken hearts with better plans
I tried to be someone but still don't know how

Empty performances with the blind crowd to wow
Deadly black wings above a wasteland
I am no one, so it's over now

Condescending smirks and a mocking bow
Everything is fallen and I don't know where to land
I tried to be someone but didn't know how
I was no one; I'm over now.

~ Anonymous

Sun and Shadow

Here goes, Nina thought, as she started down the street to Peter's house. It was the kind of day that puts people in a good mood. Birds chirped as they flew from tree to tree, and wind blew softly, making the heat from the relentless sun more bearable. The sky was a cloudless blue, and all seemed right and perfect.

But it wasn't. Not for Nina. It was the exact opposite. There should be lightning and thunder, sheets of ice cold rain, and harsh winds. The streets should be flooded. There should be a hurricane, if the weather were reflecting how well—or, how badly—things were going for Nina, because she certainly wasn't the happy-go-lucky person the weather seemed to be begging her to be.

She wanted to be happy, but she couldn't. Not until she told Peter what her heart had told her, what she had been trying to tell him all week. She had gone to his house every single day for five days in hopes of telling him. But each day his older brother Sam said he wasn't home. She very well knew he was. Peter was avoiding her. Why, she didn't know. Out of embarrassment? Shame? He didn't do anything wrong, just caught her off guard, that's all. She wasn't going to yell at him for it. How could she? After all the times he had been there for her: when she was bullied in second grade, when her father died, as well as too many other times to count.

He was even there for her five days ago, when she cried over a boy. A boy that she liked, that wasn't who she thought he was, simple as that. She had decided to move on, but it was harder than she thought. Of all things to cry over or be upset about, a boy was last on her list. The whole stupid thing was—and always will be—blown out of proportion.

Still, she cried, despite her feelings towards the reason. What could she say? She was hurt, and felt like the biggest idiot on the planet. And even when she tried to push Peter away, say that she wanted to be alone and demanded that he leave, he didn't. Peter knew something was wrong with her. He always knew, and he stopped at nothing to find out what and see if he could help in any way. Then she saw the look of determination in his mesmerizing, fierce, blue-green eyes. . .

That was all it took. Though Peter seeing her cry over something like this was the last thing she wanted, Nina just couldn't hold it in any longer, and succumbed to tears. . .

Peter pulled her into his arms, resting her head on his shoulder and holding it there.

"It's okay," Peter murmured softly over and over again, "It's okay, Nina. Everything's going to be all right. It's okay. I'm here, Nina. I'm here for you."

Nina didn't answer, just continued to cry on his shoulder, clutching herself close to him, the only real and constant thing in the world to her. He was her rock in the raging ocean that was the world.

"Are the Water Works all dried up?" Peter asked, wiping her face with his sleeve.

"I—I think so. I'm sorry. You didn't need to see that."

"Don't worry about it. I didn't mind."

Nina wanted to argue, but all she could manage was, "Really?"

"Really. Now, do you mind telling me what set off the water fall?" His voice was gentle.

"Kind of, yeah. It's pretty stupid."

"Try me."

Nina didn't want to tell him, but she knew he deserved to know. He was there for her without question, the least she could do was tell him.

"Well. . . you know Kyle, right?"

And Nina told him everything. How she realized Kyle wasn't who she thought he was, and decided to move on and forget about it. Easier said than done. She remembered telling Peter that she didn't want to go through all this drama for a long, long time. . .

"What? What do you mean?" His voice cracked from the shock.

"I don't want to get wrapped up in this again. Not for a while, at least."

"I don't think you can control something like that. Aren't you the one who always says 'The heart wants what it wants'?"

"Yes, but I'm still going to avoid it as best I can."

"What if. . . What if somebody liked you and asked you out. Would you go out with them?"

She didn't know why he had asked that, but she didn't want to think about it. Truth was, she didn't have an answer. What would she do? She didn't know. Peter still pressed it, though, and as one thing led to another, she soon discovered that Peter liked her. Had liked her. . .

"Peter. . . do you. . . do you like me?" Nina had asked it outright, there really was no other way.

Peter was silent for a while. When he finally answered, his voice was hushed. "Yes," he whispered, "I do like you. I have liked you."

She was silent, thinking, then his last sentence reached her. "Have?" she quoted, "Have? How long?"

Again, Peter was silent for a while. "I liked you before you liked Kyle," he said quietly, slowly. "Let's leave it at that."

That's when Nina was caught off guard. She wanted to say something, she just didn't know what. On top of that, a feeling from deep within had risen in her. It was strong, uncontrollable, overwhelming. It had been there her whole life, buried deep and held down there.

Only after Peter spoke those words did it come out, strong and powerful, gasping for breath for having been suffocated for sixteen long years.

Problem was, she didn't know what the feeling was, and when she remained silent, Peter took it the wrong way, and left. He had been avoiding her since. The feeling was still there, but now, she knew what it was. And over the week, it had only grown stronger.

She was at the house now. It was small, but not uncomfortable. It had gray siding and maroon shutters, only for show, of course. In the front yard was a big, beautiful, old oak tree. Its long, thick branches saturated with green leaves stretched out on all sides, putting half the house in shadow, no matter how bright the sun was.

Nina rang the doorbell, noticing there was a small brass pineapple above it. The symbol of welcoming. But she wasn't welcome here. Not by Peter, at least. Not that it stopped her. She was going to talk to him, one way or another.

Peter stared at the boring white ceiling of his room. He was lying face up on the bed, lost in his own thoughts. The surroundings of his room were bleary, the colors muted. He wasn't seeing what was in front of him. He was someplace else, floating in a pool of thoughts. His thoughts. Pained thoughts. . .

"Don't you want to find your happy ending?" Peter asked, desperate. It just didn't seem like her, to just give up liking someone in that way, no matter how horrible Kyle could be.

"Of course! Why do you think I waited so long for Kyle? Why I didn't see how horrible he was until now? I wanted a happy ending. . . And now. . . now I won't have it." Nina bit down on her lower lip to stop it from trembling.

Of course you can! With me! Peter thought desperately, hoping that Nina could hear his unspoken words. She didn't. But he had to say something in order to comfort her again. "Don't say that," he whispered fiercely. "Never say that! There's always a happy ending, one way or another. Everybody gets a happy ending. You said so yourself. If you can believe that, then you can and will have a happy ending. You deserve it."

"Thanks Peter," Nina said, smiling at him. At that moment, Peter could only remember thinking of how much he loved her smile.

Then, she had figured it out. She found out that he liked her, and asked it outright. Peter knew that he couldn't lie, even if he had wanted to. . .

Peter looked straight into her deep honey-brown eyes, brushing a few strands of hair out of her face and tucked them behind her ear, gently. "Yes," Peter whispered quietly, "I do like you. I have liked you." He never thought he'd see the day where he would utter those words. But it came. And he was glad it did.

After a moment of silence, she asked how long. Peter knew he wouldn't be able to tell her the whole truth. So he simply said that he liked her longer than she had liked Kyle. Then. . .

Silence. That only meant on thing: She was freaking out. "I have to go," he suddenly said.

"What? Why?"

Peter didn't answer her questions. He just said, "I'll see you around." And then he detached himself from her—for she tried to hold on—and left, walking swiftly across the yard to his bike in the driveway with out a backward glance.

Since that day, it was all he could think about. The memory haunted him, threatened to overtake him. He replayed it a thousand times in his head, wishing he could change the outcome of that day. Wished he didn't have to avoid Nina like this. Peter felt horrible about it. But he knew it was for the best. When she found out he liked her, she freaked out. Understandable. Who wouldn't? But trying to avoid her wasn't the worse part. The worst part was knowing that he blew the chance he had been waiting for since eighth grade. Peter knew perfectly well she had come to his house to yell at him for being so stupid. For telling her he liked her while she was still trying to get over another guy. He knew he very well deserved it, too. But he couldn't face her. Not yet. He had to do the impossible: He had to get over her first. But as much as he tried to repress his feelings for her, they bounced back, seemingly stronger than before. Peter never

realized how much he liked her, until he tried to get over her.

Peter heard the doorbell ring from downstairs. It sounded so far away. Maybe because he was far away. Mentally, at least.

"Oh, hey Nina," Sam, Peter's older brother, said when he answered the door.

"Hi, Sam," Nina said. "Is Peter home?"

"Um. . .," Sam wracked his brains for an excuse. Peter had been avoiding Nina all week.

"Sam," Nina said, "I know he's in there. I can see it on your face. Please let me talk to him.

It's really important. Please," Nina pleaded. Her eyes had gone glassy, and she looked close to tears. Not an act, Sam knew. Nina was strong. She didn't cry over spilt milk. She only cried when there was reason to. Sam then decided that Peter was going to talk to Nina, whether he wanted to or not. Whether Sam had to drag Peter down the stairs by his feet or not.

"Wait in the backyard," Sam said, a determined, hard edge to his voice. "I'll send him out."

"Peter!" Sam was outside Peter's door.

"What?"

The door opened and Sam came in. Peter was lying on his bed, zoned out, staring blankly at the ceiling.

"Nina's here."

"I can't talk to her yet."

"Too bad, 'cause you going to."

"I thought I told you I *can't*, Sam. She found out I liked her at the wrong time and now she's here to yell at me for it. She's freaked out! Not that I blame her. But I can't face her until I. . .until I. . .you know. . ." Peter couldn't bear to say the words.

"From where I stand, she's not here to yell at you." Sam crossed his muscled arms over his chest, his broad shoulders square.

"How can you know that?" Peter asked, narrowing his eyes at the ceiling.

"Gee, I don't know," Sam said sarcastically. "Maybe because she looks close to tears?"

That jolted Peter. She was crying? Or close to crying? He couldn't have that. He couldn't let her be upset. About anything. It was his instinct to catch her when she falls, comfort her, help her. Ever since second grade.

"She's crying?" Peter asked, only now moving his eyes from the ceiling to look at his brother.

"She's about to," Sam said. "So you better get your ass down there—"

Peter bolted for the door and pushed past Sam. He had to get to Nina, to be there for her. He *had* to.

"She's waiting in the backyard!" Sam called after Peter. "Love-sick maniac," he muttered to himself.

Nina turned at the sound of footsteps to see Peter rushing towards her. He was tall and lean, but strong with broad shoulders and a narrow waist. His hair was light brown and fell just above his eyes. . .

His eyes. . . A fierce, deep, blue-green. Eyes that you got lost in within seconds. . . Nina ran towards him and crashed into him at full speed, wrapping her arms around his neck, never wanting to let him go.

Peter was taken by surprise, but quickly recovered, wrapping his arms around her small waist, returning the hug.

"Nina. . .Nina, what's wrong?"

"Peter, Peter," Nina said over and over, enjoying the sound of his name rolling off her tongue. "I'm so sorry, Peter. Sorry for everything, I've been so stupid." Before she could stop them, the tears in her eyes had brimmed over.

"Nina. . .Nina what's wrong?" Peter asked frantically, using his sleeve to wipe away the water fall that was coming from her eyes. . .again. "It's okay, everything's going to be all right. It's okay. I'm here. I'm here for you, Nina. I'm here. What's wrong?"

"I've been stupid! I—I didn't know what I was feeling. . ."

Now Peter was really confused. "What? What are you saying? Does this have anything to do with Kyle?" If he could understand one thing, it would be that.

"No. . ." Peter obviously wasn't getting it. "No. . .Peter, it's not Kyle I like. Not anymore. It's. . . it's you."

As soon as she said it, she felt right. As if by telling him that, she had gained a sense of release, as if a massive weight had been lifted off her.

Then Nina got scared. What if she was too late? She knew it was a possibility, even though it hadn't even been a week. . .she got over Kyle in that time. So the same could've happened to Peter. But she had to tell him, even if he didn't like her back. After all, he had gone out on a limb saying he liked her. Now, it was her turn.

Peter just looked at her, a blank expression in his eyes. Then he grabbed her hand and led her into the small section of forest that was on his property. The trees were tall and weeds grew everywhere. The ground was uneven and roots interrupted the would-be path. As soon as Peter was sure they were far enough in so that they couldn't be observed by a possible nosy older brother, Peter turned Nina to face him, gripping her by the shoulders.

Nina looked up at him apprehensively, preparing herself for the worst: The words of rejection.

But she didn't need to.

Nina's words were like angels singing to Peter's ears.

"Really?" he whispered, his expression no longer blank with shock, but caring, so caring, and so tender, in was almost unbearable. "You. . .you. . .really. . . like me?" His voice was hushed.

"Yes." Nina smiled at him, rubbing the last of the tears from her cheeks with her hands. Peter took her hands and moved them away from her face. She let fall back onto his broad shoulders. With his right arm wrapped around her, and his left hand caressing her face, Peter bent his head and softly kissed her on the lips. Nina kissed him back, her arms wrapping around his neck, her fingers knotting in his hair. Her heart was pounding, singing in her chest, and she was happy, completely happy.

Peter, on the other hand, was euphoric. He had liked Nina for years. But he never thought that she would like him. Especially when she liked Kyle. Now Kyle was old news, Now it was he, Peter Donaldson, that Nina wanted. Not Kyle. He was the one she wanted. Not Kyle. Peter kept repeating that thought to himself: *Me, not Kyle. She wants me, not Kyle.* He thought it would make this euphoric moment more real. But even now, with his lips gently moving against hers, it still seemed like a fantasy. But it wasn't. It was real. Peter was so happy, he could've cried it out to the world. It was *he* Nina wanted. Him and *no one else*.

When they broke apart, they gazed at each other, their eyes shining with delight and triumph. Peter took Nina's hand in his and they began the walk out of the forest to Peter's backyard, smiling at each other, words not being needed.

~Alice Castello