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Freshman Composition

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## The Clash Of Two Worlds



A particular moment that stands out to me when it comes to language and literacy, is my experience of taking Advanced Placement (AP) English language and Composition in 11th grade. English was never my strong suit growing up, especially writing essays. Before taking AP language, I had never thought so deeply about passages, and articles that were handed to me during my middle school and high school years. The opportunity that [Hillcrest High School](#) gave me to take the AP English Language course really opened my eyes to the complexity of writing English passages, and forced me to deconstruct and analyze the author's writing if I wanted any chance of succeeding in that class. The course exposed me to all the strategies that author's use in order to connect and hook their readers such as diction, ethos, pathos, and logos and helped me to understand why the authors use some of the words that they use and why it is significant to the text's overall meaning. The skills I learned in this course can be transferred over to my everyday life, and can allow me to further develop my essays in the future as I take on more complex writing courses in college.

It was Tuesday, September 22, 2020, my second day of 11th grade at Hillcrest High School and I just got out of my AP calculus class, my heart was pounding waiting for my next class to start remotely. I stared at the blank dark boxes on the computer screen. I thought to myself, 'Is this who I am, a dark box?' Regardless of how the others saw me on the other side of the screen, I was determined to excel because I wanted to keep up my honor roll streak. One

may ask, why would a person who struggles with complex writing enroll in an AP Language and Composition class? Although personal history and society might say that I'm not an ideal candidate for AP Language, I was motivated by Martin Luther King Jr's speech "I Have a Dream." I knew at this point that my past would not determine my future. To add insult to my injury on my first day of class, we went straight to work by analyzing complex text and passages. Never in my 16 years of living had I been demanded to think and analyze articles thoroughly in such a small amount of time.

After a while of learning rhetorical strategies and how to identify them by reading text such as Martin Luther King Jr "I have a dream." and Abraham Lincoln "Gettysburg Address," we had to write an essay centering around our own experiences by using ethos, pathos, and logos. I poured my heart into this essay, spending hours trying to make sure this is the best work I could produce. I was confident that I could at least earn an 85% and not the shocking 70% grade. How was this possible? I nervously asked her for another opportunity to revise

and resubmit the assignment. I looked back disgusted at what I had turned in before. At this moment I realized growing up in Guyana had a significant impact on my English skills. In Guyana they speak broken English. For example, "tree" instead of "three", "dare" instead of "there". To use these words in a sentence: my grandmother would say in her deep accent "Jaden bring me tree apples (meant three); Jaden go and sit "dare" (meant there), pointing at the chair with eyes wide open. One might think that texting affects written formal language, then they



85  
100

Rhetorical Analysis 2019 Free Response  
Essay, Question 2.

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have never spent time in Guyana. The movie Paper Chase connected and inspired me since it is based on the story of

James T. Hart, who overcame all his challenges during his first year in Harvard and came out successful. There was a big gap between what I submitted and what I turned in, and I was determined to close it. Instead of adding fillers in the essay to make it longer, I learned how to precisely add meaningful details/rhetorical devices and how to incorporate my own story into that essay to strengthen my ethos, and pathos. This moment altered the way I wrote my essays because now I know what items to include in my essays to make them stronger and more appealing to my audience. When I received my revised grade, I saw it went from a 70 to an 85, which made a huge difference in my class grade. Although that grade might seem low to other people, to me it was significant because it showed that I actually improved and stepped up in my writing even if it was slightly.

One implication from my experience is that society tends to place limits on what you can or cannot do, what an ideal AP student is, placing barriers based on our culture can impact the way we develop our language. Yes, growing up, reading was a challenge. I remember a family with arms around me said lovingly “If you can’t read people will laugh at you.” Sometimes a whip in hand was my motivation to spell. I thought to myself today , oh what a 3rd world way of motivation. However, I am so surprised that developed countries similarly dictate what success looks like based on societal narratives. If I had followed society’s script: A black male, struggling reader and writer with immigrant parents, I truly would have never gained such key experiences as taking several AP classes and pursuing an Engineering degree at City College! It is imperative that individuals develop their own script and not the one that society writes for them. The only way to break down barriers is by overcoming them by determining your own fate and construct a path that you and only you choose.