

Reflection

To be fair, I applied late to Salt Lake Community College and got my acceptance letter the last day to enroll for classes. In my head it's sometimes hard for me to differentiate between fiction and nonfiction. Usually when I see the word "creative" preceding something I automatically assume it must be fiction, because how can you really spruce up nonfiction creatively? Despite that slightly embarrassing revelation, I was a little surprised I'd signed up for a nonfiction class when I sat down in the classroom two weeks late into the semester with no other options to change my schedule. That being said, it has been quite possibly the best, dare I say, accident, to have taken a creative nonfiction course.

I didn't understand the multiple roles within nonfiction and that gray spacey area in between journalism and memoir. I not-so-secretly hate journalism. When I was trying to figure it out in college the first go-round, I was a brief journalism major and even had a good and slightly painful internship opportunity writing for the National Parks Traveler. Nature writing is something that interests me a lot but it was hard seeing my editor take out all my creative nuances in between the very dry land policies and tense interviews. It felt stripped. Rereading them now I feel like they could have much more value had they been based in this essay format, especially since land management is a highly political issue. I emphasized the divide without bridging it for everyone to meet in a common ground, which is what the essay does and why it matters.

On the other side of the spectrum, I study a lot of self-help and I've been building a journaling habit the past year and enjoy that, but the power that I've noticed within essays is that it isn't an overwhelming chunk of personal history, it's an important story or chapter from life that can be beautifully integrated into something universal. This is what I tried to do with my

research essay and the world of shelling or beach combing. Not only that but all the examples we read integrate such beautiful personal stories into deeply complicated political issues. Which to me, really changed my outlook on how writing can change the world.

Despite these positive paradigm shifts within writing, it's been hard for me to write this way. The main challenge is the balance. Weaving in enough personal with enough factual information to keep readers engaged. The other challenge was form. It's hard to break out of the MLA box: intro, arguing paragraphs, conclusion. Because of this challenge, I didn't experiment and take as many risks as I would've liked. I'm still not even sure of certain forms to use. I like putting words on the page, without thinking of how to arrange them so they are received the way I envision. I hope to keep addressing these challenges as I keep writing and revising so that I can grow as a writer and find new inspiration to hopefully one day have a shot at being considered by the Best American Essays.