

## Short Try Reflection

My favorite short try was my Braided Essay, but I feel like it would be more effective if I added more to it. I wanted to try and make my second short try about food - the sensory details and my family's attitudes around food, the lack of community, and an effective working kitchen. My mom's gastric bypass and her underlying eating disorder and the role of food...how I see my parents eat, the role that women are expected and the mindfulness surrounding consumption, food waste, and the big mistake of redoing their kitchen storage/organization.

I tried addressing more of the big questions behind why I wanted to write about the importance of food and community. I felt like once I got into it and addressed those harder questions that it would be longer and I might not want to sacrifice those themes for smaller word count. I had two short tries, the sensory and the humor, that ended up being about food and since my next revision made it much longer than 750 words, I decided to keep it rolling and combine both of my short tries into one larger essay since I have so much to say. I need to work on finding a new form that could serve that length and answer all of the anxieties I have around food because of my upbringing and the ones I've experienced as an adult alongside my sister (or thanks to her) and some other friends who helped me realize the community and mindfulness.

Sometimes when I start with smaller prompts or ideas, some of my more complex thoughts find their way out of me which is one thing I love about the essay. I learned that I can put in a lot of personal and vulnerable things I need to get out within the essay format and I like it...I don't need the comfort of a character in a short story to convey a complex experience. The revision process always teaches me something new about the fluidity of writing and certain pieces taking on new meaning depending on the form or the length or whatever restriction you are putting on your free flow of thought. I wouldn't even mind turning it into more of a research

paper with the FDA and expiration dates, the introduction and complexities of preservatives, food production, food intolerances, and food in the community.

So, since this revision led me in a different direction and I also wanted more length with my braided essay, I decided to see what I could do with my first short try on walking and loss! Some new ideas popped out and some revelations as to why I am so vulnerable outside walking around. I've been tempted to keep making this longer as well because of the intense theme that came up surrounding my own life. However, since I'm noticing a trend of wanting to write long-winded essays, maybe working on tightening up my essays would have a strengthening effect on my writing since that is more unnatural to me.

## Losing the Seasonal Battle

I'm in my parent's neighborhood. Other than the next-door neighbor, I know no one. I feel vulnerable as I walk out of our yard onto the sidewalk, very aware of how much I stick out in the suburban, family neighborhood. The stigma feels extra heavy in this moment and I don't truly know why I'm living back at home at the age of 28, a couple months shy of 29, but I might as well say 30.

As I begin walking, I'm relieved that our other neighbors' infamously annoying rescue dogs aren't barking because it allows me to absorb the more pleasant sounds of summer...distant basketball dribbles, music from passing cars, rustling in the bushes, and the sound of my flip flops. Even the emerging crickets are able to drown out the nearby interstate as sunset begins.

As I wind through the neighborhood, I'm reminded all at once how dear summer is to me. The fragrant air...a mix of trees, barbecues, and freshly mowed lawns. It's my first real walk in probably close to eight years. I used to walk almost every night with my first love. We had a pretty established route, one that wound up from our street to the hill where the Logan temple sat, and at the end of the first leg of our journey was a bench we'd rest at for a moment, and we'd continue on winding down even further into "the island". Next to a park we'd arrive at our second bench in front of a lone outdoor chimney. We mostly walked at night in the dark. I miss that. I like the lights at night, but I'm too afraid to walk alone in the dark these days. Sundown is the latest I get, but I think it's a good compromise. The warm, orange air makes everything softer, like the sky turned off the overhead in favor of the lamp in the corner.

The mountains to the east are softly illuminated by the orange hue and I feel less vulnerable as I did at the beginning of my walk. Like people can't see me as well. This time of night used to make me really sad, the ending phase of sundown. The time when friends would leave to go home "before dark". Even though halfway through sundown was my mother's version of "dark" and I'd always have to leave before the rest of my friends most times anyway. She wouldn't even adjust my bedtime in the summer, so I'd often lay in bed with it still light outside unable to sleep with the sounds of playing kids still audible in the distance. I miss the night games. I don't feel like I got enough kid time in my childhood before the heavy stuff hit...moving away, losing friends, realizing your parents hate each other, multiple pet cats getting run down in the street, and a heavy burden of loneliness. But loneliness is slightly different as an adult because most adults seem lonely in some way, a kind of unspoken solidarity as we age.

The sun has almost set completely and with it being early September, I'm even more aware to summer's impending doom. The sun sets earlier and earlier. The transition to fall has begun and always brings me down. The allure of more forgiving temperatures, pumpkin spice lattes, Halloween, and sweaters aren't enough to make me excited. I like seeing the tree leaves at their greenest, especially the tall cottonwoods that are abundant in Farmington, the rose bushes, and the warm nights. But as I get closer to my house I can see some fallen leaves in small piles in the gutter and my anxieties double. As I finally reach my fence, I also notice the stumps of once the greatest, tallest cottonwood trees in the neighborhood, seven in total. The stumps are still probably eight feet tall, a sad tribute to what they once were.

I can only focus on loss. In varying scales of magnitude, from childhood hurts, to my lost love, to my favorite trees I couldn't save. Even my own path that has led me back home to my parents and to my college job. Although the sidewalk has given me a clear walking path, life

isn't as generous. I no longer have a map, or maybe I'm just realizing I don't have the metaphorical tickets to get from place to place because I want to travel farther than around the block.