**How We Write, Season 2, Episode 2 (February 2023):
To Live on Not Live Up to Expectations, That is the Question**

***TRANSCRIPT:***

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**Allie:** Welcome back to the University Writing Center's podcast ‘How We Write.’ Today's episode is ‘To Live or Not to Live Up to Expectations, That is the Question.’ And despite the excessively lengthy title, this will be a relatively short podcast believe it or not. We'll be talking about how expectations and pressures, or lack thereof in the case of some of us, affected our writing process. I'm one of your co-hosts, Allie. (00:00:43)

**Rina:** This is Rina.

**Sophia**: And Howdy, I'm Sophia.

**Allie:** So today we'll lead to a brief story on how the perceptions of our writing processes were changed and influenced. And we'll be sharing these stories, these short stories until this sound hits <ding>. And then we'll move into a discussion about sponsorship (00:01:00). Sponsors are basically anything concrete, like family, friends, teachers, or abstract, like society, media, and religion, that affects and gains something from their effects on the literacy development of others. So today we'll be sharing our stories and then talking about sponsorship. Pretty straightforward.

So let's get started.

**Rina:** (00:01:30)Hey guys, this is Rina and I'm gonna tell you a little bit about my literary narrative. So I've always loved to write, but when I was younger, I felt guilty for finding pleasure in it because I didn't really consider myself good enough. The little poems and anecdotes I would write were just passing thoughts and nothing more. I think I believe this because of my hometown, East Bernard. It's the prime example of a small Southern town. Imagine nothing more than farming, fields, and most significantly sports. Yeah. <laugh> (00:02:00) Instead of writing competitions and workshops, there was strength and conditioning and open gym. My Southern school valued the physical parts of students rather than their ideas <laugh> and creations.

As athletes, we were taken out of class earlier practice before our game, and I was even asked to miss a U.I.L practice meet so I could make a tennis tournament instead. I never gave my work and myself the credit they deserved, causing me to write for myself and no one else. This made my writing process isolated and one-sided. And I never thought of writing as a form of communication. I suppressed my love (00:02:30) to learn and kept all of my recreational writing and reading a secret, which caused me to turn a blind eye to my audience, writing for myself when I wouldn't be excluded. So I maintained my solitary writing process throughout high school and into the beginning of college. <ding>

**Allie:** Right. Awesome. So now we're gonna move into talking about sponsors a little bit. So you were just talking about how, you know, you felt really isolated with your writing process and sports, so <laugh>, (00:03:00) um, where do you think your sponsors were in all of that? Was it more concrete, more abstract? Thoughts?

**Rina:** I feel like it was a mix of both. Um, my hometown, I guess, is the biggest sponsor that affected like my other sponsors, like for example, my parents, religion, and my social class, they definitely were affected by my hometown and it's really visible in my literacy.

**Sophia:** Yeah.

**Allie:** Yeah. And sponsors always have something to gain. (00:03:30) Right. So like, what did your hometown have to gain from that? Like in the way that they sponsored you?

**Rina:** I guess my hometown gained successful athletes, which is obviously what they wanted. My high school won many state championships, I went to State Tennis twice and even got third place.

**Sophia and Allie**: Wow

**Rina**: So, thanks, so East Bernard definitely generated many talented athletes, and it clearly had a cost, um, which made students that didn’t desire who did not desire more academic opportunities (00:04:00) because they went unnoticed or had to like hide that they even had those desires like me.

**Allie:** Cool. So now Sophia.

**Sophia:** So my turn, my story. Um, I think as kids, uh, a lot of people get a lot of, like, control over their internet time. Like they have certain hours of screen time or certain websites you can't go to or whatever <laugh>. Yeah. But for me, I think my parents gave me pretty much free reign, um, for better or worse, but I was able to go wherever I wanted on the internet. (00:04:30) And at some point, I found my way off to some forums, like chat forums, and yeah. And I started doing this thing called roleplaying. And basically we just like write from the perspective of characters we made up and we'd collaborate and make a story happen.

It was really fun. Um, but like, I'd be like, ‘I’m some big red dragon named Scarlet and I have emeralds on my back,’ and I'd do the, so, um, anyway, I got super used to the idea of people, seeing what I wrote (00:05:00) and kind of immediately, uh, responding. Like if I hadn't posted for a while, people would nag me. They'd be like, come on, I wanna keep this story going. And so, yes, exactly. And so, um…

I kind of got used to getting fairly positive feedback or at least kind of neutral or whatever. I didn't really care. And I didn't really realize this was something different that people experienced until like high school. And I finally got some new perspective on that when college applications came around and people were all nervous to share their like 500-word essays <laugh>.

**Allie:** Yeah.

**Sophia**: (00:05:30) Stuff like that. <ding> So, yeah, basically I just didn't realize that was, that some people like, like Rina, seeing your writing more as an independent solo thing; it's kind of foreign to me.

**Allie:** Cool. So it sounds like we're already starting to get some contrast. Yeah. So like you're a little bit more open and just laying all of your writing out in the public eye (00:06:00) because you knew that that was the way that it was going to be. And I mean, Rina yours was like the complete opposite of that. You're like, ‘no, mine’ <laugh>.

**Rina:** I definitely was secluded in my writing process, but like for you, what would you say was the biggest sponsor for your writing process?

**Sophia:** Yeah, I think, um, I mean, in the beginning, it was definitely my parents giving me all of that freedom and encouraging me to just do whatever, and so I felt like there wasn't gonna be any negative reaction if I did something like wild (00:06:30). But, um, I think after that, once I started doing like role-playing stuff, it was definitely the people I was role-playing with and like the community and that culture going on because it was a very positive culture in my experience. There was a lot of like, ‘Well that's so fun! I wanna get in on this,’ kind of thing.

**Allie**: And what do they have to gain? Like, I mean your parents, but also I guess the role-playing sites <laugh>

**Sophia:** <Laugh> Yeah…I mean, besides like literal, like, foot traffic on the website, getting money from that, um, the (00:07:00) community itself, I think benefited a lot because we got to help each other create, like the collaborative storytelling was super important. So if it was just one person publishing like a fan fiction or something, or just their own original piece of fiction, it would be a totally different vibe. Um, not bad vibe of course, but like, it was just different. It was just not what we were looking for. We wanted something more like we were working together. So I think that's what we mostly stood to gain from each other.

**Allie:** Yeah. And what about your parents?

**Sophia:** Yeah. Um, (00:07:30) I think my parents growing up, they were very limited in what they could do for various reasons. And so I think being able to give me more freedom was a sort of emotional satisfaction and it also let them…it let them exist in a context where there was more…there were fewer creative limitations. Yeah. So I think for them it is very much more of an emotional thing rather than a literal game.

**Allie:** Nice. Yeah. Cool. Well, we're gonna cut to a commercial break real quick, but then we'll be back. Bye!

<musical interlude>

**Rina:** (00:08:04)Do you have an essay that needs restructuring?

**Allie:** Do you find yourself wondering what a good thesis looks like?

**Sophia:** Do you really know what a semi-colon is for?

**Allie:** If this is you, you might need…

**All:** The University Writing Center!

**Allie:** At the writing center, you can find a consultant that's a good fit for you. We use our tried and tested non-directive non-evaluative approach, improving your writing on your time, and in your way.

**Sophia**: Side effects may include a more efficient writing process, open-mindedness, grammar improvement, heightened brainstorming, and awareness of your writing style. Check with your professor to see if the University Writing Center is right for you.

<musical interlude>

**Allie:** (00:08:44)…and welcome back! So now I'm gonna share my little literacy narrative and story and sponsors and things, so let's just dive into that. So first let me give y'all some background. Um, I was, uh, ‘that’ kid, alright. So like the teacher's child, everybody knew me, all the teachers loved me. I was like straight A’s (00:09:00), only female in the classes, and yeah…<laugh> could do no wrong say no wrong model student. At least, you know, that's what I thought. And, uh, that was given that I never failed an assignment and my work was, you know, pinned to teachers’ bulletin boards. And I was even asked to tutor, like–I kid you not–every subject. And I'm not just saying that as an exaggeration, like at my school, it was 35 kids per grade, a 500-student K-12: there weren't already that many classes, to begin with. So, you know, like it, wasn't hard to cover all the grounds.

Anyway, y’all know my little mini life story (00:09:30), so let's set the scene for my main. So I'm in AP world history, okay, sophomore year of high school; it's like the first or second week of the semester and we just had written our first major essay for the class and my teacher, Mr. Johnson–the man himself–is passing them back out with grades and stuff. And so he gives me back mine and it's got this…it's slathered in yellow highlighter, just like the whole thing, like a chunk, like a big chunk of yellow and a big old ‘32’ written at the top. And of course, you know, given it's me, I'm about to start crying, but– <ding>

**All:** <laugh>

**Allie:** (00:10:00)I waited until everybody left the room and you know, all calm and cool and collected before I absolutely lost it.

I'm like, ‘Mr. Johnson, why, why do I deserve this?’ more or less. And he's like, ‘Well, Ali, you know, in two pages you pretty much said the same thing over and over and over again. All the yellow is unnecessary commentary. But, honestly, the essay itself wasn't that bad. Like a B or a C could have been fine, but I failed you because I don't think you've ever failed a thing in your life and I would rather you fail now and this be your first failure than, like, later on when it actually matters. I want you to see that, you know?’

**Sophia:** A little plot twist.

**Allie:** Yeah. Like failure's not the end, you know, and to my little brain (00:10:30) that was just absolutely mind-blowing. And, and I think to this day, it's still like the most eye-opening experience for my–for my literacy, for my learning, because it totally changed the way I viewed writing.

Like I realized the first drafts weren't gonna be perfect, I was actually gonna revise stuff, and honestly, sometimes I was like, you know, failure might be a better option because in the long run, it would be a benefit. So yeah. Thanks, Mr. Johnson.

**Sophia:** Shout out to Mr. Johnson

**Allie:** <laugh> Shout out to Mr. Johnson. So yeah. Sponsors and things.

**Sophia**: Yeah. What do you feel like, (00:11:00) uh, had a lot of influence? Already I can see like Mr. Johnson

**Allie:** Mr. Johnson. Yeah. And honestly, he had the benefit. I think, you know, I would get a good AP score, but then, in the long run, it's like he's able to influence a student in a meaningful way, and I think that just meant a lot to him. But, um, overall I think just what made that kind of mentality that I was always going to be perfect and I had to be perfect was just that I was really set up to that. So like I was the oldest child, you know, there's all this stigma with the oldest children (00:11:30) having to be, you know, the model students and model children.

And really honestly, just like yours, it's like for the longest time, I don't think it was that I thought nobody was gonna be seeing my writing, but more so just that, anyone saw it, it was gonna be great.

**Rina:** Yeah. You already knew the outcome.

**Allie:** Yeah. I already knew the outcome. And so instead of it being like with Sophia, you were like, ‘Oh yeah, I'm just contributing for the sake of contributing!’ I was contributing for the sake of, like…I knew I was gonna get positive feedback; it fed my ego and I was like, ‘This is great.’ And then the first little, like, puncture in my happiness balloon and it was all over. But, um, no, and yeah, I recovered. (00:12:00) We are here today and it is great.

**Rina:** Do you think that the perfectionist mindset still plays into your writing process today?

**Allie:** Oh, hands down. Yeah. I struggle so much to revise things. And like, even in this past semester of working with the Writing Center and trying so hard to force myself to edit things…but it's happened! It's definitely happened. So we have seen improvement.

**Sophia:** Nice, good.

**Allie:** Cool!

**Sophia:** So we're all learning things even now.

**Allie:** Even now! <laugh> We are sponsors of our own literacy.

**Rina:** facts.

**Allie:** (00:12:30) That is the takeaway from today! And even more than that, since we’ve started working at the Writing Center, we’ve continued seeing that sponsorship of our own literacy, right?

**Sophia:** For sure.

**Allie:** And, so, let’s just take a few minutes to talk about that. In what ways have we seen our literacy be sponsored–even if, not only through ourselves but through the people that we’ve been working with, and our coworkers, and the consultees. How have we seen our literacy be shaped just over the past couple months since we’ve started (00:13:00) really working and having consultations at the Writing Center?

**Rina:** Yeah, I think my literacy has definitely been sponsored in multiple ways. For myself, I’ve taken more English classes, surprisingly–

**Sophia:** Nice!

**Rina:** –and I’ve learned a lot about how to actually write, and now I’m proud to show my work, and I’m not scared and a closeted writer. Also, seeing my consultees’ work, I’m exposed to so many different genres and styles and formats, (00:13:30) and so I feel like I’ve grown in multiple areas with my literacy. What about you, Sophia?

**Sophia:** Wow, nice! That’s really encouraging to hear. I love that!

**Allie:** <laugh>

**Sophia:** Yeah, I think, for me, I’ve definitely been able to have a lot more empathy for folks who aren’t as used to presenting their writing to other people. I’ve actually gotten the feedback, a couple times, in the surveys that I was really nonjudgmental and really helpful.

**Allie:** Aw!

**Sophia:** Yeah! For making people feel safe (00:14:00). Yeah. And it was just really nice to hear that I was able to kind of put aside what I’m used to and understand where a lot of other folks are coming from. I think that, you know, is going to do a lot for me, even past the Writing Center, just in life…not to get too grand about it!

**Allie:** <laugh>

**Sophia:** But, you know…

**Allie:** It sounds like you’re not only sponsoring your own literacy but you’re…becoming a sponsor!

**Sophia:** Oh my god!

**Allie:** …for other people!

**All:** <laugh>

**Sophia:** This is living the dream. <laugh>

**Allie:** (00:14:30)Well, um…as far as myself, I’d say…let me think. ‘In what ways have the Writing Center been sponsoring my literacy since I started working there?’ Um, it’s definitely forced me to focus on aspects of literacy that are not within, like, a STEM bubble–

**Sophia:** Oh!

**Allie:** –so within science writing and technical writing. Because, like you said, you know, you work with so many different types of people and so you end up being exposed to–like you said, Rina–you’re exposed to so many different genres of writing, and that’s so true. I’ve definitely gotten better at writing, like, application-style writing (00:15:00). I know we deal with so many Maymester applications…

**Sophia:** Oh, yeah.

**Rina:** Yeah.

**Allie:** …so many transfer applications, and so, through all of that, not only in that aspect but also seeing people come in with their writing about government classes or history classes that I have absolutely no idea what they’re talking about, but then being able to find similarities through things that are more generic writing concepts and not just specific to their paper, and being able to apply that across disciplines has been really cool (00:15:30).

**Sophia:** Yeah.

**Allie:** But…in the same kind of sense, you get exposed to so many different kinds of people, too.

**Sophia:** For sure.

**Allie:** And, so, I think, literacy in a sense of having a sense of…there is a larger range of perception other than your own and learning to understand that not only does that extend to things like, within belief systems, but also within the greater range of having a perspective of what literacy is, and knowing that the people that come in to work with you (00:16:00) in the Writing Center–the consultees that you’re gonna encounter–have their own sense of what is literacy. So even though we spent a whole semester talking about it in the course, and talking about, ‘Oh, this is what literacy is…’ and then we’ve started exploring what that looks like for ourselves, we’re then also having this sort of, like, breaking the fourth wall, sense of knowing of what literacy is. And now being in a place where we’re seeing so many different sources of literacy from other people, and being able to see that, and be aware of that (00:16:30), has been kind of cool, in a sense where I’m like, ‘Oh! These are maybe where some of their literacy comes from and some of the things that have sponsored their literacy,’ and that can then spur questions within consultations where then you get to know your consultee a little bit better just by asking those questions of, you know, maybe, ‘What are some of these things that you think made you say that in your paper? Made you write this way…’ Making them aware of their literacy, as well, and continuing that conversation of–I don’t want to say ‘literacy awareness,’ (00:17:00) because that sounds strange– <laugh>

**Sophia:** Yeah! I love literacy awareness.

**Allie:** But maybe like ‘advocate for literacy awareness’ within the Writing Center, so we can help people become aware of their own writing and that…

**Sophia:** Yeah!

**Allie:** …and just move the conversation forward.

**Sophia:** For sure, and approaching that with a compassionate lens, too, I think is really important, because it’s really easy for people to become ashamed or embarrassed because of some difference in the way they perceive literacy, in a way that a lot of people might consider, like…(00:17:30) not as intelligent or you don’t come from a background that’s important enough or anything like that. But we’re not approaching it like that: the point isn’t to cast a judgment on these different types of literacy; it’s just to acknowledge them and see how they affect things, and to interact with them in accordance. Like I think that’s a much more productive way to look at it than just, ‘There are differences, and some are better.’ You know? <laugh>

**Allie:** Yeah, very cool! (00:18:00) And that’s what we do here at the Writing Center. So find us in the PCL. Back corner. By the windows.

**Sophia:** It’s a really nice part of the library. <laugh>

**Allie:** Cool, well, that’s it, y’all! I hope everybody enjoyed listening; don’t forget to email the Writing Center with any questions about writing that you have. We will see you later!

**All:** Bye!

**Allie:** Woohoo!

**All:** <laugh>

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(00:18:50)