

I have chosen the attached papers as part of my senior portfolio because I believe them to be good examples of the different styles and modes of English course-work that I have been helped to better understand while studying for my Second BA at NEIU.

The first item I chose, “Where is the Difference Made?” is a Post-Structuralist critique of Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” that I did for Professor Libretti’s Practical Criticism class in the fall semester of 2002. His class helped me to understand the various ways of looking at literature as more than just words on a page but, as many faceted works from which we could draw so many ideas and meanings depending upon the way in which we read them.

The second item I chose, “Independent Study of a Poet: Gary Soto” is a research paper that I did for Professor Bruce-Kinnebrew’s Contemporary Poetry class in the Spring semester of 2003. This paper not only shows my ability to research topics (in this case a person) but also my ability to analyze writing—esp. poetry—from a more linguistic viewpoint. The class (Contemporary Poetry) really helped me to see more on the page than just a shortened story or a word-drawn-image, but also the sound and metrical patterns that combine to make the works complete.

The third item I chose is a paper I wrote for Professor Kim’s Engl-221 class in the fall, 2003 semester. I had a challenge with this paper to find and try to explain the function of a particular theme in two works. I wrote “The Function of Madness; *King Lear* and *The Duchess of Malfi*” as the final term paper. I believe that the challenge I had in doing this paper helped me to grow as a reader and reviewer of literature and I believe that it will help me be a better teacher one day as well as a better, more active reader in general.

I am also submitting a story that I wrote for Professor Bracken’s Creative Writing—Fiction II class in the spring, 2003 semester. I titled the story “Free Milk”. It is the re-write submitted for class in February 2003 (original was submitted in January of 2003). Thanks to Dr. Bracken’s writing classes, I am now better able to express the details of a story through dialogue and action, and am better able to critically read details of a story or play. I believe this is an extremely important part of the English major—if not all majors.

Writing Sample

The paper I have chosen to submit as my writing sample was written for English 345: Practical Criticism. The title of the paper is “A Marxist Criticism of William Faulkner’s *Barn Burning*.” The assignment for this paper was to take a work we read in class and perform a critical analysis from a Marxist, psychoanalytical or post-structuralist perspective. As the title suggests, I chose to employ a Marxist reading of Faulkner’s *Barn Burning*.

I was absolutely mortified to take this course because I found literary criticism intimidating. While doing research for other English courses where reading criticism of the literature was necessary, I found many of the critical essays to be challenging to read and understand. I thought taking an entire course based on criticism would be incredibly difficult and frustrating. Much to my surprise, it was the exact opposite.

I now understand why English 345: Practical Criticism is a required course for English majors. This class was incredibly useful and enriching. In retrospect, I wish I would have taken Practical Criticism earlier in my English sequence. The class taught me how to closely read and draw important issues out of a text. It also taught me how to view texts in perspectives other than my own. I am grateful for acquiring, through the course, the ability take one text and read it from many different perspectives. Taking this class early on would have made the daunting task of reading literary criticism for research papers much more productive.

I chose to submit my paper on Barn Burning because I found the assignment challenging and highly interesting.