



**Academy of Excellence in Teaching and Learning
University of Maryland**

2016 Student Essay Contest

Have you had learning experiences at the University of Maryland that were memorable and meaningful, as well as challenging, inspirational, and creative? If so, we would like to hear from you about them. In an essay of no more than 1,000 words sharing the learning experience that you had.

3rd place award

Hailey Klebe

Think Deeper; Share Often

Hailey Klebe

AETL Essay for UMD

To love writing poetry and to understand poetry are two very different things. I have loved writing since my freshman year of high school, but never understood its full potential until my experience at the University of Maryland. As a long-time poet, I didn't expect to grow immensely in an introductory poetry class – how wrong I was.

A professor who radiates passion for poetry and excitement for building relationships with students is a rare beauty, one that I so fortunately experienced. Each class began with a daily quote and a small discussion around it. With tired eyes from late college nights and slight fear of giving the wrong answer, students remained silent when asked to explain the quote on the first day of class. While some professors may see this first class as foreshadowing the rest, mine did not.

Each class, I watched as the discussion of the quotes became clearer and stronger. By the end of the semester, discussion took up more time than intended because of the abundance of students willing to share. This growth in attention and expression of what each quote meant to us was not improved because the quotes changed or because some days were sunnier than others, but because over time this classroom became a place of acceptance and encouragement. From day one, we learned that our answers and ideas were something to be valued, not squandered. Some opinions or poems were more abstract than others, but all equally admired by the allowance of individual creativity fostered by my professor.

My personal writing style was challenged, not only from the excerpts we read, but from hearing my classmate's work. A precious value, discovered so rarely, is that of a peer's poem read aloud; a spoken voice that inspires one to match the skill level of the class. Hearing the talent read aloud and the encouragement from each classmate inspired me to think deeper, write stronger and share more often. Prior to this classroom experience, I had kept my poetry to myself

as it is one of the most sacred forms of writing, and each poem a personal expression of a moment in my life. However, as I shared poem after poem throughout the semester, I noticed a change; a change in my style of writing, and in its intention to be shared, not hidden. A change in eagerness to reach the next class to present my poem aloud as I intended it to sound, and a change to share in a passion for the power of words that is so often forgotten amongst the hustle of daily life.

A learning experience that transcends the class itself is one worth discussing. I took this class nearly four semesters ago and it still affects my daily actions. I learned how to use the world around me: daily life, nature, people and events as constant subjects for writing. I find myself scribbling writer's notes on receipts, notebook margins and napkins daily. Each time I reminisce on this learning experience I feel appreciative and fortunate to have been a part of it. As a sophomore at Maryland I had expected to learn basic poetry formatting and technical writing skills in an introductory poetry class, but in turn, I learned more about myself as a person and my voice as a writer. The majority of who I am as both a student and a person resides in my passion for writing, humanity and learning, much of which grew immensely throughout this course.

Part of the rarity of this class was the readings. With excerpts from The Raw Shark Text by Steven Hall and poems as vital as Margaret Atwood's "Variation on the Word Sleep," I found myself more focused on class readings than I had been before. However, to pick which element of this learning experience made its effect so apparent would be challenging; between the professor, discussions and selected readings, I could not determine which contributed largest to my overall experience. I am beyond fortunate to have been a part of this learning experience and only hope each student at the University of Maryland has a chance to do the same.