

## Introduction

In my past years of English courses, I have always survived, not thrived. Like a vine latched to its lattice, I was able to get good grades by following the suggested formula and adding a few fancy adjectives- but I never really felt like I was able to make my essays my own. Narratives were even more difficult for me, I felt overwhelmed by the freedom to create whatever story I wanted- and when I wrote one it never came out as well as I had hoped. Taking UW English General has given me an opportunity to break free from the formulas and create powerful pieces of my own design. I was expecting just another class with another set of guidelines, but I was greeted with much more. The Outcomes have provided a guideline, not for a specific structure, but for the thought process for how a piece should be composed and the effects they create in the final product. It has been good for me as a writer to branch out and try different genres, all while I interpret and incorporate themes in pop culture. The way we have continued to engage the same overall topic all year has helped me put each assignment in perspective and relate them to each other, which is a critical step. The impactful pieces that I have created are proof that when I engage new sources in a variety of ways I can create unique and moving papers. I feel my writing skills have truly blossomed this year. Though the quality of my works have not astronomically improved, the thinking process behind creating these pieces has shifted to establish a more purposeful design process.



## Outcome 1 Reflection

The focus of Outcome 1 is to be able to cater the genre and argument in a piece to effectively reach a specific audience. Through the careful choice of a genre and literary elements such as tone and rhetorical devices, the author designs a piece to engage and/or convince their audience. Being able to select which elements to use helps the author appeal to both academic and non-academic audiences. Using a variety of rhetorical strategies helps the piece effectively convey the author's purpose to the intended audience. It is equally critical that the author realizes the specific effects each element has on the audience and whether each element is appropriate for the situation so they can best implement them to complete their task. The ability of the author to explain why they made their compositional choices and what their effect was is also crucial for the reflection process.

In my case, Short Assignment 2.2 best exemplifies the targeted composition described in Outcome 1. For this assignment, I wrote a pair of letters as if they were exchanged between Deborah Tannen (author of "There Is No Unmarked Woman") and Patricia McLaughlin (author of "Venus Envy"). This assignment required a lot of experimenting, since the goal was to emulate the style of two different authors. Knowing that my audience (my teacher) has experience with the original authors' works increases the stakes because I know that the audience has something to compare my piece against. This task required careful attention to the recognition of style, language, and conventions of the source material. Then I needed to interpret how the specific writing style choices created the overall impression unique to each author. Pinpointing the correct tone and diction was a vital part of writing this piece. To capture Tannen's critical and matter-of-fact style I stated her argument in a straight-forward and

unapologetic matter. "In the program Queer Eye, how many men do they style with a button up shirt and nice jeans? This is their unmarked form, and a small change of a beard or long hair barely makes a difference," I wrote. I also coordinated by use of conventions to include high-level vocabulary to tailor to the situation. Another key part of this assignment was extrapolating what a new conversation between Deborah Tannen and Patricia McLaughlin may be focused on. Since both authors have an interest in women's versus men's choice in style (or lack thereof), I decided to have their fictional conversation focus on beauty makeover television programs. They discuss whether the appearance of men's makeovers in Queer Eye help level the playing field of gender roles in regards to caring for one's appearance. Queer Eye has become a favorite of Netflix viewer, showcasing the lighthearted transformation that 5 gay guys can give to an insecure man. Issues concerning gender and sexuality are commonplace in this program, so it is only fitting that Tannen and McLaughlin join in on the conversation.

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Dear Ms. Deborah Tannen,

I recently found myself revisiting your 1993 essay "There Is No Unmarked Woman." I will always be impressed by your masterful use of language, but I have a few thoughts and questions on your statements. I thought your point over the lack of unmarked choices for women was especially interesting "Yet no makeup at all is anything but unmarked. Some men see it as a hostile refusal to please them." They literally gather something from nothing (or I suppose the lack of something, more accurately). Yet what intrigues me the most is how your thoughts may have changed over the past 16 years with the numerous changes in social expectations, since the issue of men and women's style is in the spotlight more than ever.

I think the times are *changing*, and now men's style choices are more marked than ever. I mean, just look at the Netflix reboot of Queer Eye- it is a makeover show for men. This kind of show has usually been reserved for women, but now that style is more important to men the media changes as well. Shows like What Not to Wear and How Do I Look? have focused on revamping women's style, but Queer Eye takes a new focus on men's style (including lifestyle). The show points out that men are trapped in their own cage of toxic masculinity, where they are expected not to show their emotional side. With the coaching of their style, lifestyle, and social life, they are helped to break free from their past issues and start taking care of their self-image, inside and out. As in the idea of Venus Envy, in a way men have been envious for a while how women have had the freedom to take care of themselves without judgment. I think this is a great movement toward equality, and necessary to dissipate negative gender roles (such as men concealing their emotions. Thus, just as feminist movements have focused on women dressing for themselves, men are encouraged to dress up and feel good about themselves.

Something I have learned through years as a journalist and columnist is that the media reflects society's interests and expectations. The fact that self-care and style advice for men is cropping up more and more shows how it has been destigmatized and simultaneously continues to destigmatize it. It seems we are

much closer to equality between the sexes when it comes to the acceptance of taking pride in one's appearance.

I would love to hear your thoughts on the current shift of significance of men's style, as I respect your studies and would love someone to bounce my ideas off of.

Sincerely,

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Ms. McLaughlin,

I appreciate your interest in my work, and I admire yours as well. I loved your play on the idea "penis envy". Being a linguistics professor, I always appreciate wordplay as well. As for my piece, that was one of my favorite articles to write. The dynamic difference between the perception of women and men's style will always intrigue me.

I agree that men's style has increased in significance. However, that does not mean that the judgemental pressure on women has lessened. If anything, described in the context of the reference you made to television programs, the large number of women's makeover shows speaks to the judgment and objectification they still face. In the program Queer Eye, how many men do they style with a button up shirt and nice jeans? This is their unmarked form, and a small change of a beard or long hair barely makes a difference. The option for "tucked or untucked" shirts does not nearly equate the numerous options women are required to choose from. They must choose between trousers or skirts, leggings or tights, blazers or coats, blouses or tanks. The list goes on, and each of these choices gives the surrounding audience a distinct new opinion on the woman's overall style.

I believe there is a great difference between the fact that stylish men have become more socially acceptable and the idea that they have become more expected. It is still completely reasonable to find a room full of men dressed simply in jeans and button-up shirts at a party, but were all the women similarly dressed in jeans and simple blouses, assumptions that they were frumpy and boring would form. Social acceptance is only the first step to becoming a social norm, therefore the acceptance of men seeking style and beauty improvement does not nearly equal the expectation that women do. I think there is still quite a ways to go before we can call these expectations close to equal.

In my opinion, women's style choices still mean monumentally more the men's in our society. Times have changed, but not so much that the judgment and objectification of women have lessened. The variation and extremity of men's style has increased, but not nearly enough to match that of the women. Sometimes

I see myself studying others and making assumptions about how they may live. Through my people watching over the years, I can see that women will likely never have the equal neutrality of style that men do.

Respectfully,

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## Outcome 2 Reflection

When meeting Outcome 2, it is vital that the author strategically incorporates information from a variety of complex sources. To begin the research process the author brainstorms relevant research questions and continues to add to these questions as they explore more sources. The author must read relevant sources to base their work upon, such as primary and secondary materials related to the new task at hand. They engage in close reading and analysis- all while considering the background situation in which the source was created. By considering the background - such as the source author's opinions and bias - the writer can determine if the source is appropriate support for their writing goals. Key phrases are taken from the sources and quoted in the new paper, to strengthen the argument. Then the author of the paper must synthesize the information and input their opinion. This process, if done correctly, creates a "conversation" between the writer, their source content, and the overlying themes. Lastly, the author must properly cite their sources, giving credit to the authors who were drawn into the conversation when their works were used to support the argument.

In my Major Paper 1 I dove into a variety of sources to construct a multi-faceted and in-depth argument. The topic of my paper, *Hamilton: An American Musical*, is something I have a genuine interest. This helped motivate me to enter the conversation and leave no stone unturned when conducting my research. In creating this paper I utilized over ten different sources ranging from peer-reviewed papers and published books to entertainment blogs and newspaper articles, evident by the long list of citations. By consulting a wide variety of sources I had access to varying opinions from renowned scholars, entertainment journalists, and the actors in the production. This way I was able to compare the effect of Hamilton on the academic and general

populations. For these sources, I regularly stated my opinion on their conclusions and built on them to create my own. After consulting an obscure magazine article from *Daughters of the American Revolution*, I formed my analysis as I concluded how the representation of historical figures is altered by the storytelling process of the musical. "It is hard not to notice the hypocrisy of a story acted out by people of color when they have been actively erased from it," I wrote. For this I combined information synthesized from the roles of the characters in the show and the statistics on contribution of minorities during the Revolutionary War. Thus, I have actively joined the conversation by bringing a completely new observation on this topic to the table. Suggesting a solution to the issue of racial misrepresentation and inequality through the pattern of common casting procedures in mainstream theatre further deepens the conversation. "Many of the 80% of white actors on Broadway could be replaced with non-white actors," I write, using statistics to support my conclusion that non-traditional casting could help bring more ethnically diverse actors, and therefore versions of stories, on to renowned stages. The big picture conclusion that I am discussing is how non-traditional casting measures can help solve the issue of severe underrepresentation of non-white actors in mainstream theatre. Also, I discuss how this solution will have a positive effect on America's youth of color. In my conclusion, I bring together how the future of theatre could include fair and diverse racial representation through this practice. My proper MLA citations give an organized list of the sources I consulted, which is imperative because the authors that came before me deserve to be recognized for their part in my research and argument.

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### “Founder’s Chic” Can Come in Many Colors

Who would have guessed that many of the teens of 2016 would be focused nonstop on topics such as the Federalist Papers and the compromise that put Washington, D.C on the map as our nation’s capital. Thanks to the wildly successful 2015 musical- *Hamilton: An American Musical* has had more young people interested in the politics of the Revolutionary War era than ever before. Lin Manuel Miranda is the mastermind behind this phenomenon; he wrote, composed and played the starring role in this musical based on the biography of Alexander Hamilton by Ron Chernow. The musical follows the story of the United States’ first Secretary of the Treasury- Alexander Hamilton. From his humble origin in the British West Indies to his revolutionary plan to solve the issue of America’s national debt (also including his complex romantic relationships, of course), the musical paints an emotional picture of an influential, but underappreciated genius. However, this picture is the most extraordinary in its use of color. All of the main characters, except King George, were historical white characters played by actors of color. The casting choices of *Hamilton* are described as non-traditional casting. According to Actor’s Equity is defined as: “the casting of ethnic minority Actors, female Actors, senior Actors, and Actors with disabilities in roles where race, ethnicity, gender, or the presence or absence of a disability is not germane to the character’s or play’s development” (Onuoha). The cross-racial (non-traditional) casting in *Hamilton: An American Musical* feeds into music style stereotypes and effectively avoids the issues of race during the time, but it also helps Americans

of color take ownership of their past and form a new image of America. It leads as an example of well-received non-traditional casting on an international scale, which will hopefully drive American Theatre to increase positive racial representation of non-white characters.

The history of race representation in theatre has been fraught with inequality and suppression of non-white culture. Throughout Theatre history, people of color have been excluded from the theatre industry, and white men have dominated it. Most famous plays and musicals through history have been written for a white cast- so both a lack of roles and social stigma kept people of color off the stage. During the 19th century, African Americans (and whites wearing dark face paint) were part of minstrel (blackface) shows. These offensive performances portraying racial stereotypes were made to entertain white audiences (Britannica). As African American actors were finally scoring Broadway roles at the start of the 20th century, it was due to productions written by and for African Americans. Unfortunately, the tradition of white actors dominating mainstream theatre is still alive today. Most roles, even if they are not race-specific, are given to white actors. This leaves actors of color with few options to be cast, usually only in roles that are specific to their race. This race-specific casting often comes with stereotyped and potentially racist characters. In New York, Caucasian/whites are the only racial group overrepresented in the mainstream theatre, with a 65% ratio of White citizens of New York (McPhee) compared to between 75-80% of White Broadway actors. The importance of historical accuracy regarding race representation is often used in defense of an all-white cast, but in reality, it is just an excuse. The solution to this controversy is to embrace the practice of non-traditional casting. It is a relatively recent idea in the history of theatre, and unfortunately slow to catch on. The main purpose of non-traditional casting is to provide more opportunities for actors of an ethnic minority, different genders, advanced age, and disability. Many of the 80% of white

actors on Broadway could be replaced with non-white actors (Onuoha). The non-traditional casting in *Hamilton* is a great example of well-received use. Only one of the main roles is played by a white actor (King George III), even though each real figure was white. The racial variation from the real figures adds another dimension of commentary to the piece. The powerful presence of so many actors of color retelling history originally made by white figures opens the conversation to a variety of modern-day issues. *Hamilton* is a unique case considered to be, "... the most unexpected of phenomena: a Broadway hit that is about political, economic and racial history while also offering an implicit but acidic running commentary on the racial and cultural politics of the US today" (Churchwell). It is clear that Lin-Manuel Miranda and the rest of the production crew intended to connect his audience with history in a way never done before- "Miranda wants his audience — especially the non-white, youthful segment of his audience — to connect with the story of America's creation, so he gives them hip-hop instead of harpsichords and diversity instead of literal representation" (Horsey).

Despite good intentions, the racial representation in *Hamilton* has underlying issues. Most of the issues are ones written into the musical, completely separate from casting choices. One issue is that no characters of color are written directly into the musical. There are only white characters, played by actors of color. The issue is in the implication that there were not many people of color that did things of consequence in this time period. "[It] is misleading and actively erases the presence and role of black and brown people in Revolutionary America," (Monteiro) when there was a significant African-American population, and "America "then" did look like the people in this play, if you looked outside of the halls of government," (Monteiro). Important figures such as Salem Poor, Peter Salem (slaves and soldiers who fought at the Battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill), and Cato (the slave of Hercules Mulligan, a spy against the British)

made a mark that was then erased. In "Minorities in the American Revolution", from the Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine in 1985 states that, "Every estimate of the number of minorities who participated in the American Revolution has been deceptively low...." and unfortunately the script of *Hamilton* continued this tradition. The exclusion of Cato is the most alarming since it is emphasized how Hercules Mulligan served as a spy on the British. The musical did not bother to mention Cato's name, not to mention his critical role as a spy and courier in the Culper Ring (Godbey). It is hard not to notice the hypocrisy of a story acted out by people of color when they have been actively erased from it.

Another consequential detail is found not in what was included in the musical, but what was omitted. A musical number known as Cabinet Battle 3, was not included in the final version of the musical or the official cast recording. It was later released as a part of the *Hamilton Mixtape*, a collection of additional songs. The third cabinet battle documents the argument between Alexander Hamilton and James Madison over how slavery and the slave trade should be addressed:

"This is the stain on our soul and democracy  
A land of the free? No, it's not, it's hypocrisy  
To subjugate, dehumanize a race, call 'em property  
And say that we are powerless to stop it, can you not foresee?" (Miranda)

This is the sharpest criticism of slavery in the whole show and would have been a compelling piece in establishing Alexander Hamilton's position as an abolitionist. However, it was left out completely, even though the song had been fully flushed out. This is another unfortunate example of the erasure of race issues in *Hamilton*, where the presence of issues concerning

African Americans and other minorities goes unacknowledged. Even though actors of color dominate the stage, it cannot be ignored that their presence is lacking in the script.

Despite the shortcomings of *Hamilton*, Miranda and his production crew were able to get their ideas across to most of the audience. *Hamilton's* nontraditional casting has had some powerful positive effects, "It makes the claim that commonplace American history – textbook history, without supplements – belongs just as much to non-white Americans," (Styrt). Daveed Diggs, who played Marquis de Lafayette and Thomas Jefferson, remarked that "I walked out of the show with a sense of ownership over American history. Part of it is seeing brown bodies play these people." This is the exact sentiment Miranda was trying to achieve. He is immersing young Americans of color in their nation's history, portrayed in a way that shows how people of color can be heroic history-makers just as much as white men in powdered wigs can. "the 'faulty reenactor' can serve as a 'vehicle for historicization' through the audience's recognition of a deliberate and obvious anachronism or error" (Styrt). In other words, the simple portrayal of old history in a new way with obvious (but meaningful) inaccuracies can help the audience remember the original tale and still reap the benefits of the new portrayal.

Through all its faults, *Hamilton* has done more good than harm, by helping all those included in the "melting pot" of America to connect with its history. Through popular media such as *Hamilton*, a whole generation has gained a refreshed view of America through the lens of "Founder's Chic". It is a phenomenon of "lauding while also humanizing the founders" (Monteiro). Other than commercial success, this process has shown that America should not be defined by white men of stature as it was at its origin, but it should be defined by determined, inspiring individuals without consideration of their socio-economic status or the color of their

skin. We should be past the time where actors of color were excluded from the stage “where it happens”. *Hamilton* is an engaging story about the past that will hopefully help guide the future.



## Writer's Memo

In creating this paper, I utilized over ten different sources ranging from peer reviewed papers and published books to entertainment blogs and newspaper articles. By consulting a wide variety of sources, I had access to varying opinions from renowned scholars, entertainment journalists, and the actors in the production. This way I was able to compare the effect of Hamilton on the academic and general populations. For these sources, I regularly stated my opinion on their conclusions and built on them to create my own. Thus, I have actively joined the conversation by suggesting a solution to the issue of racial misrepresentation and inequality through the pattern of common casting procedures in mainstream theatre. I use statistics to support my conclusion that non-traditional casting could help bring more ethnically diverse actors, and therefore versions of stories, on to renowned stages. The big picture conclusion that I am discussing is how non-traditional casting measures can help solve the issue of severe underrepresentation of non-white actors in mainstream theatre. Also, I discuss how this solution will have a positive effect on America's youth of color. In my conclusion I bring together how the future of theatre could include fair and diverse racial representation through this practice.

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### Outcome 3 Reflection

While Outcome 1 emphasizes the importance of composing for a variety of audiences, Outcome 3 focuses on the formation of the argument itself from various sources. I had a difficult time differentiating between the two at first, but Outcome 3 is more specifically directed at the development of the argument as opposed to the entire piece. When forming your argument, one good technique is to address multiple viewpoints throughout your paper, this way the argument feels well-rounded and more opposing arguments are countered. Engaging in a nuanced analysis of a variety of claims and evidence is critical as you incorporate these details into your own personal position. You also need to recognize the stakes- or the impact/consequence- of your argument. Understanding why your issue would matter to your audience allows you to select rhetorical appeals that have the most effect. Designing the argument to be the most impactful by setting tone, diction, rhetorical appeals,

In my Short Assignment 1.2 I wrote a review of the racial representation in the movie *Coco*. I was constantly shifting the angle and point of view of my analysis, as described in outcome 3.1. For example, I included a counterclaim in my argument covering why *Coco* could be considered disrespectful, or at least culturally stereotypical. I also considered the opinions of others as written in my source articles and the Mickey Mouse Monopoly documentary. I have synthesized my own opinions and assumptions from these sources. As detailed in outcome 3.2, I selected and explored quotes from these sources to show their position and support my claims. I examined scenes and details from the movie *Coco* for their racial representation through ethnic elements and stylistic choices. For example, I examined the importance of the inclusion of a

*chancla* instead of a wooden spoon in Abuelita's design. Furthermore, the significance of this detail was used to support my argument that *Coco* is a thoughtful and respectful movie.

Considering the stakes of this piece guided my choice of evidence and rhetorical appeals. In this case, I recognized that my audience would partially consist of movie fans who liked *Coco*. I used a quote from the director, Lee Unkrich: "We ended up bringing in periodically big groups of all sorts of folks from the Latino community, from artists to writers to political figures to media executives, because we wanted to get a lot of different perspectives." The purpose of this quote is to support the ethos of my claim that the movie showed an overall respectful representation. I recognized that fans of the movie would hope that it also was genuine and respectful, so building up the credibility of the movie supports my argument and reassured my audience's positive view of the film. To capture my audience's attention further I used a lighthearted, yet slightly academic, tone. This made the reader feel comfortable, as they did while watching the lighthearted film, and made me seem more knowledgeable and expert on the subject.



## Aye-Yai-Yikes, *Solo Un Poco* Racism in *Coco*

Visions of the warm glow of candles and vibrant marigold petals litter the screen of Disney-Pixar's *Coco*. Small details of authentic Mexican life are placed everywhere in the record-breaking film, inspiring massive support from Latino and non-Latino communities alike. Disney-Pixar's *Coco* is a wonderful and culturally respectful film that leads the studio in the right direction for portraying ethnic communities and stories in the future.

One testament to *Coco*'s success was how well it was received in Mexico. The movie was released in Mexico before any other country in a nod of respect to its inspiration. In November 2017, in Mexico, "the movie [had] already set a box office record by pulling in \$43 million after less than a month in theaters," remarks Tom Huddleston Jr. in "Disney's New Pixar Movie 'Coco' Already Set A Box Office Record" from Fortune.com. *Coco* rapidly became the top-grossing movie in Mexican theaters due to high attendance and multiple viewings. The fact that this film was so well embraced by the very culture it documented is a strong testament to its cultural accuracy.

The wild success of *Coco* was partially due to the immense effort put into cultural research. Director of *Coco*, Lee Unkrich, and the production crew enlisted a plethora of consultants from the Latino community. "We ended up bringing in periodically big groups of all sorts of folks from the Latino community, from artists to writers to political figures to media executives, because we wanted to get a lot of different perspectives," Unkrich said explaining their effort to make their movie as culturally accurate and respectful as possible (Guerrasio). One example of how this specifically changed details of the film was changing the accessory of Miguel's

*Abuelita*. She was originally designed to carry a wooden spoon tucked in her apron, but a consultant recommended that it be changed to her slipper, or *chancla* (Guerrasio). The idea of punishment via *chancla* is a persistent theme between Latino kids who grew up fearing it. Countless Latina grandmothers and mothers selected these worn sandals as their weapons of choice, so the inclusion of this detail gave yet another reason for the Latino audience to relate to this nostalgic story.

However, not all viewers loved the movie. “*Coco* stinks. It has nothing to do with our traditions,” posted Gerardo Fernández Noroña, Mexican politician and presidential candidate on his Facebook page (Krauze). He seems to be one of the only Mexican viewers that openly preached their disapproval for the movie, however other criticism is hard to come by. The reception of this movie was overwhelmingly positive, but that does not mean that it was without fault. Certain Latino stereotypes were still represented in the film, such as the “*Grito*.” Before Miguel’s first performance, Hector gives him the advice to just add in a loud yell if he is nervous or needs a little extra style. The “*Grito*,” or “yell,” is a common part of Mexican music- but also a slightly offensive stereotype in the United States. “*El Grito*” is reminiscent of the Mexican stereotype of fat, drunk, goofy mariachi men, and the film would be better if it were not included. Though it was not likely intentional and not offensive to all viewers, the fact that it echoes a racist stereotype is not worth its inclusion. The whole purpose of the movie *Coco* was to portray Mexican culture in a different light, one of love and loyalty. The misleading idea that a classic Mexican “Aye-yai-yay!” can solve your problems does not align with this.

Although stereotypical portrayal was not completely avoided in *Coco*, compared to past Disney films the stereotypical representation is drastically reduced. “Latino characters in Disney



movies? Oh, well, one comes to mind, the Chihuahua--and that's about it ... It's almost expected," Marisa Peralta discusses in the documentary *Mickey Mouse Monopoly*. Movies such as *Lady and the Tramp* and *Oliver and Company* feature Chihuahuas as the sole Latino characters. They are usually represented as dirty troublemakers. Choosing to represent this story with human characters is one way this stereotype was avoided. Additionally, the dog included in the film was not a chihuahua but a Xoloitzcuintli (or Xolo) dog, a breed with actual cultural significance. Xolo dogs were believed to be guides to the afterlife in Aztec culture, one of the main indigenous civilizations in Mexico (Romey). This is yet another example of the producer's attention to detail and dedication to include a wide variety of cultural details, which serve to make the film feel more authentic and accurate in terms of representing Mexican culture.

Between the many hours of research and intricate attention to detail, Disney's *Coco* was formed into a considerate and lovable story. It is obvious that director Lee Unkrich and his production crew went through a tremendous amount of effort to help correct the stigma of Disney's racist movies of the past. They sought a way to unite people of all cultures with the story of one, and succeeded- and in a time where the political environment encouraged the exact opposite. "Where our country might be wanting to put up a wall, Pixar built a beautiful marigold bridge," said Kristen Anderson-Lopez, who wrote the movie's Oscar-nominated song "Remember Me" with her husband, Robert Lopez (Puig). *Coco* is a great example of respectful cultural representation that should be followed, both on and off the big screen.

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#### Outcome 4 Reflection

Outcome 4, as I have come to understand it, is all about utilizing the feedback from peers to fine-tune a piece to best reach its audience and convey its purpose. By checking in with peers and the teacher during review and conference time, a student is able to bring other's perspectives into the process of continuously revisioning and refining their piece. This is a critical step, since collaborating with others is a lifelong skill, and this collaboration helps a writer improve their personal revision techniques. These skills will continue to be important for the rest of the student's life as they strive to produce effective, high-quality material. This could vastly range from suggesting edits to computer code to create a smoother video game to rewriting a movie script with the help of other writers. The ability to learn to rework ideas and create a more cohesive and effective product is the central goal of Outcome 4.

The assignment in which I most thoroughly received and implemented peer review was in Short Assignment 3.1, where I created a political cartoon to make social commentary on how exclusive the American upper class is. In making my political cartoon, I wanted to make social commentary on how difficult social mobility is for individuals of a lower class and how difficult it is for them to be accepted by the upper classes. I portrayed the upper class as an exclusive club that denies access to the poor. Members of this "club" have numerous advantages, advertised on signs outside the club. The text "Whatever happened to the land of opportunity?" portrays the contrast between the ideal of equality in America and the reality of class discrimination. The poor woman in tattered clothes standing outside the entrance to the club is stopped by the bouncer, denying her access to the higher class and all the benefits that come along with it. I have contrasted the somber expression of the poor woman and the empty street with the colorful signs

on the club and the smug people inside. To get a new kind of feedback, our rough drafts were exchanged with those of another class, and we wrote feedback for each other. I was able to give feedback on other's cartoons to help them refine their composition and rhetorical elements. Being an audience member analyzing their piece, I was able to help them with improving their composition as well as gain a better understanding of what it feels like to be a member of the audience. By reviewing other papers I could recognize patterns such what are commonly confusing elements that authors included in their pieces. Seeing the weaknesses of other's arguments gives me the opportunity to improve my own by checking common points of weaknesses and strengthening them like how I helped my peers strengthen theirs. This process also allowed me to receive honest, anonymous recommendations from a new group of people. Their constructive feedback guided me in redrawing the final draft. The peer edit sheet that my reviewers filled out helped me see the specific elements I had added, often without recognizing their significance to the piece overall. For example, my peers pointed out how the bias and point of view of a student are evident, since I have referenced the Olivia Jade college admissions scandal. This made me more aware of who would be most affected by my argument, other students like me, who sense the injustice of the socioeconomic class system. I have also targeted the audience of the upper classes and institutions that favor the higher classes, to criticize and raise awareness for the exclusion in the class system. This cartoon is applicable to a variety of audience since individuals from lower classes can relate to the exclusion from the elite based on their own experiences. Members of the upper class are targeted and can join the discussion of how elitism still remains in the United States. Any citizen can recognize the connection between the metaphor of high class as a club and the reality of class discrimination in the U.S. By

experimenting with the format of a political cartoon, I am able to paint a literal picture of this issue that is accessible to everyone (since it does not require much background knowledge and explains my claim in fairly simple terms). It also provided me with specific feedback, such as how the bouncer character in my cartoon could be more impactful if it were a defender of the wealthy. For this reason, I changed the bouncer to Donald Trump for my final portfolio. I also labeled the velvet rope "Tax Cuts for the rich" because many of Trump's tax policies have given the most benefit to the upper class. This small detail strengthens the political and social commentary by criticizing a specific person and policy. Another factor that separates the classes is the effect of discriminatory classes of the past. Policies such as redlining legally defined "good" and "bad" neighborhoods and furthered the cultural and economic divide by rewarding more opportunities and privileges to members of "good" neighborhoods. Higher social class is like an exclusive club because a combination of social and legal processes keep those in lower classes from rising in status. The social stigma surrounding "the poor" is one factor that separates the classes. The upper classes often view the lower classes with pity- or even disgust. They are seen as the "other" that decrease the sophistication of the highest social classes.





## Final Reflection

Throughout the year, this English class has helped me bloom as both a writer and a citizen of the world. It has helped me connect real-world themes and issues to practical writing projects. I am hopeful that in the future I will be able to use the skills I have nurtured this year to make a difference, both inside and outside the classroom. The proficiency to create a plethora of different kinds of works is not only useful in an academic setting, but a professional setting as well. From designing compelling advertisements to business letters, the papers I may compose in the future could all be inspired by the experience I have gained in this class. The ability to synthesize information from the media surrounding me and form my own opinion is something I will constantly use as I go about my daily life. The formation of arguments that I make, whether the be why I should be hired for a job or why one should eat cake over pie, will be influenced by the strategies I absorbed. Collaborative brainstorming and revision will be an imperative practice in any job, and the process we have practiced will help me give feedback in an organized fashion. As I continue to reach for the sun in my journey as a writer I know I will carry the lessons and habits I have learned throughout the year along with me, for a real writer never stops growing.

