

## Poetry Project Self Reflection

“The road of life twists and turns and no two directions are ever the same. Yet our lessons come from the journey, not the destination.” These invaluable words of wisdom hail from the American Novelist and Poet, Don Williams Jr. and perhaps have become cliché. However this phrase is the key to my growth as a poet over this past project. Originally, my poem only focused on the topic of truth, more specifically the truth of socialization and how we as a people are complacent with mediocrity, unwilling to push ourselves to new heights.

I also drew inspiration from Taylor Mali’s poem, *Speak With Conviction*, which identified a similar problem within our society: the words that we speak don’t hold any significant meaning. After showing my first draft to a few peers, the feedback that I received is that although the message is clear, it doesn’t feel complete, as if I am trying to say more than what I had written. Personally, I felt quite complacent with the status of my writing. It was then that I realized that I had fallen into the exact same situation I was attempting to call out in my poem: I was complacent with my own mediocrity. So I decided that I would improve the message by overcoming the very problem that I was identifying by adding to my message, and then explain how I overcame that issue. Not confusing at all, right? Thus my poem took to a new road, leading it in a different direction. The final product not only focused on the truth of our society, but also how to find one’s own inner power and break free from the chains of laziness. Thus, winning at the the rat-race of life. Even though my journey as a poet has only just begun, I feel that I’ve learned to appreciate the process of writing and to listen to my own words of wisdom.

One of the most important changes that I made to my poem happened quite early in the writing process. I added a very large amount of repetition to my poem with the line, “What do you see Magic Nick?” Below is a sample of what my poem originally looked like in the first draft:

...  
*I need to be myself and not put all of my eggs into one basket.*  
*I have been told that I should work hard in life until I reach my casket.*  
*The observation is that some people are lucky and think that to succeed,*  
*You need to be at the right place at the right time*  
*In order to shine,*  
...

I felt that these lines were very bland, and read as if they were coarse pieces of sandpaper when I wanted my poem to flow as smoothly as a baby’s bottom. This is what the same lines looked like after I added my repetition:

...  
*I see that I should be myself and not put all of my eggs into one basket.*  
*I see that I should work hard in life until I reach my casket.*

*What do you see Magic Nick?*

*I see that some people are lucky and think that to succeed,  
You need to be at the right place at the right time  
In order to shine,*

...

The above changes improved my overall poem because now, instead of making bland intellectual statements, I was having a pseudo conversation with myself, and by extension, the reader. What I mean is that this approach allowed the onlooker(s) to be involved with the metaphorical conversation that I am having with myself, which makes them actually think about the words and interact with them on a different level rather than just scanning over them. Also, the repeated repetition of "What do you see Magic Nick?" forces the reader to remember that one line, which also aids in conveying my message.

The second most important change was adding a turn halfway through my poem.

...

*If you want your dreams to come true,  
Then combine desire and action to achieve those means;  
Because everything you have is a manifestation of what you think.  
Before you realize it,  
You will be on the brink of success.  
Take action because nothing comes to those who wait.*

*What do you see Magic Nick?*

*I see that I should not just be myself,  
I should be my best self.*

*I see that you do not have to be in the right place at the right time,  
You should be everywhere all the time!*

*What do you see Magic Nick?*

...

Above is what the poem looked like before I changed it. Personally, I didn't feel that the above lines needed to be changed, but Brittney Ketchum identified that after my poem climaxed at, "Take action because nothing comes to those who wait," there was no resolving action and my poem just seemed to end abruptly; so the poem was changed to:

...

*If you want your dreams to come true,  
Then combine desire and action to achieve those means;  
Because everything you have is a manifestation of what you think.*

*Before you realize it,  
You will be on the brink of success.  
Take action because nothing comes to those who wait.*

*Do you see it now Magic Nick?*

*I see that I should not just be myself,  
I should be my best self.*

*I see that you do not have to be in the right place at the right time,  
You should be everywhere all the time!*

*Do you see it now Magic Nick?*

...

By changing my repetition from, "What do you see Magic Nick?" to, "Do you see it now Magic Nick?" improved my poem because on a subconscious level, it tells the reader that the main question that was being asked in my poem had been answered. Subsequently now all that I am doing is describing how this apparent resolution influences some of the examples that were used in the beginning of the poem, better illustrating my point.

The final and most important change to my poem was integrating it with a performance piece and adding audience interaction. It is challenging to provide physical evidence for a change of this manner, so I will attempt to describe what happened. During my original practice recitations, I simply spoke my poem and then performed my trick. This felt very choppy, as if the magic was just hastily added to the end of the poem. I wanted the magic to be an integral aspect of my poem, and vice-versa. So what the final product ended up looking like is a magic trick whose patter was my poem. Before I began my poem, I was able to interact and talk with the audience by producing a bowling ball out of thin air and describing my outlook on poetry and magic, thus building a repertoire and setting them up for my main effect. When the trick actually took place, there were moments where I broke off script to enact my magic effect, while staying in tone with my poem. The end result is that my magic trick and poem came to their climax at the same moment, allowing for one big feeling of wonder. This improved my poem because instead of having two separate moments of amazement, they happened at the same time. Emotionally, this gave the audience a feeling that what they just experienced came to a just conclusion and the intellectual and emotional experience was worth their valuable time.

In conclusion, this project was a deeply enjoyable experience that I would readily repeat in the future.