

Chapter 5: Disabling Soundwriting: Sonic Rhetorics Meet Disability Pedagogy

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5. “Dayton” by Cat Dotson

Cat Dotson shares her literacy narrative, focusing on the power of her own voice in both the audio and transcript. The narrative was created as part of a larger project focusing on her experiences growing up and living in Dayton, Ohio.

Transcript

Hi, my name is Cat Dotson, and I’m a third-year English student at The Ohio State University, and this is my literacy narrative. I’ll start by talking about my literacy growing up, and then I’ll move into my writing process and what that’s like.

So, growing up, my nighttime routine was much like that of other children in that my parents always read me a bedtime story. My nightly selections were limited not because we didn’t have books, but because my parents wanted me to learn how to read on my own. Mom and dad read the same stories to me over and over, each time trying to have me follow along with my fingers tapping each word that they read. After some time, I could read aloud with them, and then again after more time, I could read the words on my own. Both of my parents enjoyed reading and my dad especially loved to write. Their interests drove them to teach me to read and write on my own as soon as possible. When I was in first grade, I was the first in my class to read a chapter book on my own. By the time I was in sixth grade I was reading at a high school level. I always had an interest in both reading and writing, but I truly believe that my parents had the greatest influence over my reading and especially my writing, both of which have gotten me to where I am today. My writing may be more advanced now than when I was younger, but everything that I’ve written previously has helped me develop into the writer that I am today.

I don’t remember most of what I wrote when I was younger, but there are certainly some examples that stick out to me. For example, “Josh the Roach and Mitch the Robot” is most likely one of the earliest examples of my writing that I can remember. I was seven years-old and in second grade when I created the adventure series about my friends Josh and Mitch. Over the course of a few months I created several stories that were roughly ten pages each, complete with illustrations, cover pages, you name it. I honestly can’t remember what compelled me to write those stories, but after I was done with that series I continued to write. From there, I wrote “Detective Sidney and Her Sidekick Katie,” another short adventure series based on my real-life friends.

After that series ran its course, I didn’t write anything of significance again until I started fourth grade. My mom had recently gotten a desktop computer and she would let me play around on it. When I wasn’t recreating the *Jaws* movie poster on Paint or messing around with Pinball, I was experimenting with Word. At that time, I was reading a lot of teen magazines that I picked up at the store so I decided that I was going to create something like that on my own. The result was something like a newsletter that talked about style tips and top ten lists that consisted of topics like my favorite books from that month. I had my mom print off my newsletter at her work so I could pass it out to my friends during recess. It was an amazing feeling to not only have people reading something that I had created, but to also have an audience that enjoyed it.

I continued to write short stories up until the end of elementary school. By the time I started seventh grade though, I stopped writing short stories and began writing poetry. We had several poetry assignments in my English class, and while I felt like it was an

area that I did well in, I tended to keep them to myself instead of sharing them with others like I had with my short stories and newsletter. My teacher thought that my class did very well with the poetry unit, so she decided to organize a class poetry contest. I was reluctant to enter, but she encouraged me to. I wrote several poems for the contest, but eventually I chose one that described a forest at dusk. If I were to look back at that poem now, I would probably cringe at my word choice and the topic in general, but that poem helped me win the contest. My classmates seemed to really enjoy what I had written and that was nice, but I was never quite as excited about people reading my poetry, most likely because it was more personal than any of the stories that I had written.

I continued to write a lot of poetry and various kinds of short stories until about my junior year of high school. During my last two years of high school, I student taught and began learning how to write research papers, and I learned a lot about teaching and education and I began to enjoy learning about how writing works and the different kinds of writing processes that people have.

For the longest time, I didn't think that I even had a process for writing. I don't create outlines or concept maps. I usually don't have anything beyond a first draft and a finished paper. When I start writing something, I get on my laptop, pull up Word and then I begin typing. I tend not to sit at a desk or table if I'm writing at home. I find that I have an easier time writing if I sit in the corner of my couch with my legs crossed. I rarely listen to anything while I'm writing, but if I do, I have a Yoga playlist on Spotify that is usually my go-to. If it's a research paper that has to include citations or evidence, I'll usually put those on notecards and find ways to incorporate that information as I'm writing. I tend to edit sentence-level structures while I'm writing and save larger revision processes like clarity of ideas for later. Also, I never start by writing my introduction paragraph. I begin by writing out my body paragraphs and bit-by-bit I take some of the ideas from those body paragraphs and I begin to build up my introduction. Starting with body paragraphs was advice that I received from my English teacher my senior year of high school.

She knew that I always got stuck writing my introduction, so she told me to save it for last because sometimes you don't know how you want to introduce your topic until you already have the facts laid out. Not starting with an introduction may throw some people off a bit when they're reading a draft of mine, but I feel like my writing turns out the best when it's done out of order. I don't always process information in an orderly format, which may be why I don't work well with outlines. I just write as thoughts come and I rearrange and revise as I go. My hope at the end of writing a paper is that the reader doesn't find that there are logical missteps because of the way I go about my writing process.

That is my literacy narrative. Thank you for listening.

Cat Dotson's Artist Statement

For this project, I created a recording of me reading my literacy narrative. I thought that this was something that needed to be created because it's interesting to hear about people's experience with literacy while growing up and what their writing process is like. Also, researchers study literacy narratives that are uploaded in digital archives such as the DALN [Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives]. Ultimately, I think that it makes literacy and the concept of literacy more accessible to people.

To create the audio for this project, I used a recording app on my phone.