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Writing 220  
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### Not Why I Admire Avril Lavigne

At the moment, I find it pretty difficult to answer the question “Why do I write?” There is no deep vortex within me where fictional characters are trapped, trying to claw their way out and have their stories told. I have no deep spiritual connection with the written word where metaphors flow freely from my pen and I can barely manage to get them out fast enough. Even as I write this paragraph I am literally struggling to make it sound fancy and writer-like, so I’m just going to stop, and write like myself.

I guess the most honest answer to why I write is that I am not someone who is particularly talented in any given field, whether that be academics, music, athletics, etc., and I find that, comparatively, I guess I am decent at writing. I have been struggling to decide on a career path. Everyone wants a job that “sounds cool” or allows themselves to “follow their dreams”, but simply having an interest in something isn’t usually enough to become successful in it as a profession. You have to actually be good at it and you have to be willing to study it and practice it until you’re even better at it. That’s why people who are amazingly talented at math find it fun to calculate in their head thing like how much they’re truly saving at different discount rates. That is why my genius friend, Jenna, who is in the most selective program at Penn, gets a kick out of logic puzzles and solving practice LSAT questions, even though she’s not studying for the LSAT at all. It feels good to do something and know that you’re good at it. For me, writing is one of the few things I feel that way about.

Let me back up a bit and provide some context of my writing history. I don’t really remember whether I was good at writing when I was very young. I know that when I was in

Kindergarten, Mrs. Sorrentino told my mom that I was trying desperately to use writing to explain my journal drawings before we had even learned to read. Perhaps I was a child prodigy for a hot second. My earliest memory of really writing, though, was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade when we wrote a paper about whom we admired most. Every one of my classmates wrote about a parent, sibling, or grandparent. How charming of them. I wrote mine about Avril Lavigne, a punk rock singer whom I don't even like anymore. I remember being really excited to get to write five whole paragraphs about my then-idol, but I don't remember how it turned out but I do still tingle with embarrassment at that choice in topic. Way to make me look bad, girl-who-wrote-about-her-military-dad.

Writing, as a serious discipline, for me really began in high school. I was in Honors English class all four years. That and Spanish were the only subjects I could ever take at a "higher level" than other people. During my junior year of high school, my English class was a total joke. About 80% of my grade was determined by weekly vocab quizzes that included words like bicycle and sorority. The words were always chosen based on Latin roots, not on usefulness or difficulty. Needless to say, I wasn't exactly taught anything that would help me prepare for college-level writing. On the side, though, Jenna, who went to an elite private high school at the time, would coach me in grammar rules I had never been taught as I prepared for the SATs. She also helped me revise the two major papers that comprised the other 20% of my English grade. She was able to take the garbled shitty first draft of a personal essay I was writing on my severe phobia of needles and craft it into something eloquent, all while showing me how I could do it myself next time. She also taught me a few big words that I now throw in nearly every academic paper, but I won't

ruin that surprise just yet. Using what Jenna taught me, I think I started to improve and I started to feel really proud of some of my writing.

Fast forward to when I started out at Michigan as an overwhelmed freshman who didn't know what clubs to get involved in, much less what I wanted to study. Jenna (who comes into this story again purely by coincidence) suggested I try writing for the school newspaper when I told her I wanted to do something that wasn't primarily based on attending weekly meetings because I was afraid of time commitments. I liked the idea that I could just write articles when I had time. To my own surprise I found that writing for The Michigan Daily was something I really enjoyed. I didn't expect to find it so satisfying since I was essentially just an opting into an additional homework assignment. I love the satisfaction of sharing my articles with my friends and family and I love that it has forced me to learn about things I wouldn't have otherwise ever thought about. Who thought I would ever take a trip to North Campus to learn about aerospace engineering? I certainly didn't.

A few months later, I decided to apply for a position as a writer at another on-campus publication called Spoon University. Spoon is an "online publishing platform and food community for college students" if we're being technical, but it's essentially a food blog. I thought to myself, "Hey, I like writing, and I definitely love food. This is perfect for me!" I was also excited at the prospect of getting to write in a new style and tone that was totally different from what I was used to. The Michigan Daily is very straightforward, factual, and serious. There is no room for my opinions or experiences. I can't even use other versions of the word "said". No "he mentioned" or "she added". Just said. I loved Spoon though, because I was free to write in a more laid-back, colloquial tone that sounded like

how I speak rather than like an academic paper. I submerged myself fully in writing for Spoon, bringing at least three article ideas to every meeting and gaining a reputation for promoting my articles on every possible form of social media.

I also did well in my English 125 class, which happens to be one of my favorite classes I have taken at the University of Michigan thus far. It was based around the theme of photography and we wrote essays about photographs from different points in our lives. As I write this paragraph I am in tears from just rereading one of my essays from that class. My parents and close friends who read my English 125 papers and my myriad articles started telling me, "You're pretty good at this! Maybe this can be a future career path for you!" I guess much like Lady Gaga, "I live for the applause" because from there, I decided I wanted to pursue my interest more intensively. I applied to be in the writing minor so I could improve my writing abilities and hopefully prepare myself for a job that involves writing. I don't know whether I want to write for a blog-type website like The Infatuation or Elite Daily, a more serious journalistic publication like the New York Times, or become something else like a lawyer where writing isn't necessarily at the heart of the job but is still critically important and useful. What I know is that being able to write well is an incredible skill to have in my repertoire. To be able to take a complex idea in my head and articulate it properly and perfectly is so immensely satisfying. I love to go back and read something I wrote and feel like I did a fantastic job, like I just did when I reread my English 125 paper.

So I guess the answer is, I wrote initially because I wanted to get into college and then to do something besides watch Netflix all the time once I got to college. Now I write because now I think I'm alright at it and want to get better at it. A mild interest has become

a passion and I sincerely hope it becomes something I can utilize in the future. But I write, as in take classes on writing, because I know I am not the best writer I can be. I won't deny that the thought of writing in a style that I'm not used to intimidates me. I don't love the challenge of doing something I'm not used to doing while I'm in the moment. I generally prefer doing things I feel comfortable with and know I can do well. But at the same time, once I surpass the initial nervousness and explore the uncharted wilderness of an unfamiliar writing style, I feel confident and safe knowing that it won't be quite as daunting the next time.

No matter how many papers I write though, I'm never good with conclusions.