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Problematizing Paper

No format, no organization, no layout. You get to make all of the choices and decisions on your own, GO! What? No structure? No guidance? Full creativity? How? This question is the reason I have rewritten this paper over and over. It’s why I’ve drastically switched my topic every day. Why do people like structure? Why do they cringe when they are given the opportunity to do what they want? To think and act for themselves. We go most of, if not our entire lives with people telling us how to do things properly. We complete assignment after assignment through a black and white format. In this there is structure, there is certainty, there is security.

But why do we like this? Why do all people, regardless of age, race, and gender like this? You see this phenomenon a lot particularly in young children. You know the type. The crazy, out of control, naughty type who are bouncing off the walls… ya, they’re pretty hard to miss. Have you ever noticed their parents though? They’re typically the ones who “don’t care”. Might you say the ones who don’t provide structure. Who don’t give rules or set boundaries. And the children, they hate it. They don’t seem like they hate it because of the way they display their behavior. But as soon as they are in an environment where there are rules and someone is taking control, they calm down a lot. An interesting phenomenon I think that applies itself to all humans alike. We like someone being in control. But again, why? It’s not a common thing for teenagers or young adults to enjoy someone being over or in charge of them. But I saw the faces. I saw the reaction of the class as our assignment was being given, and I’m guessing my face looked very similar. Is it perhaps because we got a peek into adulthood, and that frightens us? Was it the realization that we will very soon be the only ones utterly over ourselves? That we will be the ones making decisions and choices? Is it that kind of responsibility that startled us at the beginning of the assignment?

I sit here pondering the answers to these questions. But the truth is, I don’t know. I don’t know why this assignment with all of its twists and turns is so hard for us to grasp. I don’t know why I feel the need to have structure and guidelines assigned to every mundane task in my life. I have gone through endless topics and drafts. But it is only now as I write this that I suddenly realize something. This paper, despite what we all might have thought, is not what we thought. Sitting here pondering and writing I begin to answer one of my questions, but I stop. We are not allowed to answer our questions on this paper. Wait. We are not allowed to answer our questions on this paper. Nor are we allowed to write about a topic that has been written about again and again. And with that, structure is back. This paper appears easier and I have no trouble continuing to write because I have structure. I have guidelines that help me shape my paper. But now, suddenly I want that freeness back. I want to be able to answer my questions with an easy yes or no. I don’t want structure.

Do people just want structure when they are given freeness, and freeness when they suddenly receive structure? Why do they instantly want the other when theirs is taken? For over a week I’ve wanted guidelines to this paper. I’ve wanted strict rules and regulations so that I could complete the task assigned to me, get a good grade, and become one step closer to graduating. But right now I also want to answer the questions I have listed. I want to end my paper here instead of making it a full two pages, and I don’t want to turn it in until next week. But this paper has rules. It has regulations, and my mind races as I wish I could share this with the class. Because I’m sure now that it would help them formulate and write their papers with the knowledge that, unlike we thought, this paper does have structure. But then again, maybe it wouldn’t help them. Maybe that’s the point of this paper. To make us realize the good and bad of formats and guidelines. To help us understand the importance of developing our own creativity under guidelines, no matter how strict or lenient they may be. But then why didn’t I see that at first? Why did we all panic? Why did we need an example from Mrs. Payne? I don’t know. And I won’t answer, because I have been given structure, and despite it going against my better instincts... I must obey.