

Last term, in EN 270, I tried something new (new for me at least), so I thought I would share the experience and the product with you. Instead of my usual final portfolio of revised essays, I asked my students, as a group, to collect and publish their best work in some form of magazine. I placed them in committees—based on the general model of a magazine staff—and set them loose. The form of the publication, the look, and most of the content was totally up to them. All I required was that the first two essays assigned, one on fiction, one on poetry, were both represented, and that everyone in class would contribute one revised literary essay and a short reflective essay. What they came up with, an online publication, is quite wonderful in my opinion. I am proud of the work they've done, and I hope, when your busy schedules permit, that you'll consider taking a look at their work.

I told them initially that you, the English faculty, were their primary audience, and that you might later share their work with other English Majors. They wrote all term long with this audience in mind, knowing that you were not an implied audience, but a real one. My side of the agreement was that I would show their work to you when the time came.

To be sure, the work is of varying quality. This project did not miraculously turn weak writers into strong writers. Yet I'm proud of their essays, even the humblest of which show progress from earlier drafts. Even more interesting are their reflective pieces, some of which were a real thrill to read and others, I must admit, made me cringe a bit—both consequences of honesty. The majority of the reflections show real, tangible growth in the students, as writers and as adults.

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