

“The Yellow Brick Road to Literacy”: An Exploratory Essay in Documentation Responsibility

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Course: English 102

Instructor: Mr. Chris Genre

Assignment: Exploratory Essay

The sun beat down as the hot wind scattered toasty leaves in my direction. Onward to the English Department I trudged, where my next challenge awaited. Alas, I finally returned to college, not as a spry, young lad comforted in my cocky, endless youth, but as a somewhat weathered, slightly graying example of “a road less traveled.”

My return to academic endeavors was not without its challenges. The recently-coined term, “non-traditional student,” was ready and waiting for my inevitable return. Strolling through the swarm of “munchkins” lining the hallway to room 314, I immediately decided that the “Tin Man” and “Scarecrow” were the only characters missing from this university. I quickly sat in my customary place among the now familiar faces. The professor then marched into the room, business-like as usual, pounding his tattered, leather book-bag down onto the desk and dragging it into position in one fluid motion. He began a withering assault of expectations on the frightened passengers of his train-to-literacy. The instructions were to write an exploratory essay on the experiences of finding source material. The assignment continued to flow, like a levee break during an April flood.

The task was to properly express, in writing, the experience of searching for and properly documenting information sources. After listening to a harrowing explanation of the crimes of plagiarism—accidental or not—I felt the need to jump off the nearest building. However, not being

one to shy away from danger, I chose to take my chances and walk through the deadly minefield of accidental plagiarism, on my way to educational glory.

I watched the rain come down from a recently revived tropical storm—"Ivan the Terrible"—as I pecked the computer keys. The gloomy weather reflected my outlook on using such electronic contraptions as I made my way to the library resource pages. Since the topic for my paper was drug abuse, I had no problems finding material. I managed to locate an interesting article, which listed facts that I could include in my "proposing solutions" assignment. I chose this source over several others because it discussed less-boring scientific information, which would cultivate interest in the readers and avoid boredom, in my opinion. The first article I selected was "Illegal Drug Use; Marijuana Abuse is up Among U.S. Adults," prepared by Staff Editors. It was copyrighted in 2004, via NewsRx.com & NewsRx.net, and was published in *Obesity, Fitness and Wellness Week* magazine, Atlanta, Georgia, on page 639 of its May 29, 2004, issue. I accessed the information on September 23, 2004, and the database was hosted by *ProQuest*, whose home address was <<http://www.proquestcompany.com>>. Southeastern Louisiana University, Sims Memorial Library, located in Hammond, Louisiana, purchased the rights to access.

Slowly, I began to recover from the overwhelming amount of information required to document sources from the Internet. I continued to grind out my search while punishing myself for procrastinating on this assignment. Voila! I found another wonderful source for my essay because it listed the medical effects of Marijuana use. I decided to use this source because, while medical terminology is often complicated and full of technical jargon, this paper seemed to translate the medical information into easily understood terms. Fright reared its ugly head again as I pondered the endless amount of documentation which lay ahead. The article, "Marijuana's

Effects: More Than Munchies,” written by Linda Carroll, was published in the *New York Times, Late Edition* (East Coast), New York, New York, on page F.6 of its January 29, 2002, edition.

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My journey continued, as I scratched and crawled my way through the technology maze. For my next source, I chose to select information presenting positive medical evidence for smoking pot. There are two sides to every story, I reminded myself, and I felt it would lend credibility to the evaluation process if the positive effects were also listed. The article, “Scientists Identify Gene That Triggers Marijuana’s ‘High’ - Fluke Discovery Could Spawn New Medicines That Have Herb’s Therapeutic Effect,” was written by Richard L. Hudson and was published on page B.2 of the August 9, 1990, issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, (Eastern edition), New York, New York. This information was accessed on September 23, 2004, and the database was hosted by *ProQuest*, whose home address was <<http://www.proquestcompany.com>>. Southeastern Louisiana University, Sims Memorial Library, located in Hammond, Louisiana, purchased the rights to access.

Elatedly, I realized the professor’s requirement for three magazine articles had been met. The next obligation was to find two books to serve as information sources. The professor appeared to have some kind of hidden phobia regarding e-Books, so I decided to find information elsewhere. The worst thing that could happen to me would be some sort of grisly death, administered by the haunting librarian lady. I needed more research information on various health effects, so I chose the book *Drug Abuse Sourcebook*, written by Karen Bellenir; it

was published by Omnigraphics in Detroit, Michigan, in 2000. The reason I selected this information source was because it was like “a library within a library,” figuratively speaking, since it contained an enormous amount of research findings, survey data, statistics, and preventative solutions to drug abuse.

I began to think ahead to the “Proposing Solutions” essay. Because the assignment was centered on evaluating and recommending corrective action, I decided to select another information source to provide additional data regarding possible solutions. I chose the book titled *Buzzed: The Straight Facts About the Most Used and Abused Drugs From Alcohol to Ecstasy*, written by Cynthia Kuhn, 1st edition, published in New York, by W.W. Norton in 1998. This was another source filled with layman’s terminology regarding the real world facts about drug abuse. Again, I chose this excellent source over several others because of its lack of technical jargon.

Somehow, I managed to navigate my way through the mind boggling array of links, web pages, and confusing details. The result was an ensemble of informational sources which would not only serve my efforts to create an essay, but hopefully also meet the professor’s exacting requirements. Only time would tell if my journey was in vain. I left for my appointment with the Writing Center through the thunder, lightning, and rain. But, I felt dodging the severe weather and tornados could not be nearly as hazardous as the minefield of accidental plagiarism.

Mr. Genre’s Comments: *The general idea behind this assignment is to relate the experience each student has, and the processes they go through, while searching for sources to be used in future essay. Just as it sounds, the real challenge of the essay is to meet the requirements yet still*

keep the essay entertaining. Here is where Rusty excelled which makes this essay a model for others to follow.