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Cover Memo

When I was first presented with research paper assignment, it seemed extremely daunting and I was uncertain what topic to complete my research on. After giving the assignment a lot of thought, I decided I would look further into Disney films, because I am an avid Disney fan. I had noticed that most Disney movies left the protagonist without a mother, thus that is where I began my research. I did not have an exact idea of what my paper would be about, but I knew I wanted to research more about the lack of mothers in Disney films.

Upon completing some of my research, mostly in the form of scholarly articles, I began to focus less on why there were no mothers present and more on how the lack of a mother affects the protagonists. I finally decided I should analyze a motherless protagonist that I am familiar with: Ariel. The more I began to research about *The Little Mermaid* and Disney films in general, the more I realized that many of my beloved childhood films were reinforcing gender roles. I was very intrigued by the messages *The Little Mermaid* was sending to children, thus I decided to focus my research entirely on that film and how it reinforces gender roles.

My portfolio is being presented in the format of a webpage and includes all of the required materials: annotated bibliography, works cited, proposal, and the presentation of my research. I was immediately intrigued by option to present my research as a website; however, I did not realize that creating a website would take more time than writing a fifteen page paper. I wanted my website to be aesthetically pleasing, have a logical flow, and provide the audience with a lot of useful information.

The first part of portfolio I completed was the annotated bibliography, which contains fifteen sources. When I first started the annotated bibliography, it seemed like a lot of extra work. I was not introducing my sources correctly nor was I italicizing the names of movie titles within my MLA citations. I was immediately writing what the authors’ claims were and never introduced the title of their books or articles. Once I finally realized how to correctly write and format my annotated bibliography, it was slightly easier to complete. I did not truly appreciate it until I was writing my various pages on my website and would refer back to it to see which source I had read something in. It actually proved to be worth the extra work and I am really glad I wrote it. I annotated six scholarly articles and three academic books, which demonstrates my “ability to critically read complex and sophisticated texts in a variety of subjects.” I not only had to read all of the higher-level material but I also had to fully understand it in order to correctly annotate it. In addition, I used six of my sources from my annotated bibliography to explain my research. This aligns with Writing Arts core value four, which indicates “students will be able to investigate, discover, evaluate and incorporate material into the creation of text.” My incorporation of this research demonstrates my understanding of the readings and my ability to incorporate it into my own text to create a coherent argument. This

The second portion of my portfolio I completed was my proposal. I had never written a proposal before so I was uncertain how to complete it at first. During its first draft, I still did not know what my research topic was, which was evident throughout my paper. It seemed very vague and had a lot of possible ideas; however, I needed to commit to one idea and stick with it. In the plans for future research portion, I merely wrote I was going to complete more research. In my second draft, I narrowed down my research topic and my proposal became a lot more focused. I changed my future plans to include a time-permitting research study and to re-watch *The Little Mermaid*. My second draft was vastly superior to my original draft, which was lost when my computer reformatted itself.

I was very excited to start creating my website. The first layout I created for my website was not compatible on all computers. Users who had Firefox or Google Chrome could not see my layout the way I had intended for it to be, so I contacted Weebly for help. Unfortunately, Weebly said they could not help with my specific question and I should use one of their pre-designed layouts. I decided to follow their advice, because I wanted everyone’s viewing experience to be identical, and I just customized their pre-designed layout instead to make it appropriate for my research. I changed the opacity of the center table so my background depicting Ariel would always be visible. I also changed all the colors of the font and the links to match the background. I tried several clever URL names, but they were all taken. I was finally able to register with hookedonariel, which I really like.

Before I posted any of my text onto my webpage, I always typed everything into a Microsoft Word document first. I wanted to ensure everything was spelled correctly and I was being grammatically correct. It also allowed me to revise and edit my text more easily. This process demonstrates my use of “self-critical awareness of [my] writing” and that I am “familiar with the current standards and dynamic nature of grammar, mechanics, and usage and will be able to apply them appropriately.” In addition, Weebly is sometimes temperamental and does not save all of my changes, thus I wanted to have all of my hard work saved on my computer just in case it was somehow not saved on Weebly.

On two of the pages, I wanted to embed music from *The Little Mermaid* that would start automatically but would still be able to be paused by the viewer. It took a very long time to find both of the songs I wanted, in good quality, and to format the songs so they would automatically start at a semi-loud volume but could still be stopped at any time. I also incorporated as many moving pictures as possible to break up the long text. My favorite touch on the website is the Ariel cursor. I decided to give my webpage an extra special touch to pull the theme together and embedded coding for an Ariel head to follow the cursor around my webpage. The look of my webpage was very important to me because I wanted viewers to realize I am knowledgeable about the film and an educated fan. Taking the time to find the perfect background, songs, clip art, and cursor demonstrated my dedication to the research and the project overall, which viewers will appreciate when they visit my page.

Throughout my webpage, I embedded YouTube videos that show portions of the film to help bolster my argument. Some of the clips I really wanted to use had the embed function disabled, so I had to use alternative videos. On my “Ariel’s Body” page, I included a clip from Ursula singing “Poor Unfortunate Souls.” All of the clips on YouTube have the embed function disabled, which means I was unable to use them on my website. Instead, I had to use a video in which someone inserted the Broadway musical version of “Poor Unfortunate Souls” over the animated film. The lyrics of the song are identical as is the scene from the animated film, thus I decided it would be better to provide the visual than to completely omit it. I believe my use of videos, pictures, and text, which work together in unison, exemplify the first writing arts core value: “Writing Arts students will demonstrate understanding of a variety of genre conventions and exhibit rhetorical adaptability in applying those conventions.” I analyzed a film and then through a series of three other genres was able to discuss and prove my findings.

Overall, I am very proud of the way my webpage turned out. I came a long way from not even knowing what to research to customizing even the smallest of details on my webpage to enhance the viewer experience. I successfully created a series of links so the viewer has to view the first two pages in order; however, upon viewing those pages, he or she can then view the other pages as desired. I tried to make the learning process fun on my webpage and I really hope it shows.