

# *even now, the assignment is wrong*

BREE TRICKEL  
WR 121, Fall 2022

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It's 2018. I'm fourteen years old. Standing in front of the entirety of my creative writing class and all their parents. I just told all these people I had been bullied to the point of trying to commit. Spoken word poetry.

they break us  
continuously  
like a game of chance  
do you think she'll snap today?

No clapping for at least five seconds. Five seconds of tears welling in my eyes because saying it was easy, the silence was hard. The shock was hard. Then, clapping. Slow. Agonizing. They're shocked. They're shocked because for two minutes they had to hear me spit out statistics and personal experiences in a poetry event that was supposed to be fun. The kid before me talked about waffles in a love poem.

I can't even look at my mom and brother. My father didn't show. My eyes find my teacher, who is absolutely beaming. She's clapping the loudest; she's proud. That's enough. I walk offstage.

I'm sitting back in the audience, my classmates are telling me I did great. I don't hear them. I'm pulling out my journal to write more.

That's what it's like for the next five years. Pulling sludge up from wherever it hid in me and placing it onto a page. Making people uncomfortable. The silence never gets any easier, but I was writing. Poured it into novels and poetry, short stories, broke up my own emotions with essays. Still passionate about animal rights and gender studies. Still marking up the same copy of *The Handmaid's Tale* I bought my Freshman year. Pick up her poems, too.

do i have to live and breathe as a dying piece of art?  
to think my thoughts in lines of poetry  
when you move away from your friends  
who tell you that you're the brightest light they've ever seen  
and you have to choke down the words  
because stars burn the brightest right before they explode  
lift my chin to focus my eyes on the sky  
ignore the blade that is tilting it up  
and simply convince myself the ground is not getting any closer

Passion doesn't come easy from academics. It's the same with emotion. You draw up something you don't really want to think about and make it work. College is hard. Not just the moments where you're in the study room cramming information you're supposed to know back in your head because somewhere in between the divorce and therapy, you forgot the thirty-five rules of the theater you were supposed to memorize. Monologues come easier, but that's speaking. That's writing that's not your own. It doesn't count.

You run away from your own emotions. Name every single writing style with a name that's not yours. Remove yourself. Let out Atlas.

My therapist asks if I ever write poetry that's positive.

coming back home

(bury me with lavender, it doesn't grow in the winter time)

It's another assignment. Write something happy. That's funny. I was always good at school but somehow I'm going to fail this one too.

I laugh. No, I don't.  
Do we ever write essays about anything that doesn't need changing?

Even in this assignment, break the rules. Forget your annotations for *Invention throughout the Writing Process* are public and tear into the writing. Laugh, brush it off when your friend brings them up. I didn't like it, *why?*

There's always going to be *someone*, a teacher, a friend, a fellow student, who wants you to do what's hard. Who wants you to keep writing. Even in the 2 am moments you can't think and haven't slept in days, that tells you to rest and come back to it. You're bored, find what doesn't bore you. You're hurt by the people who don't understand, make them understand.

"Instead, I got angry, and anger when it is used to act, when it is used nonviolently, has power."

*On Writing a House on Mango Street, Cisneros*

anger is a secondary emotion  
that's the important part  
of the silence after an argument  
i'm hurt, aren't i?  
between the lines of an essay  
only few can understand  
i suppose, i must be  
if it's the only thing i can hold  
just like this

Connecting schoolwork and personal work is also hard. It's also involuntary. Nothing that is written by the individual is not personal. Nothing that comes from someone's hands is unimportant.

Writing is you. So, pick up your pencil. Somewhere in this assignment you really don't want to do, is something just for you. Go ahead. Write.

**Author Bio**

Bree took this semester as an opportunity to break as many writing rules as possible. This is a formal apology to their teacher. They've been writing poetry for six years, and enjoyed the chance to mix their personal work with academics.