GETTING BEYOND THE BLOCK

Helpful ways for students to defeat writer’s block

By Vincent Civitillo

It’s Sunday. It’s 11 p.m., and sure enough that nine-page paper on Hamlet’s role in shaping the face of Canadian water purification is due the minute you walk into your 8 a.m. class the next morning. Despite all your preparations and extensive knowledge of the topic, you find yourself stuck in the so-familiar situation of sitting down to write the thing and coming up with nothing.

You have writer’s block, a complete and all-encompassing barrier between you and the ability to get any sensible words down on paper. Luckily, unlike the Ebola virus, writer’s block doesn’t have to stop you dead in your tracks. There are ways of beating it so you can sleep easy and make it to your early class on time.

And so the drawing became “Luminescence—L’Avventura.”

Naar, a member of Princeton Artist Alliance (PAA), recently teamed up with English professor Dr. Robbie Clipper Sethi to produce four works. The pieces will be featured in an exhibition at the New Jersey State Museum. The exhibition, entitled “Vision and Voice: Princeton Artist Alliance in Dialogue with Contemporary New Jersey Poetry,” is a collaboration between PAA members and New Jersey poets.

Sethi was inspired to write “Sea Legs.”

“T o Naar, the color and the darkness of the piece. ‘Heat’ instantly became a narrative,” said Sethi. “L’Avventura” gave her a visceral, emotional response; she had to write a poem because it was so intriguing, and the resulting poem as being lyrical.

The collaboration holds further inspiration for the two artists.

“One of the things that happened as a result of this is that I started writing more poetry,” said Sethi. “It really inspired me.”

Through the drawings, Naar and Sethi have found themselves inspired to write more poetry.

“Whenever I get stuck, I make a basic outline of everything I’ve got to write about and start with whatever the easiest is,” senior Alyson Sherby said. “Sometimes if you just get something, anything, down, you find your groove and the rest gets easier.”

However, sometimes the best way to get the best of writer’s block is to leave the keyboard all together, advised sophomore Cynthia Pearce.

“If I spend too long on one thing without getting anything done I’ll just do something else,” she said. “There’s almost always other homework to do and, if not, you can always just talk to someone until you feel ready to go back.”

The Internet can be a useful lifeline for struggling writers, Sherby said, who finds that search engines can usually point her in the right direction.

“I go online and type what I’m writing about in Google and get key points to build off of,” she said. “You never want to take their ideas or, especially, their words because that would be plagiarizing, but at the very least you can get an idea of what other people are saying about something, which can usually be enough to give you your own opinion or expand on theirs.”

Finding a sub-topic that interests you can also help, according to senior Desawaka Dolo, who stressed that there is always a different way to approach an assignment.

In any topic there are about 100,000 different things you could say about it, so try to find one that I either know something about, or wouldn’t mind researching,” he said. “If something is boring you, you’re not going to have an easy time writing about it, but if there’s something about it that you like, use it.”

If all else fails, “Hack Your Way Out of Writer’s Block,” an article on 43Folders.com, suggests talking to a monkey. Indeed, monkeys are compassionate creatures that can help you verbalize your thoughts until they become easier to get down in writing.

Those without immediate access to monkeys, they write, can consider using the nearest stuffed animal instead.

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Dr. Robbie Sethi
Professor of English

The difference in the drawings also inspired two poems of different styles for Sethi. “L’Avventura” gave her a visceral, emotional response; she had to write a poem because it was so intriguing, and the resulting poem as being lyrical. Meanwhile, “Heat” instantly became a narrative.

“I immediately had a story,” said Sethi. “That painting tells a story.”

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Both are excited about being included in the exhibition. This is an opportunity where two professors from different disciplines have merged to enrich the University, said Naar. Sethi agreed, saying that the show makes a connection.

“In a way, that kind of connection is what Rider’s all about, because we don’t stay within our disciplinary lines,” said Sethi. “In a way, it’s an illustration in how you can get inspired by crossing disciplines.”

Professors gain recognition for collaborated art work

By Maureen Zahn

Inspiration can come from strange places. For example, Harry I. Naar, professor of Fine Arts, recalls watching the Italian film L’Avventura while working on an untitled drawing. There is a long scene where the characters are climbing mountains.

“I was right in the center of my drawing, doing that,” said Naar. “I was right in the center of my mountains.

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