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Ms. Byrnes

Intro to College Writing Enhanced

17 February 2020

Te Amo Abuela

It was the championship game. It was the 9th inning and we were losing by 2 runs. I was next up to hit and as I stood on the on-deck circle, the nerves crept in. The cheers of the crowd, the smell of hot dogs from the concession stand, and the torching sunlight that made me sweat so much. So much was going through my mind at that moment. I was practicing my swing and timing the pitcher, but I was so nervous. I was next up to bat and if I didn't get a hit, my team would lose the championship. My teammate drew a walk, so now it was my time. My parents were standing right behind home plate. My mom cheered me on, screaming my name as loud as she could. My dad, the one whose dream was to play professional baseball, stared at me with such intensity that I could feel it as I walked up to the plate. He always did that.

There was someone missing from the crowd, but I couldn't think about it at that moment. I stepped up to the plate and stared at the pitcher. I wanted to get in his head and I wanted to intimidate him. I was on a mission and no one would stop me. I wiped the dripping sweat from my eyes and forehead, rubbed my gloves together, and dug my feet in the dirt. The umpire signaled to the pitcher. He was ready and unfortunately for him, so was I. The cheering grew even louder and my teammates roared in the dugout. Everyone's eyes were on me. "The best player on the team." "The man to win us the championship." As the pitcher began his windup, I took a deep breath and remembered that this was for her. For the person that wasn't in the crowd that day. The ball was thrown, its spin telling me that it's a fastball. As I waited for it, the world

turned silent. I only saw the ball and I heard nothing. Then the screaming and cheering happened. My teammates scored and we won the game. The coaches and team ran to me and huddled over me, celebrating. They dumped water on me and tried ripping my jersey off. I looked at my mom and dad, and they were crying. They were crying because they were so happy. They were proud. They were also crying because someone was missing. I looked up at the sky, made the sign of the cross, kissed my chain of the cross, and said, “That was for you. I love you abuela.”

I was reading a book from one of my favorite novel series, *Captain Underpants*. It was a couple weeks before Christmas and I was so excited. I already sent my letter to Santa. I used blue construction paper and wrote it with a pencil. I always asked Santa to sign my letter after he finished reading it. A lot of gifts were under the tree and my mom was finishing up the rest of the decorations. My mom is one of those Dominican moms that completely transforms the house for an upcoming holiday. Dominican moms go crazy about decorations for holidays and they'd decorate a month ahead of time, depending on the holiday. She hung some lights on the windows, put the stockings up, and put little Santa plushies around the house. I was most excited about going to my abuela's house for Christmas. The whole family was going. My mom's side of the family is huge, so I didn't know how everyone was going to fit in the house. I didn't care, as long as I got to spend Christmas with my abuela and the family. I loved abuela's house. As soon as you walked in, you'd smell the food she was cooking. That rice with habichuela and the scented candles she had all over the house. There was a portrait of Jesus on the living room wall and some other paintings. Sometimes, I'd look at the portrait and stare into Jesus' eyes and move back and forth, because I always thought he was staring at me. I don't think he was though. My

favorite part of abuela's house was this couch she had. It was leopard skinned and I always sat there. That was my spot and everyone in the family knew that.

I had reached the part of the book when Captain Underpants was battling the villain, Wedgie Woman, and I heard my mom's phone ringing. It was her sister, so she picked it up. A minute into the conversation, my mom ran outside. I was scared because my mom had never done that before. I wondered if my aunt was okay. My mom came back to the house ten minutes later and was crying. My dad was on his way home from work, so there was nothing he could do at that moment. I had to put on my big boy pants and do something. I went over to my mom, hugged her, and asked what's wrong. She looked at me and said, "Everything will be okay. Just go to your room and watch some TV." So I went to my room and watched my favorite show, *Power Rangers*. It didn't feel right to just go and watch tv, but I was scared. The show reached the point where the rangers got their megazords to defeat the villain. A couple minutes later, I heard the door and it was my dad. I ran out the room and hugged my dad. When I looked at his face, I saw tears streaming down his cheeks. Why was I the only one that wasn't crying?

My parents had to work, so I had to go stay at abuela's house. She lived in Brooklyn. Not a bad part of Brooklyn, but it wasn't great either. My mom didn't like Brooklyn that much; all the graffiti, crime, and stuff didn't make her comfortable. It's where my parents grew up. It's where they met and it's where the majority of my family was born and grew up. Brooklyn was home to everyone else, except for me.

My mom dropped me off, talked to abuela, and kissed me on the cheek goodbye. When she left, my grandmother told me the plan for the day. She spoke to me in English and Spanish, but mostly in Spanish, since her English wasn't the best. I could already smell the food she was cooking. It smelled like eggs or something. I was amazed I could smell her cooking from

upstairs, since the kitchen was downstairs. I guess the scent was very strong. I sat down on the leopard skinned couch and turned on the television. It was a really old-fashioned television. It had like a little antenna, and I would usually play around with it for fun. Every time I turned on the television, I looked for our favorite show. The Price is Right! We watched the show every time I was at abuela's. I never knew why abuela loved watching the show. I still don't know to this day. My parents say it's because it helped her with her English. I try not to think or talk about the show anymore. When the episode finished, we went to go pick up my little cousin, Ryan, from daycare. It was a short walk from the house and abuela always said that walking is good exercise. On our way to the daycare, we saw a homeless man sitting on a bench. The man was short, with a scruffy beard and he was wearing glasses. I looked at the man and felt bad for him. "It's awful that people live like that, abuela," I said. "Yo sé," abuela said. We walked up to the man and she handed him five dollars. He was shocked. He said thank you and God bless. We crossed the street and I asked abuela why she did that. "Dios dice que ayudemos a los necesitados," she said. God says to always help those in need.

I turned down the radio and opened the car window. It was sunny with that type of breeze that, when you take a deep breath, you feel relaxed. My dad was driving. It was only me and him in the car; my mom was in another car. My dad was wearing this nice suit and he got a haircut two days before. He wore some really nice glasses too. We were talking about baseball. That was probably the only thing that could distract us from what the day was about. My dad always talks about his love for baseball. His dream was to be a professional baseball player, but that dream wasn't supported. He had the talent to play professionally, but he was forced to work at a young age at his dad's restaurant. His dad wasn't the best at caring for his kids and their dreams. As he drove, he was telling me that his dream of playing baseball in the MLB lives through me. "Your

mom, abuela, and I sat down one day and discussed your future. I don't want you to have a childhood like mine. Skipping school to work and not being able to do what I wanted to do sucked. I didn't want you to play baseball because I feared that I would act like my father. Abuela looked me in the eyes and said that I am better than my father and you will make this family better no matter what you do. What you've accomplished at this point in your life is beyond what any of us could've dreamed of. I'm proud of you, your mom is proud of you, and so is abuela." My dad parked the car. We did our special handshake and got out of the car. Everyone proceeded into the funeral home.

"Name him Sebastian. Sebastian is a name for a boy that will do great things. He will be someone special," abuela said. I saw her in the casket and I couldn't process what was happening. How did she die of an asthma attack if she didn't have asthma? How would God let this happen to her? My dear abuela. She looked so peaceful in the casket. Her eyes were closed, her hands folded together holding a bible, and she was wearing like a dress or something. I leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. Now she can make some rice with habichuela for God, the angels, and everyone else there. She can watch The Price is Right with all them too. That'll be fun. She'll be able to watch my games from heaven too. Watch me get the game-winning hit for the championship.

I was hesitant to write this memoir. I'm not an "open person." I don't like to get personal or tell people about things like this. I pondered what I should write about for the longest. I'm writing this right now and I see a picture of me and my abuela on my desk. It's a picture of her holding me. I'm wearing a cute, little outfit with a spongebob hat. Spongebob was my favorite when I was a baby. I think about her everyday. How different would life be if she were still alive? It's a question I'll never have the answer to.

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Theoretical Analysis

When writing a memoir, “your task is to write a memoir to bring to life a moment, or a series of moments, from the past in order to explore the meanings it has for the present.” We must look back and explore our past to search for its meaning, and how it has impacted our lives in the present. “Soul-searching” is a term that could be used to describe the process of writing a memoir. We need to look within ourselves and find answers that will help us find the true meaning of our past and life. How has my past and these memories, or moments, affected me? This is a question that can be answered when writing a memoir. In order to find that answer, the six “I’s” in Richard Hoffman’s essay, *The Ninth Letter of the Alphabet: First-Person Strategies in Nonfiction* can be used. These six “I’s” include the engaged I, the reminiscent I, the reconstructed I, the self-regarding I, the imagining I, and the documentary I. These “I’s” act as a lems for the audience to see the story they’re reading. I wrote my memoir, *Te Amo Abuela*, through the reminiscent I and self-regarding I.

In this memoir, I explore my past very vividly as I discuss my abuela and my memories with her before her death. Though reluctant to write a memoir about my abuela, I looked deep within myself and decided to use moments in my past to write about a very important person in my life. I realized that my abuela is one of the most influential people in my life, so she had to be the main focus of the memoir as I develop the narrative of my past and my memories of her.

I utilize the reminiscent I to put my experiences into perspective for the audience. Hoffman says that the reminiscent I “invites us to accompany the narrator in her remembering” and is the most usual, probably because it is the most natural.” I convey my lens into my past life, as I give the audience the opportunity to walk in my shoes. I use the past tense for a large part of my memoir because I am portraying my past and my abuela. There are many emotions being developed throughout my memoir, so using reminiscent I was something that helped develop the emotion. I wrote this memoir, reminiscing about my past in order to find the moments that I can explore, so I can find the meaning of my past and how it impacts the present. Using the reminiscent I is what made this memoir what it is. The more I reminisce, the more memories I explore, which is what made this memoir.

As most memoirs are, the foundation of my memoir is the self regarding I. It was interesting to me that self-regarding I is a key component of all memoirs because it forces the writer to soul-search and look very deep within themselves. As I stated previously, the process of soul-searching is a major component of memoirs, so the self-regarding I takes the writer deeper into that process. Hoffman says the self-regarding I “interrogates and explores itself within a specific time-frame.” This explains the self-regarding I beautifully. We interrogate ourselves because we ask ourselves the questions that come up when we explore our past. We question the things we did and how we’ve changed since. We ask ourselves why we’re going to write this memoir and will it truly accomplish. When I use self-regarding, I reflect on moments in my life that I feel were most important in talking about my abuela, and my memories with her. This reflection helped me understand the things that happened in my past and how it’s impacted me right now.

Te Amo Abuela is something that I thought I would never have written. It was difficult, mentally, to write about the memories I have with a family member that meant so much to me and the rest of my family. There wasn't a lot of research that went into this emotional drain of a memoir, but I did have to ask my parents and family members for some reminders. There was nothing I wrote about that required research. The memoir was strictly personal and straight from the heart, which is one of the reasons it was so hard to write. I used Sarash Sweeney's *Don't Drink The Antifreeze* as a model for some aspects of my memoir. Her memoir was personal, in which she talked about the death of a beloved family member, and uses some of Hoffman's six "I's."

I am extremely proud of myself for being able to write this memoir, because as I said before, it was a very difficult thing to do. *Te Amo Abuela* is the journey of my past life, in regard to my abuela and how she shaped it. It's a journey I don't talk about very often, but I did with this memoir.

