

Draft One, With Response

Sean,

I appreciate how you've worked to make this piece more idea-driven (talent vs. skill) than your w1, while also drawing on your own experiences, like Woolf, to make your point. However, I still see two things you'll want to work on, if you decide to continue with this essay:

1. You pose the question about talent vs. skill—but I'm not sure you take a position on it, or tell those of us who are not drummers why we should care about it.
2. In the end, this still feels more like a story about you—there you were, “in the zone,” with the audience standing and applauding—than an essay in which you explore an idea of interest to other people.

Actually, now that I write them out, I realize that these might both be aspects of your same issue: How can you draw on your experiences to write an essay that is not centered on *you* but on an *idea*, an issue of concern to many people?

~jh

√

Sean Bates

W2

Talent vs. Skill

In the eighth grade, I auditioned for my middle school's jazz band. It was after school on a Friday, yet my mind was suddenly absent of all the typical stresses and social pressures of middle school; only this audition was on my mind. Drummers auditioned last, so I had been sitting in the band room for over an hour, watching as each young nervous kid (none more nervous than me, I was sure) went in a back room for a few minutes, and then came out with a stoic face. Did that mean they did well, or not? I didn't know and I didn't care. I was sweating, I was shaking, I was practicing frantically. I remembered back to the hours upon hours I put into practicing. It was just a few basic rhythms and a short excerpt of a piece, but no amount of hours practiced, no amount of confidence in my natural ability, nothing could have prepared me enough to not be nervous in that moment. But why was I so nervous? To this day I'm uncertain. Back in middle school we were all a little emotionally unstable. Nonetheless, I was panicking. I

Draft 2, with response from classmate

Sean Bates

Response:

I enjoyed how much imagery you included in this essay. It really gives me a sense of being there at the audition or at the concert with you. I think the really unique thing that struck me about this essay is your use of time. Each paragraph where you jump to a particular point in time or place you mark with a simple phrase like “fast forward” or “flipping back”. This gives the entire essay a nice cohesive feel and it really emphasizes the change in time. The one thing that I would say as you move forward is to be careful with how you analyze this talent vs. skill that you have begun talking about. A lot of your internal questions give the reader a nice sense of what you’re thinking, but I would stay away from the thoughts like “Am I really that good?” – this type of question could easily be substituted for something more along the lines of “What brings a person to success?” or “Was what brought me here today a natural talent or practiced skill?”. Questions like that are a little more in-depth and could fuel a more inquisitive reader to continue reading. Other than that I really liked the content of this essay and hope you maintain this style of writing as you continue to develop this piece.

Talent vs. Skill

In the eighth grade, I auditioned for my middle school’s jazz band. It was after school on a Friday, yet my mind was suddenly absent of all the typical stresses and social pressures of middle school; the only thing on my mind was this audition. Drummers auditioned last, so I had been sitting in the band room for over an hour, watching as each young nervous kid (none more nervous than me, I was sure) went in a back room for a few minutes, and then came out with a stoic face. Did that mean they did well, or not? I didn’t know and I didn’t care. I was sweating, I was shaking, I was practicing frantically. I remembered back to the hours upon hours I put into practicing. It was just a few basic rhythms and a short excerpt of a piece, but no amount of hours practiced, no amount of confidence in my natural ability, nothing could have prepared me enough to not be nervous in that moment. But why was I so nervous? To this day I’m uncertain. Back in middle school we were all a little emotionally unstable. Nonetheless, I was panicking. I was practicing on chairs, on my leg, on the floor, over and over, making sure I had it all down, making sure I had every beat, every note, every intricate detail of every rhythm down. Then I



Joe Harris <jdharris57@gmail.com>

Drafting Plan - Sean Bates

2 messages

sbates@udel.edu <sbates@udel.edu>

Thu, Mar 19, 2015 at 7:33 PM

To: "jdharris@udel.edu" <jdharris@udel.edu>

Dear Professor Harris,

Here is my current drafting plan for E1D3. As you know, I adapted this paper from my W2 on Talent vs. Skill but this time it develops into a conclusive ending on what talent gives me and what skill gives me. I attached a copy of my paper to this email in case that makes it easier for you than revisiting dropbox. I got very positive comments from all three group members, Katherine, Maya, and Matt. The one main issue that seemed to need addressing from the comments was my use of questions, despite mixed feelings from each group member. Matt liked the questions thinking they were very Woolf-like, Katherine commented on the repetition of certain questions so close to each other, and Maya commented on the relevance and wording of certain questions.

So my plan is as follows:

-Reword some of the questions like “was it talent or was it skill?” that appear close to each other to more in-depth questions like “what brings a person to truly be skillful?” or something along those lines.

-Review question placement in accordance with time period, since certain questions jump between time periods. For instance, after my solo performance I asked “What had brought me to this point? Was it the decisions of my father and band director? Did they notice some natural talent I’ve had all my life? Or was it my hard work?” I’m considering either cutting those or rewording them to fit a question I would have asked at the time of my story. Then in the next paragraph it reflects on the events of my past, so it’s more appropriate to ask those deeper questions there. But that’s an area I plan on significantly revising.

-Reword/rephrase sentences starting with “I”, especially those in long sequences of sentences starting with “I”. Of course my story is very revolved around myself, but I still use “I” perhaps a bit too much, or at least use it too many times in a row. So I plan to reword some of them to make “I” the object and not the subject, like “This made me feel...” rather than “I felt...”

-Add/develop/elaborate on when I froze the first time I ever played my drum solo. I’d like to add more on how I felt and why I wasn’t able to just instantly play well. Then I plan to reflect back to that moment when I compare myself to Buddy Rich and how he was 100% natural talent and I was not.

-Cutting (strictly just considering cutting at this point) most of the description from the first time I played “Greetings and Salutations” and my solo, particularly the description of the solo itself, as it’s one of the only things in this paper that I can’t seem to find a purpose for.

Questions for you:

My first question is regarding my last statement about cutting that section. Do you see a purpose in drawing out that section? I personally believe it has a large purpose in showing the audience that I did not operate on talent alone, and I think describing how I felt and how the solo worked helps the audience get into the scene, which makes the sudden freezing panic (which I plan to elaborate on) more dramatic. So my question to you is what effect does that section have on you as a reader and do you think it should be cut?

My other question is also regarding cutting. As a writer, I obviously see relevance and reason behind everything in this paper, so I'm having difficulties finding weak points to trim. I know you wanted us to avoid broad questions like this, but are there any specific weak points (that I haven't already mentioned) that you think need to be either cut or revised?

Thanks so much, and have a great weekend! See you on Tuesday.

Sincerely,
Sean Bates
UDID: 702258038

 **Bates e1d2.docx**
25K

UD jdh <jdharris@udel.edu>
To: sbates@udel.edu

Tue, Mar 24, 2015 at 11:45 PM

Sean,

You've got a strong draft here, which you've developed nicely, and a thoughtful plan for revision. You're in a good place to write a compelling essay.

To respond to your questions:

- Although I've been encouraging people to cut, I don't think you should cut the description of the solo. It works for me in almost exactly the way you say you were intending. I'd keep it.
- On the other hand, I find the Buddy Rich comparison unconvincing. (I had the chance to hear him play live many years ago, by the way.) I'm not sure it helps me understand better exactly what "talent" consists of, which is what I want to know at the closing point in your essay. Maybe this is something we can talk about Thursday.

Which I look forward to doing! See you then!

~jh

√

Joseph Harris
Professor of English
Director of Composition
University of Delaware
134 Memorial Hall
Newark, DE 19716
[Quoted text hidden]

Draft 3 (Final)

Sean Bates
English 110
E1D3
4/6/2015

Talent vs. Skill

In the eighth grade, I auditioned for my middle school's jazz band. It was after school on a Friday, yet my mind was suddenly absent of all the typical stresses and social pressures of middle school; the only thing on my mind was this audition. Drummers auditioned last, so I had been sitting in the band room for over an hour, watching as each young nervous kid (none more nervous than me, I was sure) went in a back room for a few minutes, and then came out with a stoic face. Did that mean they did well, or not? I didn't know and I didn't care. I was sweating, I was shaking, I was practicing frantically. I remembered back to the hours upon hours I put into practicing. It was just a few basic rhythms and a short excerpt of a piece, but no amount of hours practiced, no amount of confidence in my natural ability, nothing could have prepared me enough to not be nervous in that moment. But why was I so nervous? To this day I'm uncertain. Back in middle school we were all a little emotionally unstable. Nonetheless, I was panicking. I was practicing on chairs, on my leg, on the floor, over and over, making sure I had it all down, making sure I had every beat, every note, every intricate detail of every rhythm down. Then I watched as the first drummer went in. I could hear through the walls how he played, but I didn't listen. I kept practicing to myself. Finally, it was my turn. The band room was empty; everyone had left except the drummer before me packing up his things and wishing me good luck. Then, with a deep breath, sticks firmly held in my clammy, slightly shaking hands, I walked in. . . .

Grades
English 110
Professor Joseph Harris

Author: Sean Bates	Title: "Talent Vs. Skill"
Criteria	Score
Project Do you set an ambitious goal for your essay? Do you develop an interesting train of thought in your writing?	√+
Materials Do you make effective use of the work of others? Do you clearly cite the texts you are discussing?	√
Voice Is your prose clear and imaginative? Does your writing sound like you?	√+
Editing and Design Have you carefully edited and proofread your prose? Have you thoughtfully designed your document?	√
Grade	A
Comments Sean, I suspect that, at this point, you hardly need me to tell you that this is a very fine essay. You've made it better with each draft. I admire how you bring <i>Whiplash</i> into this final version, and also how you argue, through convincing examples drawn from your own experience, that it's not so much talent <i>vs.</i> skill as talent <i>and</i> skill. Well done! I look forward to seeing how you write in direct response to texts in your next piece. ~jh	