

English 180, Third Place; Professor, Dr. Magdelyn Helwig

The Color Green

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Turns out, the harder a paper seems to be, the easier it is to write. When overly simple, cut-and-dry rubrics are assigned by teachers, my voice becomes caged by the obvious standards the rubric is placing on it, and remains hidden throughout the essay. Instead of my voice expanding and growing, it shrinks away and the basic, bottom-scraping student response is born. However, junior year finally put an end to my numb, robotic ways.

My teacher's name was Mr. Groom. A quiet man, but do not be deceived. He never smiled, his words were stern, and his personality was absolutely overflowing with sadistic humor. So unless you wanted to be verbally annihilated in front of the entire class, you shut up, paid attention, and did what Groom said. He scared the crap out of all of us, so when he told us to write a five-page paper on the color green, we all quickly wrote it down in our planners and did not question it. It was not until after the bell had rung and I was walking down the hallway after class did I realize, how the *hell* am I supposed to write five pages on the color green? Groom had given us no rubric, no model to go off of, nothing. He only said to make it thought provoking, and to make it green.

I remember sitting at my desk and writing what the color green reminded me off. Money? Plants? How do either of these things have any sort of relation... talk about selling flowers for five pages? I remember throwing down my pencil and wanting to confront Groom, only to remember his beady little eyes ready to roast my entire life. I talked to classmates about my struggle, and all of them felt the same. What were we supposed to do?

I'll tell you what we did. We learned. Although we hated him at the time, Groom forced us to grow into stronger writers than we could have ever imagined. The fear and few rules he instilled in us forced our minds to think not only outside of the box, but pretty much outside of this world. I recall sitting down the night before the paper was due, going over everything. I had no rubric, no classmate help, and there was no way I could email Groom... it would only result in him reading the email to the class the next day and getting humiliated beyond belief. So, I opened up Microsoft Word, and just started to write. I started writing about plants and wildlife and how it is an essential part to this Earth, for nothing could exist without it. It was the bottom of the food-chain, the root of all life. After filling the first page with the importance of plants, I turned to writing about money; I figured I would find a way to connect the two after a while. I wrote about how money basically runs our lives and the world we live in, and how we as a human race could not survive without it.

Then, it hit me: green runs the world. Whether it be a natural or a man-made source, the color green represented something that we all could not live without. I wrote about how we unknowingly depend on the color green, for we need it to survive, physically and economically. When I was finished, I titled my paper: 'Green Runs the World'. I remember sitting back and reading it, and to this day it is still one of my favorite papers to read. Not only is it such an interesting concept, I can hear myself saying the words as I read them. Due to the lack of restrictions placed on the paper, my voice is overpowering in this essay. It was the easiest five pages to knock out once I reached my main point, because it was basically just me talking and explaining to my audience my thought process about some color.

Due to this color that runs the world, and Mr. Groom, my writing has been dramatically altered. My voice finds its way into all of my works, and I find that the less restrictions, the

better. I enjoy when my mind can wander and connect points on its own, and when I can add my own twist to topics. So, I never thought I would say this, but thank you color green, and thank you Mr. Groom. I would not be the writer I am today without the skills I gained in junior year AP British Literature... or without the threats I received from Groom.