

Write On!

A Weekly Newsletter by The Evergreen State College Writing Center
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VOLUME II ISSUE XIII

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NEXT QUARTER...

Resumés, Graphic Novels,
and MORE!

Have a great
Spring Break!

Don't forget to visit the Writing Center during Spring Quarter!

Tutor of the Week

SHAUN JOHNSON

- **Year:** Sophomore
- **Focus of study:** Environmental science
- **Length of time at the Center:** 2 quarters
- **Favorite things to tutor:** Fiction
- **Favorite book(s):** *William Stafford's Best*
- **Favorite book(s) when he was seven:** Anything by Roald Dahl

CAN YOU ...

STUMP THE TUTOR?

E.H. Cartwright asks, "Could you discuss the difference between the words 'literally' and 'figuratively'? Are they interchangeable?"



We're glad you asked, E.H. There is a great difference between *figuratively* and *literally*. In his *Dictionary of Problem Words and Expressions*, Harry Shaw explains that *figuratively* means "not literally," or "metaphorically." Contrarily, *literally* means "in a manner true to the exact meaning of the words it accompanies." One should never use *literally* unless it refers to an action that is actually occurring.

If one were to say, "She broke my heart," that's all fine and good. But if this same woeful person desired to be more expressive and emphatic, and say, "She *literally* broke my heart," then that person would be both woeful and grammatically incorrect. Unless heartbreaker split the man's heart into two pieces by dropping it on a marble floor, she merely broke his heart *figuratively*, **not** *literally*.

Here's an example of when to correctly use the word *figuratively*. One could say, "By relating the brutality of the couple's separation to the horrors of war, the author writes *figuratively* about the battles involved in the particularly nasty divorce" and be quite correct.

Writing Self-Evaluations

Evaluation is creation: hear it, you creators! It is only through evaluation that value exists: and without evaluation the nut of existence would be hollow. Hear it, you creators! ~F. Nietzsche

As you know, self-evaluations, along with evaluations of you by your faculty, are what your transcript chiefly consists of. Your job when you write a self-evaluation is to justify to readers of your transcript why you deserved the credit you received.

Every self-evaluation should discuss, in an integrated way, the following two things: What You Learned and What You Did.

An evaluation must mention *what you learned*. Don't worry about mentioning every single thing you learned. Just pick out a couple of things that stick out as being particularly important, and write about them in detail.

You should also talk about *what you did* to learn these things. This is the evidence that you *really* learned what you say you did, and that you didn't just flip through your syllabus to find out what you were supposed to have learned. A good way to think about writing this part is to consider the things you learned, and, for each one, ask, "How did that happen?", "What did I do to make that happen?", and "Why does it matter that it happened?" Be detailed and convincing. This part tells your readers that you deserve credit because you *earned* it.

The style of your self-evaluation is up to you, but you should think about this: Your evaluation is a piece of writing *by* you, but it's also *about* you. This means that the character of your writing really matters. So, you should think about the kind of person you want to present to people who might read your transcript. (Do you want to come off as serious, funny, wry, irreverent, sloppy?) Think about how the style of your writing affects this. (What kind of person uses a lot of long clauses connected by semicolons? What kind of person uses a lot of short fragments connected by dashes? What kind of person ends a lot of sentences with question marks?)

Your evaluation is your chance to give readers of your transcript a sense of what you did this quarter, and why it was important to your overall education. It's a rare opportunity—take advantage of it.