Successful Student

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EH 101-QLQ

23 September 2016

Writing Well is Paramount to the Success of Society

In his article “Good Writing Inseparable from the Practice of Democracy,” Bob Kerrey argues that solid foundations in the art of writing are essential for any individual desiring to build a successful career, rise to positions of power, or enact meaningful change in the world. The author discusses a major issue facing the young people of today: they are often afraid of writing, and the current education system does not provide them with the skills needed to write confidently and proficiently. Kerrey cites specific studies and historical data to affirm the validity of his claims. He also appeals to the emotional nature of the reader by discussing the mental benefits that understanding how to write well can provide, such as being able to find one’s identity with written words. Kerrey’s workplace experience, powerful writing style, and use of relevant stories make this article believable and drive the reader to take initiative and become a better writer.

“Good Writing Inseparable from the Practice of Democracy” aims to inform the reader that writing is one of the most important skills for people to develop. Kerrey claims most schools today teach skills such as mathematics and science with a higher degree of importance than writing. He then goes on to say that many students are afraid of facing criticism of their writings and, subsequently, fail to fine-tune their composition techniques. The combination of writing not being taught with importance and students being afraid of criticism has largely influenced the minds of young people, causing them to shy away from writing. Kerry tells the reader that
writing well is imperative to success. He also explains that writing well helps one more deeply understand and enjoy life itself. The point he emphasizes the most is that writing is an integral part of scholarship and democracy. He states that a government that neglects to educate writers who can express the will of the people will eventually crumble. He shares anecdotes from history before concluding. He ends the article by writing about his position as the leader of the National Writing Commission, establishing his expertise on the subject of writing.

Writing with a sense of urgency, Kerry demonstrates the weight of his argument and addresses the emotional side of the reader. He implores the reader to truly think about the importance of developing strong writing skills. One way he accomplishes this task is referencing inspirational historical figures by saying, “Writers like Willa Carter and Winston Churchill have moved us to tears and moved us to act. Authors like Daniel Patrick Moynihan and John McCain have shaped our society with the clarity and elegancy of their words” (Kerry 25). Later in the article, Kerrey writes about the men who drafted the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America. By mentioning that these men did not pass on the task of writing these documents to their lawyers or secretaries, Kerrey attempts to remind the reader that some of the greatest leaders in recent history were also accomplished authors.

In the most passionate and emotionally appealing section of the article, the author states that writing is not only important in history, but it is also one way humans truly experience happiness. He claims that writing genuinely, deeply impacts one’s spirit; it gives people a sense of identity and allows individuals to express themselves in ways they may not be able to explain otherwise. Kerrey eloquently writes, “It [writing] can provide real pleasure. At its best, it enchants and enlightens us, enriching our spiritual lives. It helps us to understand who we are and to acquire a sense of purpose” (Kerry 25). While these claims are not backed up by definitive
proof, Kerrey makes a strong argument that writing ranks among the most useful tools a person can possess.

Bob Kerrey is extremely qualified to give his opinions on the importance of writing for multiple reasons. First and foremost, he is the leader of the former National Writing Council, now called the National Writing Project and known informally as the NWP. The NWP is an organization dedicated to educating teachers, educational leaders, and students on the importance of developing strong writing skills (“National Writing Project”). Kerrey’s laundry list of accomplishments serves as tangible confirmation for the correlation of success in one’s career and the ability to write well. He served two terms as a United States senator, ran for president, and was the president of The New School in New York City. In addition to these impressive achievements, Bob Kerrey was also awarded the Medal of Honor, which is the highest award given to citizens of the United States. Although his life’s work is not directly mentioned in the article, the authors accomplishments instill a sense of trust in the reader. Kerrey has been extremely successful in his life, and he claims writing well is an integral part of a life lived up to its full potential.

“Good Writing Inseparable from the Practice of Democracy” was published in 2003, but it has only become more relevant with time. Kerrey states that in the age of the internet and people never wanting to slow down, good writing skills are still as important as they were when the Declaration of Independence was penned long ago. Kerrey compellingly says:

This may be the greatest barrier of all to an aspiring writer, re-enforcing a powerful instinct that writing just isn’t important enough to take the time to do it. The evidence is all around and overwhelming that such an instinct is wrong. This is the economic age in which knowledge workers and writing skills are more highly prized by employers than
ever before. A strong back is not nearly as important as a strong knack for written communication (Kerry 25)

This article also strives to compel the reader to realize that written communication will always be important in society. The author says that democracy only works when the needs of the people can be effectively communicated to the government, principally in written form. As stated previously, the author also validates the importance of written communication by discussing its importance to the human condition. Writing is a skill that is sure to be important long into the foreseeable future.

Bob Kerrey makes many heartfelt and valid points in this article, but they are not all based on facts. Much of the weight of Kerrey’s argument is based on his historical figures and his professional merit as a writer. He gives solid examples of people in the past who changed the world with their written words. He writes about well-known authors, the founding fathers of the United States, and world politicians. Kerrey also briefly missions his position at the National Writing Commission and its mission to improve the writing skills of citizens across the country. While much of Kerrey’s logic is firm and rooted in history, some of it appears more anecdotal and intended to stimulate the mind and imagination of the reader. He writes that writing is more important today than it ever has been before, but he does not provide specific data or research on how writing well directly impacts one’s happiness and job prospects. He conjures up images in the reader’s mind of great men writing important documents, but he does not offer any concrete solutions for the reader who wants to fine-tune his writing skills and become one of the greats. His arguments are all around very strong, although the addition of more examples and ways to improve one’s writing skills would make his arguments more conclusive.
Bob Kerrey attempts to show that being able to write well is one of the most crucial skills for a person to obtain. Kerrey’s passion for his argument is evident in many ways. He presents that writing is a skill that is not given the importance it deserves in school, causing many graduates to be afraid of communicating through written words. This is a serious concern; if the future of this nation truly depends on good writers, then a crisis is looming in the distance if teaching writing is not given more priority in schools. Kerrey tugs at the emotions of his reader, while also establishing credibility and using sound logic to prove his point. Kerrey makes many compelling arguments in his article, and only time will tell if writing well will continue to be an important skill in the modern world.
Works Cited
