Portfolio Introduction

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This portfolio is an expression of what I have “picked up” this semester. This semester seemed to teach me that I could relate to some of the characters’ feelings, experiences, and emotions. The principal skill that I learned in my writing was to integrate some of my own experience into my papers. Prior to this semester, I seemed to just take papers for face value. I didn’t try to “dig” very far into them. It seems that through the writing process this semester, I was able to learn how to find meaning behind the meaning in most of the books that we have read. After finding these “alternate meanings,” I was able to integrate them into my writing, and I think these insights created a uniqueness in my writing. The common theme in the three papers that I chose to enter in my portfolio is that learning a life lesson can dramatically alter one’s life.

“The Quest for Faith and Redemption” tells the tale of John Grady Cole’s quest for redemption and the implications that this brings about his life. Through his quest to “find” God, he learns that nothing is exactly how it seems and that his mistakes will live with him forever if he doesn’t find the redemption he is looking for. In the end, his “life lesson” is that he needs to forgive himself instead of worrying about God’s forgiveness, which has already taken place. In “Eulogy for Kiowa,” Norman Bowker’s “life lesson” is that a friend’s life is a precious thing that we often take for granted. The consequences of his situation are his eventual depression and suicide. In “The World of Work,” Robert learns that his expectations of what his career
would be like were thwarted when he realized that nothing is "perfect," even when one thinks it is going to be. All of these papers exhibit the same idea: when one is faced with an important life-changing situation, he can either learn from it and grow, or he can let it affect him in ways that will change his life for the worse. The most important skill I think I learned this semester is to analyze quotations in order to express the ideas I want to establish. Previously, I would have simply written my paper and then tried to "plug" quotes in that I thought went along with my ideas. I believe that this has made my papers not only run more smoothly, but it also brought more meaning and validity to what I was trying to say. One of the skills I paid careful attention to was to make my ideas more relevant to the questions that I was addressing (i.e. making the eulogy relate more to the time period in which it was written). I think this portfolio shows how I have been able to accomplish these goals over the course of the semester.

I really enjoyed my peer group this semester because we all became close friends as a result of being grouped together. Our group had a sense of comfort and respect that I think is rare when dealing with criticizing other people's writing. Through them I became a more confident writer. I am glad that I was able to work with them. I am also glad that I was able to take this course because I feel like it has helped me become a more effective writer.