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Acknowledgments

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The World's Eye, the World's Heart: Frederick Douglass and the Transcendence from Slavery

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ABSTRACT: In nineteenth-century America, Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "The American Scholar" finds a satisfying manifestation in Frederick Douglass' autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. A careful examination reveals Douglass to be the epitome of Emerson's "Man Thinking," a distinction which allows Douglass to escape slavery in a thoroughly transcendental way. In "The American Scholar," Emerson expounds upon the deficits in the American education system, in particular, passive knowledge consumption. In an attempt to correct this deficit, Emerson enumerates the qualifications necessary to achieve the pinnacle of American scholarship, which he calls "Man Thinking." Emerson claims that a man must be in touch with nature, he must explore the past through books, he must activate his soul, and he must use his new knowledge to take action and produce change. Douglass reaches each of the essential phases and meets all necessary requirements for Emerson's conceptualization. As a slave, often commodified and rendered as livestock, he can be no closer to nature. Reading the written orations of the past, Douglass is spurred into action to change his slave status. His soul is fundamentally active. It is this combination of factors which allows Douglass to transcend slavery and embody, ironically, the zenith of white transcendental intellectualism.



"Always now it is an object of beauty, however base its origin and neighborhood. . . . In its grub state, it cannot fly, it cannot shine, —it is a dull grub. But suddenly, without observation, the selfsame thing unfurls beautiful wings, and is an angel of wisdom." — Emerson (249)

While they initially appear to have little in common, Frederick Douglass, the ex-slave, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, the transcendentalist, sprang from the same literary-historical matrix, American romanticism of the antebellum era. During this period, especially from 1840-1860, the two men frequently crossed paths, inspiring each other to ever greater works, specifically in their abolition efforts, efforts necessary because of what they perceived as indefensible outrages to a commonly accessible divinity. For his part, Emerson felt that America had drifted from its moorings in an independence that was not available to all citizens and failed to live up to its full intellectual potential. Aiming to rally academics to a higher purpose, Emerson presented a lecture entitled "The American Scholar" to the Phi Beta Kappa society in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In this 1837 address, Emerson enumerates the deficiencies of passive knowledge consumption, calling for an active interaction with books and the creation of an entirely American style of intellectual: "He is one who raises himself from private considerations, and breathes and lives on public and illustrious thoughts. He is the world's eye. He is the world's heart" (251). He is "Man Thinking," he is "an active soul" (244, 247). He is the American Scholar. When Douglass

wrote his autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* in 1845, as a black former slave, much of society (and likely Emerson, too) considered him an unlikely person to assume the prescribed role. Ironically, however, chattel slavery, a fundamentally dehumanizing institution, aides in Douglass' personification of the ideal Man Thinking, which, according to Emerson, is the height of human intellectual evolution. Thus, like a grub becoming a butterfly, the American Slave becomes the American Scholar.

As abolitionists, Douglass and Emerson shared the public stage during a period of increasing social hostilities. Recently declared legal in the South, the issue of slavery was pushing the limits of the American crucible, and the country was threatening to fracture over the contentious topic. On one side were the pro-slavery, largely white, Southern citizens who resisted slavery's dissolution using every weapon at their disposal, including perversions of the Bible and pseudo-science. On the other side were the abolitionists, a group largely composed of former slaves, like Douglass, and white intellectuals, like Emerson, who used newspapers and public speaking to call for an immediate end to what they considered heinous acts against fellow human beings. One major quarrel between the groups was over the intrinsic humanity of black people. Ethnology was used to claim those of African descent were subhuman and therefore unable to be free and in no need of human rights. Emerson scholar Len Gougeon references "the common, contemporary belief that blacks belonged to a 'feminized race,' were unwilling to fight for their freedom, and were 'therefore deserving of enslavement'" (626). Emerson believed this theory was refuted by the series of slave revolts in the West Indies that eventually led to tempered emancipation celebrated on August 1st. By violently throwing off their yokes, the slaves proved to be a race of free men, like any other, deserving of the same rights: "The first of August marks the entrance of a new element into modern politics, namely, the civilization of the negro. A man is added to the human family" (Emerson, "Emancipation"). While it is problematic that Emerson qualified his statements with the idea that black people

were subhuman before this uprising, that does not disqualify the progress his speech represents. The American Civil War, beginning in 1861, was eventually fought, in part, over this ideological clash.

These rapidly changing opinions about the humanity of blacks are reflected in the slave narrative, such as Douglass' *Narrative*, an authentically American genre of literature, which fulfills Emerson's petition in "The American Scholar." In this lecture, Emerson warns against America's dependence on European writers: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe" (256). Continuing his dim forecast, he predicts, "Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life, cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests" (244). Instead, Emerson suggests action: "Each age, it is found, must write its own books ... The books of an older period will not fit this" (246). A product of the antebellum period, Douglass' *Narrative* fully represents this age. Emerson concludes with hope: "Perhaps the time is already come, when it ought to be, and will be something else; when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill" (243-4). The "something better" is revealed in the form of the slave narrative.

While arguably the most famous, the *Narrative* is only one of many similar works, the aims of which were to foster abolition and, according to William L. Andrews in *To Tell a Free Story*, elicit empathy from readers (5). Because both sides of the debate already used pamphlets and speeches, a new rhetorical form of protest was required, and this new form of writing proved remarkably effective at reaching "the hearts of men." In addition to pulling at the heartstrings of readers, at the root of these narratives are tales of striving for and achieving freedom, both physical and intellectual: "In the slave narrative the quest is toward freedom from physical bondage and the enlightenment that literacy can offer to the restricted self- and social consciousness of the slave" (7). This liberation is

the kind of true freedom that Emerson claims will come with the status of Man Thinking, or the American Scholar, an intuitive and highly philosophical freedom that for Douglass was instead experiential and intellectual.

Freedom's reverberations are felt within many other works of the American literary renaissance, as well. In the seminal work *To Wake the Nations*, Eric J. Sundquist explains that freedom figures prominently in this literature because it was written during a time when the nation was a house divided over slavery, which recalled the same division felt during the Revolution (30). Since the Revolution was fought for American independence, the energies that fomented that conflict inspired works of self-sovereignty. Sundquist continues, while it is then no surprise that an era as tempestuous as this should result in a rich cultural renaissance, one angle is oft overlooked: "writing about the problem of slavery ... by African Americans—can be seen to have animated that rebirth ... because it defined the overarching ideology of liberty which left the nation in a state of unresolved crisis while at the same time authorizing its cultural independence" (30). Therefore, Sundquist concludes, "the slave narrator that composed his own story was among the most 'American' of antebellum writers" (86-7). Douglass, then, is ideally situated to bring American literature to life, as called for in "The American Scholar."

This is not the first time that Emerson and Douglass have been brought together in scholarship. Gougeon argues that Douglass is also the embodiment of Emerson's "anti-slave," a person Emerson described in his 1844 speech given on the anniversary of the emancipation of the black slaves in the British West Indies. In that speech, Emerson claims the Anti-Slave is the hero needed to accomplish full emancipation: "So now, the arrival in the world of such men ... outweighs in good omen all the English and American humanity. The anti-slavery of the whole world, is dust in the balance before this ... the might and the right are here: here is the anti-slave: here is man: and if you have man, black or white is an insignificance" ("Emancipation"). Gougeon further claims Douglass is the inspiration for Emerson's conception and concludes

this inspiration works both ways, as it appears Douglass was equally impressed with Emerson: "Following his appearance in Concord, Massachusetts, where he heard Emerson's call for militant resistance, Douglass set to work on an autobiography that would eventually become an American classic, the Narrative" (632). The *Anti-Slave* can be likened to *Man Thinking* with the further addition of violent resistance where necessary to maintain human dignity.

Another critic highlighting striking similarities between the two men, African American literary specialist Douglas Jones analyzes Douglass' address "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered" to show how Emerson's conception of divinity, called the Over-Soul, and Douglass', called the All-Wise, are similar in their use of impersonality to reveal the inherent sameness of all men. "Claims" was given in 1854 at a time when there were "increasingly prevalent cultural, ethnological, and theological discourses that questioned and, in some cases, outright denied 'the negro's manhood'" (Jones 7). Because of this, Douglass had to always remember that many audiences would question his full personhood, and so he goes to great lengths in "Claims" to prove that "Negros" are men, the same as Caucasians: "Throughout 'Claims,' Douglass' meditations on cultural, linguistic, physiological, and socio-historical differences return to this principle of transcendentalist impersonality: essential human sameness" (Jones 23). According to Jones, not only does Douglass successfully employ Emersonian impersonality, he also adds to it, making it his own, which is another hallmark sign of his arrival as *Man Thinking*: "at the core of Douglass' most painstaking refutation of ethnological racism emanates a notion of the impersonal that not only parallels Emerson's but also enhances it" (11). It is this notion of connecting to the impersonal divinity that makes immersion in nature a central tenet of transcendentalism.

Immersing in nature, or the divinity, is the first step in becoming *Man Thinking*, explains Emerson in "The American Scholar." Through this process, Emerson claims man "shall see that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to

it part for part. ... Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainments" (245). Here Emerson is explaining a personal, intuitive freedom gained through nature. Gougeon explains this intuitive freedom:

Emerson believed that through the agency of personal intuition, the individual becomes aware of his/her own divinity and truth and is thereby empowered. ... This indwelling divinity is for Emerson, and other transcendentalists, the ultimate source of self-reliance, since a reliance on self is actually a reliance on God. For Emerson, we are closest to this primal, intuitively perceived dignity when we are in nature. (653)

Hence, communing with nature allows man to identify himself and hold dominion over his own life. While he could still be physically held in bondage, he can be no man's slave in truth once he recognizes his intrinsic connection to nature and, through nature, his connection to every other human. For Douglass, however, these attainments are quite literally measured with a pen in the scars upon his feet: "My feet have been so cracked with frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes" (Douglass 33). For the slave in America, nature is not a place to dwell in peaceful communion, it is an arena that offers scarce refuge, and in this moment, Douglass measures the freedom attained – evident by the pen he holds as memoirist – from his physical struggle to survive nature's onslaught. Jurgen Grandt explains: "The prolepsis ... contains the autobiographer's historical conscience. Here, the pen links the text with historical experience and personal memory; the memoirist's pen literally touches a lived experience" (29). So, while Emerson considers freedom a philosophical proposition to be mulled over in serene reflection, for Douglass, freedom is an experiential reality inextricably joined to a negotiation with nature. This prolepsis signifies the importance of the battle. Surviving nature gives him dominion over his own life, and while he continues for a time in physical bondage, his mind is set free.

This negotiation with nature begins at birth.

Often categorized with livestock, Douglass is forced to confront nature in a way a man born free never could. The former slave, in recollection of his childhood, was routinely reduced to an element of nature, and even more sinisterly, a commodified element: "I had no bed. I must have perished with cold, but that, the coldest nights, I used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill. I would crawl into the bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in and feet out" (33). This small slave child, depicted head-first in a feed sack, as if he is already meal fresh-ground from the mill, places Douglass in the very midst of nature; he cannot be closer bound. Continuing the reflection, he recalls that when he was fed, he was fed like swine, in a "trough ... upon the ground" (33). The children of slaves are treated like livestock in a bucolic scene gone awry. This conflation with nature continues throughout the *Narrative*, deepening the connection. Douglass describes a slave auction with the same twisted pastoral imagery as the children eating: "We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination" (46). Men are inspected for their ability to plow fields, women for their ability to produce milk and meat, and the children, the children are faceless swine on which one can only speculate future profits. This intimate bond between man and nature, achieved by the rendering of slave as brute animal, ironically prepares Douglass to accept the mantle of Man Thinking. Though not meant to oversimplify the complex and contentious history African Americans have with nature, this preparation is a situationally ironic outcome. Masters would never willingly have given their slaves an advantage as prescribed by Emerson, and indeed would have actively fought to mitigate such an advantage if it were viewed thus.

Among the other justifications for enslavement mentioned above, this conflation illustrates a common belief that blacks were inherently more at one with nature and thus

rightfully viewed as animals. Kimberly N. Ruffin confirms, “[F]rom the beginning to the end of a slave’s life the message that African-descended people were somehow less human and more pejoratively ‘animal’ was a pillar of enslavement ideology and practice. This approach subjected them to work conditions akin to and sometimes worse than conditions for beasts of burden” (34). Many whites held these beliefs (and some still do), and even Emerson subscribed to highly prejudicial views early in his career, something that changed in his later years as his racist notions confronted his lived experiences. Identifying this intimate connection to non-human nature is also not intended to valorize slavery. Quite the contrary, as Dianne D. Glave explains, “African Americans did not ‘find themselves’ in the wilderness; instead they found, potentially, deliverance from lives of servitude” (33). And while it is true that “African Americans actively sought healing, kinship, resources, escape, refuge, and salvation in the land” (8), they also “experienced nature entwined with fear and violence” (4). By surviving these elements, Douglass is simultaneously enslaved and set free. So, while I am indeed linking Emerson and Douglass in terms of nature, I want to make clear that their realities were quite different. Regardless of perspective, whether this intimacy with nature is achieved through thoughtful reflection, *à la* Emerson, or base reduction, *à la* Douglass, the results give equivalent preparation.

Douglass, his mind now primed by an intimate connection to nature, though forcibly imposed, is prepared for the next phase of Emersonian soul activation: a mind for the past, best found through books. Exploring the past through books provides valuable commentary on the present. Even more significant than reading books for the facts they present, Emerson implies, is creating a narrative for the present in relation to the past. In other words, apply history to present circumstances and let the world know this new truth: “The scholar of the first age received into him the world; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him – life; it went out from him – truth” (Emerson 246). The books are useless if the

reader does not apply the material to the world and create original knowledge. Emerson further expounds upon the dangers of becoming too bookish, and concludes that books are simply a tool in the quest to become Man Thinking. He claims books “are for nothing but to inspire” (247). They are only useful to inspire man to reach for truth in the world, a journey that leads to an active soul, the ultimate tool for achieving freedom (247). Emerson asserts that all men are capable of this achievement: “The soul active sees absolute truth; and utters truth, or creates. In this action, it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man” (247). Most of his audience at the time of the lecture did not consider slaves capable of attaining such intellectual freedom.

Douglass, however, disproves this racial fallacy as he is wholly capable of achieving an active soul through his use of books as inspiration to escape his bondage. Initially, books inform Douglass of his enslavement’s depravity. When his mistress seeks to teach him to read, his master interrupts her saying, as relayed by Douglass, “‘if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave.’ . . . These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering and called into existence an entirely new train of thought” (37). Suddenly child-Douglass knows that his state is just as unnatural as he has always sensed: “I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man’s power to enslave the black man” (37). He fully comprehends the depth of discordance between man’s natural connection to other men, something he feels innately, and the deep divide produced by chattel slavery. This realization sets him on the path to literacy: “Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read” (38). Achieving his goal allows him to make appropriate use of books as a catalyst.

The fresh knowledge of his debased condition coupled with his fledgling literacy spurs Douglass to closely examine his environment and study human enslavement. Later, as he

dwells on this newfound information, applying it to his life just as Emerson says should be done, he despairs:

[J]ust the thought of being a slave for life began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled “The Columbian Orator.” ... These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for lack of utterance. ... The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. (41-2)

Reading the book “Colombian Orator,” about a slave and master relationship, allows him to articulate his master’s depravity, but unfortunately, it does not show him the way to relieve his torment: “It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. ... The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness” (42-3). Forced to become one with nature and educated by books, yet deprived of his liberty, Douglass has become pure, active soul frustrated within its chains. Though he is at this point unsure of his course, the books have inspired him to act.

Douglass’ subsequent actions constitute the last step in becoming Man Thinking, which, according to Emerson, is using one’s discoveries to take action to produce change. Emerson says, “Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it, he is not yet a man” (248). Douglass cannot become Man Thinking, free and independent, without acting to change his enslavement. Gougeon argues Douglass and Emerson both espoused this point in later works: “[they] contended that moral self-reliance and physical courage are absolutely essential to securing and maintaining freedom” (650). Because he has activated his soul, he feels he must act or die: “I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt

but that I should have killed myself” (43). His resolution begins from the moment he learns to read, but escalates when he encounters a free Irishman that laments over Douglass’ sorry state: “The good Irishman ... [said] that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life” (43). Douglass concludes, “from that time I resolved to run away” (44). His desire to be free has solidified and his mind is fully free, though resolved to wait for the right plan to form. Later, his life’s enduring stagnation renews Douglass’ urgency for purposeful action, and he explains, “I was fast approaching manhood, and year after year had passed, and I was still a slave. These thoughts roused me—I must do something” (72). Douglass can see his future life strangled in the vise of slavery and can bear it no longer. He concludes, “I should prefer death to hopeless bondage” (74). His urgency is rewarded, and his actions are ultimately successful: “The wretchedness of slavery, and the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me. But I remained firm, and, according to my resolution, on the third day of September, 1838, I left my chains, and succeeded in reaching New York” (89). In his subsequent freedom, he writes his story, fulfilling the final caveat for the importance of books: the creation of one. Sundquist agrees this authorship is a defining moment in Douglass’ emancipation:

The Narrative was set down primarily so that Douglass might guarantee its authenticity ... but also that he might take personal possession of it, declare it his own property, thereby capping the quest for literacy that had been so crucial to his resistance to and escape from slavery. When he transfigured the text of his scarred slave’s body into the Narrative, Douglass changed ‘property in man’ into property in himself and took the first step in a lifelong series of reinterpretations of his life. (87)

His entire autobiography is a re-description of action undertaken due to inspiration derived initially from books. He could not be a better embodiment of Emerson’s concept.

Emerson ends his description of the American Scholar with a reminder that it is

not enough to simply become Man Thinking, one must work to lead others to this evolved state. Emerson explains, “The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances” (251). Douglass’ activism starts long before his hard-won freedom, predicting his ascendancy to Man Thinking. His intimate relationship with literacy provides an avenue to help his fellow slaves, something he feels compelled to do from the time he learns the truth of his bondage. He begins by extolling literacy’s potential, which results in a devoted slave following: “I succeeded in creating in them a strong desire to learn how to read ... [therefore] I agreed to [teach them], and accordingly devoted my Sundays to teaching these my loved fellow-slaves how to read” (70). The school is very successful and brings joy to Douglass’ otherwise dim life:

They were great days to my soul. The work of instructing my dear fellow-slaves was the sweetest engagement with which I was ever blessed. ... They came because they wished to learn. Their minds had been starved by their cruel masters. They had been shut up in mental darkness. I taught them, because it was the delight of my soul to be doing something that looked like bettering the condition of my race. (71-2)

His love for this vocation indicates an active soul and foreshadows a fully realized Man Thinking.

His passion for service continues after his escape into the free North, where he discovers the abolitionist newspaper the *Liberator*. “The paper became my meat and my drink. My soul was set all on fire. Its sympathy for my brethren in bonds – its scathing denunciations of slaveholders – its faithful exposures of slavery – and its powerful attacks upon the upholders of the institution—sent a thrill of joy through my soul, such as I had never felt before!” (96). While he has attained his own freedom, he is not content to rest on his success; he will not stop until he deals a mortal blow to the institution of slavery. This is no easy task and is often met with societal resistance. Emerson explains how Man Thinking must persevere in the face of such difficulties:

For the ease and pleasure of treading the old road ... he takes the cross of making his own, and, of course, the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and loss of time which are nettles and tangling vines in the way of the self-relying and self-directed; and the state of virtual hostility in which he seems to stand to society, and especially to educated society. (251)

For Douglass, this “virtual hostility” is painfully true in his new state of freedom. He writes by way of explanation, “Let him be a fugitive slave in a strange land – a land given up to the hunting-ground for slaveholders – whose inhabitants are legalized kidnappers – where he is every moment subjected to the terrible liability of being seized upon by his fellowmen” (90). However, no matter the danger and discomfort, Douglass works tirelessly for the abolition cause. He feels it is his duty to aid the other slaves: “We owe something to the slaves south of the line as well as to those north of it” (85). He stays true to his principles. He is an activist. He is Man Thinking.

Breaking his chains with the past and succeeding in the face of his oppressors results in the true freedom defined by Emerson. At the end of his narrative, Douglass is an independent Man Thinking, trusting in his faculties and his intrinsic tension with nature, using his freedom in service to his fellow man. Emerson pens, “In self-trust, all the virtues are comprehended. Free should the scholar be, —free and brave. Free even to the definition of freedom” (252). No longer restrained by the definition of freedom that has haunted his life, white versus black, north versus south, Douglass knows he has always been a free man and thus denies slavery its power over him, dealing it a devastating blow by writing his *Narrative*: “In revising his life story while immersing it rhetorically in the ideology of the Revolution, Douglass at once engaged the ancestral masters in struggle and made their language and principles his weapons of resistance” (Sundquist 30). This concept is crucial: ultimately, Douglass takes the tools of white culture and uses them to undermine the flawed system from within, thus denying the system its power. Because he started his life with

value no higher than a piglet, full of unrealized potential in the marketplace perhaps, but with no inherent worth of his own, Douglass intuitively sees the lie that is chattel slavery. He knows that underneath the historically divisive shibboleth of skin color, man is connected to man, and therefore refuses to be defined by pigmentation. Emerson agrees with Douglass' intuitions: "The world is his who can see through its pretension. What deafness, what stone-blind custom, what overgrown error you behold, is there only by sufferance, —by your sufferance. See it to be a lie, and you have already dealt it its mortal blow" (252). The moment Douglass places his pen in the gashes of his feet to measure the suffering of American history, he becomes not just Man Thinking, but Black Man Thinking. While Emerson in his early days would have been incredulous at the outcome, Emerson in his later years would have found it perfectly fitting that a nation born, at least economically, from the systematic rape of one race of people by the other, should birth a mixed-race man embodying his American Scholar.

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Contributor Bio

Mastering her procrastination and dominating her indecisiveness, Emmy Dixon finally graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of North Georgia with a BA in English literature and a minor in psychology. Her passion is for American writing from the Romantics to the Modernists, especially Melville and Hemingway. She has a special interest in slave narratives written by women and has recently developed an appreciation for Emily Dickinson and John Milton. While a student at UNG, she was published in UNG's literary journal, the Chestatee Review, each of the six years of her attendance; had two plays produced by Onion Man Productions; and presented an award-winning essay at the Sigma Tau Delta International Convention. Currently, she is a professional writing tutor, which she loves with all her heart. Her future academic goals include an MA in Southern Literature, followed by a PhD in American Literature. She aspires to be a professor one day, teaching composition at a small college in a small Southern town, where she will restore a small home. She'll spend her free time reading big books and sipping sweet tea, while swaying slowly in her front porch swing. But let's be real. She'll probably be stuck in a fishbowl somewhere with 500 Comp 1 essays, and her hottest date will be Mr. Coffee. Either way, as long as she gets to read, research,

write, and repeat, it's all poetry.

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