

The Writing Associates Program

WA Application: Spring 2019

Name		Class	
Major (or prospective major)		Email	
Nominated by			
Faculty reference			
Faculty reference			

To apply for a Writing Associate Fellowship position, you must complete the following:

Application cover sheet: Complete the boxes above and include this sheet as the first page of your application.

One-page cover letter: Please craft a letter expressing why you would like a position as a Writing Associate, what you hope to gain from the experience, and what experiences and qualifications you bring to the position.

Sample paper: Include with your application a clean copy of a 3-5 page sample of your own recent academic writing. Please submit a paper written for a humanities or social science course at Swarthmore.

Mock WA paper: Attached to this application you will find a student paper. Imagine yourself functioning as a Writing Associate; comment in writing on this essay in ways that you think would encourage the writer to make constructive revisions. **Be prepared to conference about the paper during your interview.**

References: Include the names of two faculty references who can attest to your writing abilities, class participation, and/or approach to your academics. Once you submit your application we will contact your references to answer a few questions about you. Make sure you have permission from both people to list their names as references.

List of courses: On the enclosed sheet, please list the courses you have taken both in the fall and spring semesters (dept. code and number, e.g. ENGL 33) or, if you prefer, include a photocopy of your transcript.

List of activities: Please list both **previous** extracurricular activities and jobs while at Swarthmore and all anticipated extracurricular activities and jobs for next year.

Interviews: When you submit your application, sign up for an interview. Interviews will take place March 27 through April 9 in Trotter 105.

**Completed applications are due Monday, March 25, 2019 by NOON
at the Writing Center, Trotter 120.**

*For more information about becoming a Writing Associate please visit writing.swarthmore.edu,
or contact Joanne Mullin at jmullin2@swarthmore.edu or (610) 690-2059.*

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The Writing Associates Fellowship Program selects and educates students to be peer mentors of writing. WAs collaborate with students during all stages of the writing process and in various disciplines. They work in conjunction with courses, and they staff the Writing Center during weekday afternoons and evenings. The purpose of the program lies in the desire to teach the Writing Associates how to talk about writing with students from a variety of backgrounds in order to develop skills and the ethical intelligence necessary to function as citizen teachers after leaving the College.

Goals:

By participating in the WA Program students will learn how to:

- Assess academic writing on different levels including argumentation, logic, grammar, and audience.
- Craft and disseminate both written and oral feedback that is constructive and supportive.
- Develop a reflective practice so they continue to learn and develop as peer mentors.
- Apply learned pedagogy in written commentary on papers and in conferences with students.
- Interact with a variety of students including English Language Learners, students with learning differences, and students with underdeveloped writing processes.
- Mentor each other as they raise questions, observe, and share best practices.
- Question their assumptions about writing and writers.
- Listen actively in order to respond effectively to the individual needs of students.
- Develop an ethical process by contemplating such issues as confidentiality, time management, and power dynamics within the peer mentoring situation.

Responsibilities:

By participating in the WA Program students will need to:

Gateway Course: *During their first semester, WAs will receive a full course credit in lieu of a stipend. The credit will Humanities credit if taken as Engl 1C and Social Sciences credit if taken as Educ 1C.*

- Complete all the requirements of Engl/Educ 001C, which is taught as a seminar during the Fall semester on a CR/NC basis; one section will meet on Monday afternoon and one on Wednesday afternoon. Continuation in the WA Program is dependent upon a student's overall engagement and development throughout Engl/Educ 1C.
- Work 3-4 shifts in the Writing Center over the course of the Fall semester. These Writing Center shifts will be paid on an hourly basis at top pay scale.

Course WAing: *After completing English 1C, WAs receive a stipend when assigned to a course. For the 2019-20 academic year it will be \$1000 per semester.*

- Work with up to 15 student writers in an assigned course, offering comments on several rounds of papers and conferencing with every student during each round in order to create a revision plan.
- Maintain communication with the Course WA professor about class needs and expectations, providing feedback about different writing assignments and the assessment of these assignments.
- Submit an end-of-semester paper reflecting on the past semester and establishing new goals.

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- Understand that Course WA positions will be assigned based on availability. If not enough assignments, we will find alternative work within the WA Program.

Writing Center: *WAs will be paid hourly for work in the Writing Center.*

- Work a weekly 2.5-hour shift for one semester each year.
- Submit a reflection piece at the conclusion of each shift.
- Submit time sheets.

Other Responsibilities:

- Attend a mandatory start-up session once a semester.
- Attend weekly Writing Program meetings.
- Meet with the program director at least once a semester to discuss goals, feedback, and reappointment in the program.
- Respond to e-mail and complete administrative tasks associated with position in a timely fashion.

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Mock WA Paper

Assignment: How does Fadiman use “argument”?

Bias as it Pertains to Argument in The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down was a story of Hmong family with an epileptic child living in Merced, California. The story described the experiences of the young child primarily through first-hand accounts of the Hmong family and the doctors that dealt with both the child and the family. Author Anne Fadiman attempts to provide an unbiased argument that there is a rift in communication in the United States between the Health Care industry and American inhabitants from foreign cultures. Argument, in this case, can be defined as a way an author uses primary sources to make the reader conscious of an issue. Fadiman’s argument, however, was not entirely credible. She established an emotional connection with the Hmong family, which did not have with the other sources. The doctors, by examining certain textual examples, are periodically portrayed incorrectly as prejudiced and uncaring. In the end, author Anne Fadiman’s consistent bias in favor of the Hmong and against the doctors failed to establish a strong argument. Bias, in this case, can be defined as an unbalanced perspective of a prior event that leads to an unfair portrayal of the characters and, in the end, weakens the argument.

Anne Fadiman had a strong emotional connection to the Hmong family that contributed to her consistent bias towards the medical staff that treated Lia. She had an emotional bond with the Hmong family that she did not have with any member of the medical staff. With a broader knowledge of the different personalities of each member of the family, Fadiman was able to portray the plight of the Lees in a way that caused the reader to feel more sympathetic. Once the reader established his or her own emotional bond to the Hmong family, he or she was more likely to sympathize with the Hmong rather than weigh the actions of the Hmong and medical staff without significant bias. The “hundreds of hours” (98) Fadiman spent with the family, consciously or not, gave her a biased perspective of the experiences of Lia. Even though she interviewed the other doctors involved, she had not shared the same personal experiences she had with the Lees. Fadiman described one such experience where Foua, the Hmong mother, dressed Anne in Hmong garb in

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order to influence her boyfriend to propose. In this instance, Fadiman had spent so much time with the Lee's that Foua "firmly... took [Anne] in hand." The close relationship between Foua and Anne demonstrates an emotional bond that is absent from anyone else interviewed by the author. Foua, one day "decided to get [Anne] married" (101). She then proceeded to dress Anne in traditional Hmong garb and presented her to her current boyfriend.

Anne Fadiman's addition of this unrelated and undocumented personal story shows give the reader a look into the personal lives of the Lee family, something she fails to do with other major participants in Lia's struggle. The strong emotions for the Lees conveyed by the author might have been appropriate with an alternative argument. For instance, if Fadiman wished to argue that many immigrants to America are mistreated by the Health Care industry because they cannot communicate. This, however, was not her argument. She tried not to pick sides or even make the presence of one side against the other an issue. Her bias and unequal representation of both the Lees and the doctors created a situation where a reader was subtly forced to take one side or the other. Since this was not the intention of the author, the underlying argument was weakened. In order to completely illustrate her argument and gain credibility with all readers, Fadiman needed to give an unbiased account of Lia's medical history.

In several instances throughout the book, author Anne Fadiman expressed a predetermined bias against Western medicine. She wrote that she had and still has a "romanticized" view of the Hmong. She admitted, that during the process of writing the book, she perceived the Hmong in a different way than she perceived the medical workers. Her "romanticized" view of the Hmong influenced her interpretation of history and her interactions with both the Lee's and the doctors. She might have been less inclined to ask a critical question when interviewing the Lee's because it could have affected her personal relationship with them. Fadiman's bias weakened her argument that there was a rift in communication between Western medicine and culturally different American residents. Fadiman, intentionally or not, constructed an argument latent with biased undertones. Her strong emotional ties to the Hmong family and her interest in their culture created an unfair representation of both the Hmong family and the health care industry which weakened the strength of her argument.

Fadiman's portrayal of events made it easy for the reader to perceive the doctors as being prejudiced or uncaring. In one instance, Lia was taken to the hospital where both her parents and

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foster parents were present. Fadiman included a quote from Dee, the foster mother that insinuated a prejudice of the doctor toward the Lee parents. Dee described how the doctor only spoke to the “smart and white” people and “as far as [the doctors] were concerned the Lees were neither” (151). A reader might interpret the previous statement as the doctors being racist for not communicating for the Lees. The fact of the matter was that, the Lee parents were notoriously obstinate uncooperative. The foster parents were much easier to talk to and to understand what the doctors were doing. Doctors are more likely to communicate with someone who can understand him or her immediately, instead of dealing with stubborn and uncooperative parents. Since both her parents and foster parents were there, the doctor probably figured that he could explain the situation to the foster parents and they would relate the information to Lia’s real parents. Since racism in the medical profession was not part of Fadiman’s argument, then the only purpose of raising the issue, whether intended or not, was to give the reader a bias against doctors. This bias discredited and weakened her argument by raising but failing to elaborate an issue that could have be interpreted in many different ways.

Anne Fadiman’s primary argument in her book was to illustrate a communication gap between a central aspect of American society, the health care industry, and American residents, like the Hmong, who come from foreign cultures. Her argument is significantly weakened due to her strong emotional ties to the Hmong family. This special bond affected the way she perceived the responses she received from both the Hmong and the medical workers. She had a distinctive insight into the lives of the Lees that she did not have with any of the other people she interviewed. This unique relationship, as seen through specific examples from the text, contributed a bias that weakened the strength and credibility of Fadiman’s argument.

