

*To the student—Below is a sample of the kind of cover letter you must write as the introduction to your Senior Portfolio Assessment. It has been adapted from actual cover letters submitted in previous years. Note that the letter provides a summary of each work in the portfolio and appraises its strong points and weak points, and then goes on to briefly address the writer's overall achievements and growth while here at ASC. Names and other details have been changed.*

January 5, 2010

Dear ETCFL Faculty:

Please accept the enclosed résumé, transcripts, and essays as my Senior Portfolio. I have already completed the online Graduating Senior Questionnaire.

The first essay, "Everyday Abuse," was written for Ethnic and Minority Lit. I analyzed Alice Walker's story "Everyday Use" and tried to show that Walker was criticizing a particular aspect of the Black Pride movement of the late sixties and early seventies. She was concerned that people like Dee (or rather, Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo) and Hakim-al-Barber were constructing an "African" identity that was false and, even worse, disrespectful to their real Southern roots as represented by Mama and Maggie. It was a good paper, even though, as the instructor's comments indicate, I certainly could have done a better job using quotations from the story.

The second essay, "Sedgwick vs. Cooper," was written for American Literature 1492-1865. It compares and contrasts Catharine Maria Sedgwick's novel Hope Leslie with James Fenimore Cooper's Last of the Mohicans. I tried to show that, while neither novel is a masterpiece, Hope Leslie is far better in terms of plot and characterization, as well as in terms of its egalitarian social vision. The big question I failed to address is why, if Sedgwick's is such an obviously superior literary work, Cooper's novel became so much more famous and influential. As the instructor's comments suggest, I focused on evaluation but ignored the arguably more interesting question of canonicity. In a weird way, however, I'm more proud of this paper than I am of others that were easier for me to write, just because I struggled with it so much.

My third essay, "Pounding Ezra," is from my Senior Seminar class. It will be included in this portfolio by the professor. I can say now, however, that I still have a lot of trouble "getting" poets like Eliot and Pound, and I have no idea why I chose to write a paper on the critical reception of the Cantos. Still, I think I have made a good attempt, and I hope it will show that I have learned a lot just about poetry since declaring my major.

I am sure that all the work I have included here demonstrates the level of achievement I have made and the learning that I have accomplished. I believe that I have advanced as a writer and critical thinker over these past four years, and that I have gained a broader view of our world, its culture, and my place in it. Through literature I have seen the world through the eyes of others, and these new perspectives help me appreciate the many forms and voices that literature can assume.

As I look back over the work I did as a freshman and sophomore, I think my biggest growth has been as a researcher and writer. I have learned a lot during my years here at ASC, about a lot of different

subjects, but I think I have best prepared myself to work in the arena of finding and synthesizing information, and then using that information to address the kinds of questions I'm interested in.

Thank you for accepting my portfolio. I hope you enjoy reading it and are able to learn something about the department's strengths and weaknesses from it.

Sincerely,

Jean S. Enior