

# Last minute papers assignment



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

No, make that bittersweet nectar, the taste of sugary cherry goodness reminds me, with every sip, that I've intended myself to another unnecessary all-nightmare. I have few ideas and even less time... The blinking computer cursor on an otherwise empty screen is the college version of the blank white page of my earlier years, before technology had taken us so far. But for me it is, in many ways, the same old problem. With early drafts of a paper rarely required, I came time and time again to a point where a significant portion of my grade rested on what was essentially a single nights work.

I usually left myself no option but to write in one long session on a computer, there weren't enough hours remaining to compose a erosion on paper to be typed up afterward. And time and again, my method, as it was, worked for me. Not only survived but prospered. But I sometimes wondered, and still wonder, that this works, but am I progressing? Has my writing grown? Should it be possible to turn out an " A" paper in a night? What standards are being used to judge these papers? Do my desperate all-night writing sessions somehow, in ways I don t understand, help me improve?

How did I learn to write at a level that has helped me succeed up to this point? My early writing education is mostly lost to my conscious memory, but I do hint that regular reading, from a young age helped a great deal in my education. I remember a prose piece from sixth-grade " honors" English class called " Mutants". It was my response to an assignment to write " a book"; about thirty handwritten pages, it was made up of two separate stories about young people with super-powers. Was at the time a huge fan of comic books, recently popularized on film, called " The X-Men".

It was a story about a group of people born with strange powers who fought for good even though they were feared and hated by the public. I've come across my sixth-grade book in ears since, and it is written in a way that makes me wonder how I ever passed. But it does have vocabulary and a message about tolerance that I don't think I would have learned if not for those comic books. I'm pretty sure that no first draft of that assignment was required, or if it was, I'm pretty sure managed to somehow get out of it.

But still the story received a grade of think I wrote it all in one day (all-night writing was still a few years away). So my process, whatever it was, was set fairly early on. In those years of comic-book obsession, I was sure wanted to write comics “when grew up”. And tried a little at the time, but a regular habit of writing never took hold. I think, though, that a notion of myself as a writer did. Surely this was fueled by the fact that my written work for school was well received.

And that being the case, I think I also decided that being a writer must not take much time just one session per project. As I continued through high school, this was certainly the norm for me. An exception was a junior year creative writing class that had daily journal entries as a requirement. This didn't lead to me continuing a journal once the semester ended. Nor did it lead to more regular writing of any sort for me. But thinking about it now does make me wonder about what might have happened if the habit of regular informal writing had been ingrained earlier.

My own habits changed little as I proceeded through high school. Early drafts were still rarely a requirement, although I did encounter a class or two

requiring frequent short response papers. Brief exercises during the semester were, it turned out, basically optional, and we merely had to turn in a final short story of some sort to complete the class. I submitted about five pages written, as usual, during the twelve-hour period prior to the final class session. When my grades for the semester arrived, I discovered that had gotten a “ B” in the course.

It helped my grade-point average but not my writing skills. I decided to write my essay on procrastination for a few laughs. But behind the humor of my all-nightmare tales there are some serious questions. Would my writing have improved if I'd been in the habit of writing drafts, not just one hurried version, of my papers? If so, how much would it have improved? How does the fact that wrote on a computer, where what I edited was erased completely rather than just crossed out fit in? And what difference does it make at all, if my technique seemed to work?

It does make a difference to me, not only because those nights with no sleep often seemed like a living hell, but also because I would like to be a better writer, and I'd like to see others become better writers. Those moments of “ desperation inspiration” which gave birth to many of my last-minute papers are a source of fascination for me, and are a topic I'd also like to explore. But the road of college writing has just begun for me. Maybe a born writer will automatically write obsessively, every day, from an early age. If so, I wasn't born into this. But maybe I could have grown, and still could grow, into it more than I've done so far.