

Reanna Phillips

Professor Elkins

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### Senior Seminar Write-Up

For my project, I created a TikTok account I used to post poetry I wrote as a way of building a platform as a writer. This is important to me in that I want to share my writing on my own terms so that I am enabled to pursue writing professionally, in the future. This project is very dear to me in that, even though I feel as though I fell behind where I had aspired to be, it is still something I can and will be utilizing in the future. Besides just being able to add to the account, I have a greater idea of the kinds of ways in which I should share my poetry and engage with poetry on social media.

The project started with something of a preliminary search in which I explored the ways in which people shared poetry on TikTok. This meant looking into things like formatting and how authors tended to maintain their presence in successful ways. What I found were a lot of different answers, which meant that my poetry could be tailored in very specific ways to garner a specific audience. For example, of the top accounts under the “poetrytok” tag, the most mature poetry was done by someone who was speaking their own poetry. I came to the conclusion of what “mature poetry” included on my own and for the most part it meant that the poetry was performed by someone who appeared to be an adult and the piece included a slightly more in-depth narration of their theme. Comparatively, the pieces that it seemed were meant to reach a younger audience (high school students in particular, would be my guess) sounded very similar and were very straightforward, meaning they didn’t include many literary devices. Those poems

tended to use moving backgrounds with text overlaid on top. In the end, I chose to use the format of the latter while maintaining a mature writing style. This was because, after some experimentation, the format was the least tedious, looked stylistically cleaner, and made for a wider audience. The only issue with this is that my first video, the one that did the best, the video is very obviously stylistically different. I think it can still be something I experiment with as the difference in interaction can be attributed to a number of different reasons besides just style, such as time of day that the poem was posted, the days since last posted a poem, or even just the quality of the poem.

As someone who has also gone viral on a small scale before and therefore been part of a community on a small section of TikTik, I also understood that finding other poets would be an important part of gaining momentum on social media. Having “mutuals” would make it easier to solidify a sense of community in which people are better able to support the art of the people with similar interests and styles as well as being able to reach the audiences of those people. Unfortunately, I wasn’t able to do this as much as I would have liked to and that is in no small part due to the difference in format that I chose. There is one other poet who I now tend to support the work of and who interacts with my work as well but going forward, this is something to work on.

The poems I shared are as follows:

*1. Hard To Love*

There are days when I remember that I am hard to love. That my heart is a little too tired to remember how to give properly, a little too heavy to hold and really, it wasn’t your fault.

I don’t know how to be loved in the ways that matter.

If I could be purely, truly, and incandescently happy, it would not torture you to love me. If I could have one sunrise feel just a little warmer, I would know that being loved by you was worth it in the end.

## *2. Paper Girls*

Paper girls taught me how to catch each untouchable feeling in the empty space between my skin and bones: let it sink beneath my skin, let it make a home to ache in.

I have molded myself around the habits of imperfect paper girls who will become perfect, pretty, paper girls. Try to be pretty paper thin, try harder to ignore my imperfect paper skin, and beg to be loved by pretty paper boys that love perfect pretty paper girls.

## *3. Breathe*

No one has ever taught me what it is like to breathe and so I was born chasing each breath. I've caught and counted each broken sigh before letting them fall between my fingers and in line with the wind. She demands payment for each bit of oxygen I have stolen and hidden and saved for when I have run out of pressure to make my lungs work again. Once I have forgotten how to breathe, I will chase another breath and hope that it will teach me peace.

## *4. Penance*

Today the world will end.

I will drown beneath the waves of my last baptism and if you have loved me, you will not ask me to swim.

I have lived my hell of chasing kindness and seeking goodness and I have lost all memory of what it must be like to float

If the water should make heavy my lungs and quiet my heart, it is because I am not sorry to have loved her.

## *5. The Laurel Tree*

If I should find myself asking for one lonely day, it would be so that I can talk to the flowers beneath the laurel tree.

If I should find myself looking for their roots, it is so that I can bask within their fountain of youth.

If I should find myself singing their same slow song, it was so that the wind would pass me by.

And in the end, I will have laid and learned how to disappear.