

Whitney McLaughlin

Professor Rhodes

WRIT 2050

30 May 2019

### Grammar and Style Manifesto

The oh-so brutal topic of grammar and style... Should grammar be taught with style? Should style be taught with grammar? Or should they both be taught separately? Academics have had their fun with teaching grammar in a dull and mundane way. While the traditional practice may work for some people, and by some people I mean those who enjoy tedious worksheets and nonmemorable definitions, others may not have the ability to absorb material from a textbook as well as others do. Grammar is not an easy subject. End of story. But what is essential to know is that change is okay. Leaving traditional ways is okay. As a society, we have to evolve. All of the aspects of our society change at one point or another. With the vast amount of diversity in our world, we absolutely need to stray from traditional practices to incorporate all the types of styles. Well, within this piece, we will unravel why grammar and style should be taught with preference and through one's writing journey.

I stand by the belief that grammar and style are both achieved through experiences. Without experience, we know nothing. Students and nonstudents need to be immersed in different style and grammar practices to understand and absorb material to the fullest potential. Experience within any subject of academia. Writing is an aspect of every class a student takes throughout their whole academic career. Students who are not exposed to writing assignments will never know what aspects of writing they struggle with until they challenge themselves. Students will not understand how much they hate boring and tedious grammar worksheets until

their third-grade teacher makes them do a month-long lesson on nouns and verbs. What might be more challenging is one's eighth-grade history teacher challenging them to write an academic report on a constitutional law which one knows close to nothing about. Writing is individualized. One learns through themselves. But a writer can learn through others by having conversations, reading, and writing.

Let's start teaching grammar and style in preschool. Schools should not be allowed to use technology with kids younger than ten years old. Invite children to love learning through interactions. Allow children to learn the alphabet, and from there, let them form weird conversations with their tiny friends. Maybe their grammar won't make complete sense, but how well are young children suppose know all the twists and turns of the English language. Children are allowed to make mistakes. We are all allowed to make mistakes. But society socially constructs mistakes as a sign of failure. But I beg to differ. From our mistakes, we can change and grow to be better versions of ourselves. But let me pull back from giving you a profound speech on mistakes. Instead, I will explain why mistakes can be beneficial in one's writing career. Making mistakes through conversations, through writing the alphabet, and maybe even writing the alphabet will allow students to understand the concept of their own voice and the English language as it comes naturally.

As students enter elementary school, I believe it would be in the teachers' best interest to get creative with writing and grammar practices. Younger children have amazing imaginations, so why not put their minds to work and pump the creative juices. Style should be natural, just like speaking. When an individual is forced to write in a particular style, they tend to lose their own voice within the process. So why do teachers continue to push writing styles on students? Do they not recognize the agonizing pain one endures when staring at a blank white page as they

contemplate how to get their content to fit within certain guidelines? I am not saying every lesson on style or grammar should be thrown away, but the big book of rules and labels should be shortened. No one remembers the tedious labels or names of different structures of a sentence anyways.

Students should be exposed to as much reading as they possibly can throughout their academic career. Without books the use of books, individuals will not be able to understand specific styles. Students will not have the opportunity to see how other writers use language in certain contexts. People read less and less nowadays, which means exposure to grammar and style is not as strong as it may have been in the past. Skimming and reading bullet points seem to be the best option for people in a time crunch. But this system won't work for those who want to grasp the concepts of style and grammar. One must indulge in books from the past and the present. One must be okay with not enjoying a particular style. Everyone is different when it comes to likes and dislikes. But students won't know what they like and don't like until they explore what is out there in the world.

My last point may be the hardest to understand only because it may be the most cliché. I encourage teachers to make students feel comfortable in the space of writing. School should feel safe. Not only physically, but mentally. Teachers should allow room for mistakes, making mistakes a sign of growth, not a sign of failure. Some students are not born to believe they are "writers," but I think everyone is a writer. If you can pick up a pen or move your fingers across a keyboard, then you are a writer: you just need to find your voice. One must be comfortable with their own voice. School systems should emphasize authenticity as a crucial part of school work. Throw away guidelines and expectations of traditional ways. Throw away word counts and specific structures. Allow students to say what they need to say through a way that works for

them. Invite acceptance into the classroom. Promote confidence by admiring the beauty within differences. And allow the room for improvement if needed. Grammar and style should be the basis of one's creations, but not the whole entire page.