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Reflecting on My Writing Journey: Insights and Growth in English 102

These things always start the same way–who are you? If we're boiling it down to basics, I'm Alex Leiar. I'm a freshman at the U of A, 20 years old, someone shaped by crossing cultures, adjusting to a new environment, and constantly chasing improvement. But that's just a frame. What really builds the picture are the stories behind what I've written, what I've discovered about writing, and myself, through this class.

Coming into English 102, I thought writing was just about structure, argument, and clarity. And yeah, that's true, but I didn't realize how much the process also asks you to slow down and see yourself from a different angle. One major shift I experienced in this class was seeing writing not just as a skill, but as a mirror. Every project, every reflection, even every peer review became a way to better understand how I process, how I observe, and how I communicate.

Let's take Project 1: Annotated Bibliography. This wasn't just about citing sources. It forced me to think about how history and imagination can meet on a page. I created a world where a young French farmer changes the course of the French Revolution through one bold act. It was fiction, yes, but rooted in deep research. Using texts like "Peasantry and Society in France since 1789 and Assassination as a Terrorist Tactic", I had to analyze how real-world dynamics shaped my character's internal and external conflict. This pushed me to write with more purpose and

precision. I wasn't just explaining a source; I was asking, "Why does this matter to my story? What truths am I trying to unearth?"

It was also the first time I realized that writing historical fiction could become a way of exploring questions I care about: resistance, identity, power, belonging. As someone who's lived across different continents, and who's been in spaces where I either blend in or stick out depending on how I speak or carry myself, I felt a strange kind of connection to the fictional protagonist. Just like him, I've had moments where I felt like I was acting against the current. Writing became a way to channel that, both creatively and critically.

Then came Project 2: Rhetorical Analysis. For this project, I analyzed the article "Artificial Intelligence and Its Implications for Real Estate" by JLL Research, focusing on how the real estate industry is being reshaped by AI. The article discusses AI's growing role in property management, investment strategies, and urban development, and I explored how the author used credibility, emotional appeal, and logical reasoning to strengthen their argument.

Moreover, as I worked through the analysis, I realized the importance of carefully considering the audience, genre, and purpose when writing rhetorically. The article leverages JLL's established reputation and references influential organizations like OpenAI and Goldman Sachs, building credibility through authoritative sources. Emotionally, it taps into common concerns about job displacement while also emphasizing the benefits, like AI's potential to increase global GDP. Logos, or logical appeal, was perhaps the strongest element, with the article presenting compelling data and historical analogies to demonstrate AI's impact on real estate.

Writing the analysis helped me refine my ability to look at how arguments are constructed and how persuasive techniques are used. It also reinforced the idea that good writing isn't just about

presenting information; it's about engaging with it critically. The more I analyzed, the more I saw the connections between this topic and my own thoughts on the role of technology in industries. It was a powerful reminder that deep engagement with any text often leads to greater self-reflection on the world around you.

Additionally, a big part of that journey has been learning how to revise. Before this class, revision meant checking for grammar. Now, revision means questioning your choices: "Why am I making this argument? Does this evidence really support my point? Is my tone doing what I want it to?" Peer reviews helped here too–not just getting feedback but giving it. When I read someone else's work, I started noticing things in mine that I wouldn't have seen otherwise. That collaborative learning, the push and pull between perspectives, taught me a lot about clarity and intention.

I also came to appreciate genre more than I expected. We didn't just write essays; we wrote reflections, proposals, even a fashion-themed rhetorical analysis that connected literature to visual culture. I learned that every genre has its own rhythm, its own expectations. But once you understand those, you can start to play with them, even bend them a bit. That's what good writing is, it respects the form but doesn't get stuck inside it.

Throughout all this, I kept returning to the same core ideas: identity, struggle, clarity. I realized I often write from a space that's trying to bridge gaps, between cultures, between ideas, between who I was and who I'm trying to become. Writing has become less about getting the grade and more about grounding myself. It's the same reason I wake up early to work out, or write down goals to stay on track. Writing, like those things, is a discipline, and now I've started to treat it like one.

That brings me back to the self-portrait reflection I wrote earlier in the semester, the one framed through the idea of Achilles' shield. I imagined mine as a patchwork of worlds: languages, sports, friendships, music, travel, and personal drive. Looking back now, that shield hasn't changed, but I see it more clearly. Each assignment we did chipped away at the fog. Each revision was like polishing part of that shield. It's not perfect, and that's okay. The important part is that I now know how to look at it more honestly.

This class hasn't turned me into a perfect writer, but it has made me a more thoughtful one. I understand how to approach different writing situations, how to evaluate sources critically, how to revise with purpose, and how to use genre to shape meaning. More importantly, I've started to see my writing as an extension of who I am, not just as a student, but as someone trying to make sense of a complicated, multicultural world.

So, to future students walking into English 102, here's what I'd say: Don't just write to finish. Write to understand. Write to connect. The assignments may look academic, but if you let them, they can also help you find your voice. And if you're like me, still adjusting, still figuring things out, then this class is more than just a requirement. It's a way to begin seeing yourself a little more clearly, even if it's through a glass, darkly.

Project 1: Annotated Bibliography

“Project 1: Annotated Bibliography Alex Leiar English 102 Professor Slater 02/17/2025 The Farmer Plot: In an alternate history, a young French peasant farmer, barely out of his teens, makes a fateful decision–to assassinate a notorious French general whose unchecked power has brought suffering to the common folk. With nothing but his determination and months of practice, honing his aim on turnips, he prepares for the moment that will change history. Outside the grand château in the Bois de Boulogne, his shot finds its mark. The general falls, and with him, the fragile order of France. What follows is an uprising unlike any in the history books–the true spark of the French Revolution. Annotated bibliography: Moulin, A. (1991). Peasantry and society in France since 1789. (M. C. & M. F. Cleary, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. - Google scholar Moulin’s Peasantry and Society in France since 1789 provides a detailed historical analysis of the French peasantry, their struggles, and their evolving role in society. Moulin’s work traces the changing conditions of rural life from the late 18th century onward, examining the economic, political, and social forces that shaped the experience of France’s lower class. By focusing on the peasantry's relationship with the ruling elite, land ownership, and the pressures of taxation, Moulin offers a crucial perspective on the conditions that led to revolutionary unrest. This book is a well-researched and credible academic source, as it was published by Cambridge University Press and incorporates extensive historical research into the realities of the French rural class. Connection to My Story: Moulin’s exploration of peasant life most definitely provides a foundation for understanding the world of my protagonist—a young farmer who witnessed firsthand the suffering inflicted by an oppressive system. (b - internal/external conflict) Her discussion of land struggles, taxation, and social inequalities helps establish the motivations behind the assassination. The protagonist, like many real-life peasants

of pre-revolutionary France, lives under the weight of unfair taxation and exploitation, making his act of rebellion deeply personal and inevitable. Furthermore, Moulin's insights into the peasantry's shifting role in society align with the novel's themes, as the protagonist unwittingly sparks a larger movement that changes France's trajectory. The book also supports world-building by highlighting the daily hardships of rural life, the dynamics between peasants and the ruling class, and the historical legitimacy of peasant resistance. Moulin's work ultimately enriches the novel's historical foundation, making the fictional uprising feel grounded in real-world struggles. Hopkins, R. S. (2003). From place to espace: Napoleon III's transformation of the Bois de Boulogne. Arizona State University. - Google scholar Hopkins' article examines the transformation of the Bois de Boulogne from a royal hunting ground to a modern urban park under Napoleon III. Moreover, Hopkins explores how the space evolved in response to shifting political and social priorities, particularly in terms of accessibility, class divisions, and symbolic power. The article provides valuable historical context for understanding the Bois de Boulogne's significance as both a physical and ideological space. Given Hopkins' affiliation with Arizona State University and the scholarly nature of the publication, the article is a credible academic source that contributes to a deeper understanding of France's historical landscapes. Connection to My Story: The Bois de Boulogne (c - setting) plays a crucial role in my story, serving as the setting for the assassination that triggers the French Revolution. While Hopkins' focus is on the 19th-century transformation of the Bois, his analysis sheds light on the area's earlier significance as a domain of the aristocracy. The general's château, nestled in this secluded yet opulent environment, becomes a symbol of elite power and detachment from the suffering of commoners. The protagonist's decision to strike in this location is not merely an act of personal vengeance but a deliberate assault on the symbols of power. The contrast between the grand

château and the humble farm life the protagonist leaves behind underscores the deep economic and social divide fueling the revolution. Hopkins' discussion of the Bois as a controlled, exclusive space prior to its transformation helps emphasize the theme of restricted power–one that is violently shattered by the assassination. Ultimately, this source enriches the novel by reinforcing the symbolic weight of the setting, showing how geography itself can be an agent of historical change. Mandala, M. (2017). Assassination as a terrorist tactic: A global analysis. Original Articles, 14-39. - Google scholar Mandala's article examines assassination as a political tool, analyzing its historical use, motivations, and impact on societies. The article explores patterns of political assassinations across different time periods and regions, considering the broader implications of targeted killings on governance, public perception, and revolutionary movements. By framing assassination within the context of terrorism and political upheaval, Mandala provides an in-depth analysis of how eliminating key figures can either destabilize or accelerate change. Given that this article is published in a peer-reviewed journal and offers a structured, data-driven approach to assassination as a tactic, it serves as a credible and authoritative source on the subject. Connection to My Story: Mandala's exploration of assassination as a strategic tool directly aligns with the central event in my story, which is the killing of the French general that ignites the revolution. Her analysis provides insight into how targeted assassinations have historically triggered larger political movements, reinforcing the plausibility of my protagonist's actions. The novel's premise–that a single act of rebellion leads to mass upheaval–is supported by real-world cases where assassinations 'catalyzed' revolutions or significant political shifts. Additionally, Mandala's discussion on the public perception of Ubisoft. (2014). Assassin's Creed Unity [Video game]. Ubisoft Montreal. Assassin's Creed Unity is a historical action-adventure game set during the French Revolution, immersing players in a

richly detailed 18th-century Paris. The game follows Arno Dorian, who is an assassin navigating the chaos of revolutionary France while pursuing personal and political justice. The narrative explores themes of power, corruption, and the blurred lines between revolution and vengeance, offering an interactive depiction of historical events, figures, and locations. The game is known for its historical accuracy in architecture and atmosphere, making it a valuable visual and contextual resource for understanding pre-revolutionary France. While it takes creative liberties for storytelling, it remains well-researched in its portrayal of revolutionary dynamics, class struggles, and the role of assassinations in shifting political landscapes. Connection to My Story: Assassin's Creed Unity serves as an invaluable reference for world-building, character motivations, and the broader atmosphere of revolutionary France. The game's depiction of oppressed peasants rising against a corrupt ruling class parallels the themes in my novel. The protagonist of my story–like Arno–uses assassination as a means to disrupt the system, reflecting the tension between individual action and widespread rebellion. The game's portrayal of Paris, particularly its detailed recreation of the Bois de Boulogne and aristocratic châteaux, helps visualize the setting for the assassination in my novel. Additionally, Unity explores how assassinations are perceived by different factions, offering insight into how my protagonist's actions might be received–by the common folk as an act of heroism and by the elite as a dangerous act of terrorism. The game also delves into the personal stakes of revolutionary violence, which can definitely help shape the emotional and moral struggles my protagonist faces after committing the assassination. By drawing from Assassin's Creed Unity, my story gains a richer, more immersive historical backdrop and a deeper exploration of how one act of rebellion can ignite a larger movement. ”

Project 2: Rhetorical Analysis

“Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing how industries operate, and real estate is no exception. As technology evolves, AI is transforming property management, investment strategies, and urban development. The article "Artificial Intelligence and Its Implications for Real Estate," published by JLL Research, discusses AI’s impact on the real estate industry and its potential future role. This analysis explores how the article uses credibility (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos), and logical reasoning (logos) to make its case. By examining these rhetorical strategies, this paper evaluates how effectively the article argues for AI’s growing role in real estate.

Credibility is essential when discussing complex topics like AI in real estate. The article builds trust by leveraging JLL’s reputation as a global real estate firm and referencing well-known organizations like OpenAI and Goldman Sachs. By incorporating expert opinions and data-driven insights, the authors establish authority and make the article more persuasive for real estate professionals and investors.

For example, the article cites an OpenAI report stating that “around 80% of jobs are exposed to AI disruption,” highlighting AI’s impact on employment. It also quotes Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, who advocates for a "human-centric approach" to AI, reinforcing the notion that industry leaders acknowledge both the risks and benefits of AI. These references build confidence in the article’s claims.

Moreover, the structured format of the article also strengthens its credibility. It organizes the discussion around five key themes: geolocation, demand among assets, new asset types, revenue and investment, and design and space function. This clear structure demonstrates a deep

understanding of the industry and reassures readers that the authors have conducted thorough research.

Pathos, or emotional appeal, helps connect with readers on a personal level. While the article maintains a professional tone, it taps into common concerns about AI, especially regarding job displacement.

One compelling example is a historical reference to Queen Elizabeth I refusing to grant a patent for a mechanical knitting machine due to fears of job loss. This analogy makes AI's potential impact more tangible and relatable. Additionally, the article highlights AI's potential benefits, such as a projected 14% increase in global GDP by 2030. This optimistic outlook encourages readers to see AI as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Additionally, the article also points out that AI can improve the efficiency of property management by automating repetitive tasks, such as lease tracking and maintenance scheduling. This reassures real estate professionals that AI is not solely about replacing jobs but enhancing productivity. However, the article could be even more engaging by including real-life case studies or testimonials from real estate professionals who have successfully integrated AI into their work. Such additions would make the discussion more relatable and compelling.

Logos, or logical appeal, is the article's strongest element. The authors present a well-structured argument supported by research, data, and historical comparisons, making their claims persuasive.

One key argument is AI's role in geolocation and demand forecasting. The article explains how AI-powered tools analyze vast amounts of data to predict property trends, helping investors make

informed decisions. References to AI-driven real estate platforms support this argument, demonstrating that AI is already influencing the industry.

Another strong point is the comparison between AI and past technological shifts, such as the rise of internet connectivity in real estate. The authors suggest that, just as Wi-Fi became a standard feature in commercial properties, AI-driven analytics will soon be essential. This analogy makes AI adoption seem inevitable.

Moreover, the article also acknowledges challenges such as ethical concerns, data privacy, and regulatory issues. Addressing these counterarguments strengthens its credibility. However, the discussion could delve deeper into how companies can mitigate these risks, making the argument even more balanced. For example, the article could explore best practices for ensuring AI-driven analytics comply with privacy laws and industry regulations.

Additionally, the authors touch on the idea that AI could create new roles in real estate, such as AI specialists and data analysts, to manage AI-driven tools. This counterbalances the concern about job losses and suggests that AI will reshape rather than eliminate the workforce. A deeper discussion of these evolving job roles would enhance the argument further.

The article assumes its readers have some background in AI and real estate, using industry-specific terms and economic projections. While this approach works for professionals, it might be difficult for general readers to follow. For instance, terms like "AI-compliant infrastructure" and "data-driven property valuations" are not fully explained. Including simple definitions or real-world examples would make the article more accessible to a broader audience.

Moreover, the article's professional and research-based tone suggests it is targeted toward investors, real estate developers, and corporate decision-makers rather than everyday homebuyers. While this focus is appropriate, adding a section that discusses AI's impact on residential real estate and homeownership could broaden its appeal.

Overall, "Artificial Intelligence and Its Implications for Real Estate" is a well-researched and persuasive article. The authors effectively use credibility, emotional appeal, and logical reasoning to make their case. They establish trust with reputable sources, engage readers by addressing both fears and opportunities, and present strong data-driven arguments.

However, the article could be improved by incorporating more real-world examples and case studies to illustrate AI in action. A deeper discussion of AI-related challenges and possible solutions would also provide a more balanced perspective.

In my opinion, the article successfully highlights AI's growing role in real estate. The discussion on AI-driven demand forecasting and infrastructure is particularly strong, but additional concrete examples of companies using AI effectively would enhance its impact. I also believe that the article could address ethical considerations in more detail, as AI's role in real estate raises concerns about bias in property valuations and data security.

While AI has the potential to revolutionize real estate, it is crucial to strike a balance between innovation and responsible implementation. The article does an excellent job of introducing this transformation, but more discussion on practical applications and safeguards would make it even more compelling.

"Artificial Intelligence and Its Implications for Real Estate" makes a compelling case for AI's increasing role in the real estate industry. By leveraging credible sources, addressing readers' concerns and hopes, and presenting well-structured arguments, the article effectively persuades its audience. While it could be more accessible and include more real-world examples, it provides valuable insights for professionals seeking to understand AI's impact on the industry. The discussion ultimately reinforces the idea that AI is not just a trend but a transformative force shaping the future of real estate.

As AI continues to evolve, its role in real estate will likely expand, influencing everything from smart building design to automated property transactions. The article successfully argues that AI will be an essential tool for the industry, but it also serves as a reminder that responsible integration is key. The future of AI in real estate depends on how well companies balance efficiency, ethics, and human expertise.

Works Cited:

JLL Research. "Artificial Intelligence and Its Implications for Real Estate." *JLL*, 25 Mar. 2024, https://www.us.jll.com/en/trends-and-insights/research/artificial-intelligence-and-its-implications-for-real-estate."