

The Adventures of a Teaching Assistant

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

Last semester, yours truly decided to be an undergraduate teaching assistant. She didn't exactly realise what she was in for.

After passing multiple stages of the recruitment process and finally landing the job, I was elated at getting to re-use my dusty red pen from a previous teaching job.

Previously, I only pitied students (including myself) who had to stay up all night writing assignments. Little did I know there were TAs staying up all night crying, equally miserable having to check the entire section's work.

The TA experience humanised faculty members to me as I couldn't believe the things they have to read on a regular basis. It isn't apparently uncommon for people to start writing essays without so much as fully reading the topic. People also get carried away with plagiarising as the chances are astronomical that students sitting beside each other both had the same near death experience seven years ago when asked to write about "An Incident that Changed My Life".

Another feat which I never fully appreciated teachers for



is maintaining objectivity when grading. Sometimes, when checking copies, I was in a fabulous mood and in other times, I was half passed out at three in the morning, starving and swatting mosquitoes with one hand while checking copies with the other. After giving minimum pass marks to six consecutive copies, I realised I clearly wasn't doing my

job right. Needless to say, the marks we provide are never final and are always scrutinised by faculty members and edited before they are handed out.

The entire semester was a learning experience running around the department, lots of late nights and pulling my hair out at the incalculable number of ways an APA citation can be done wrong. This all culminated in me proctoring while students sat for their final exams, when suddenly, a name on a student's paper caught my eye.

I had been checking copies of nameless, faceless students the whole time but here was the name of the person whose scripts tormented me the most and made me lose sleep for an entire semester. She was right in front of me. I wanted to do many things at that point; it took every bit of strength in my body as I calmly and professionally walked past. The role of a TA varies greatly between departments let alone between universities but my experience is based on working for the English department.

Mrittika Anan Rahman is a daydreamer trying hard not to run into things while walking. Find her at mrittika.anan@gmail.com

Please use good, legible handwriting. A neat paper rewards more marks.

"I HATE POETRY."

MATILDA

Do you, fellow reader, read for fun? Do you enjoy going over the words of your favourite author at a speed of your choice, getting wholly immersed in a world that you do not physically inhabit? Do you feel touched by a piece of writing and feel that it has fundamentally changed you in some way?

All these feelings may disappear five minutes into an advanced English class requiring you to analyse, and (depending on which course it is) write poetry. Allow me to explain. Poems are fun, and sometimes easier to remember than most of the other texts you normally go through. They certainly require less time to read than novels and short stories. However, there comes a time when the thought of poems might make you want to curl up and hide under

your bed.

You will know the feeling too, when the placement of a dash, comma, and colon have essays written on them, when you learn that splits between stanzas aren't splits but enjambments, and when a cup isn't a cup but a metaphor for human existence and alludes (don't you dare say "refers") to the idea of both an ancient philosopher and a philosopher who was alive even ten years ago. I have come across 11-page poems that have had people writing books critiquing the books critiquing the poems; I've come across shorter poems that require you to count the syllables in each of the line for you to understand what the poem is about. Teachers will tell you that you need to have knowledge of the Bible, the author's life and ideas, and the political scenario at the time the poem was written.

It only gets worse. You don't just have to read and re-read poems, you have to sound it out so you get a sense of the rhythm—see if it's cacophonous or harmonious. Think similes, metaphors and alliteration is enough? Think again. Here comes assonances, consonances, metonymies, synecdoche, dactyls, and the iambic pentameter. Rhyming doesn't just happen at the end of a line anymore: introducing "internal rhyme". You further learn that there is something called an iamb, and it consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, and the opposite of an iamb is for some reason called a trochee instead of a reverse iamb.

Now you may think that maybe somewhere deep down I really do enjoy poetry, and you wouldn't be wrong. But then you come across lines like "I have measured

out my life with coffee spoons" and you realise that that this is you with your inane existence.

I can go on. But I'll just leave you with one of my own poems.

roses are red,
violets are blue.
i hate poetry
and I hope you do too.

— matilda



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