

Final Year Blues

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Ever felt like eating your cake and having it too? That's life as a final year student.

Stepping into my last semester, I feel a wave of emotions. The most pronounced one is probably confusion. I want to graduate and escape this endless stream of exams and presentations but I also want to loiter around in the campus discovering more street food and taking candid shots of my friends as they laugh, sing or spill cola. I want all of these to end but I also want to hold on as long as I can.

Final year is a difficult phase to be in. There's a lot to look forward to. Probably you are going to get a job, apply for grad school, get married or even catch Pokémon all day, who knows. Turning back, it's also hard to recognise yourself. You used to be in shape back in the days, no? And you thought you would be a young entrepreneur at 21. Look how you got played but give yourself some credit. You no longer have panic attacks when presenting in front of the class, can finish that Economics book within a day and combine a handful of sources to pull off an "original" piece of work.

Four years may go by in a flash but it is enough to make bonds for a lifetime. Or is it? I wonder once we graduate, and not meet each other almost every day, will we still have so much to talk about? What about inside jokes that tickle us every now and then? Will memes floating on the internet still be so relatable? Can we tag each other and share a moment? And what about all those Facebook groups

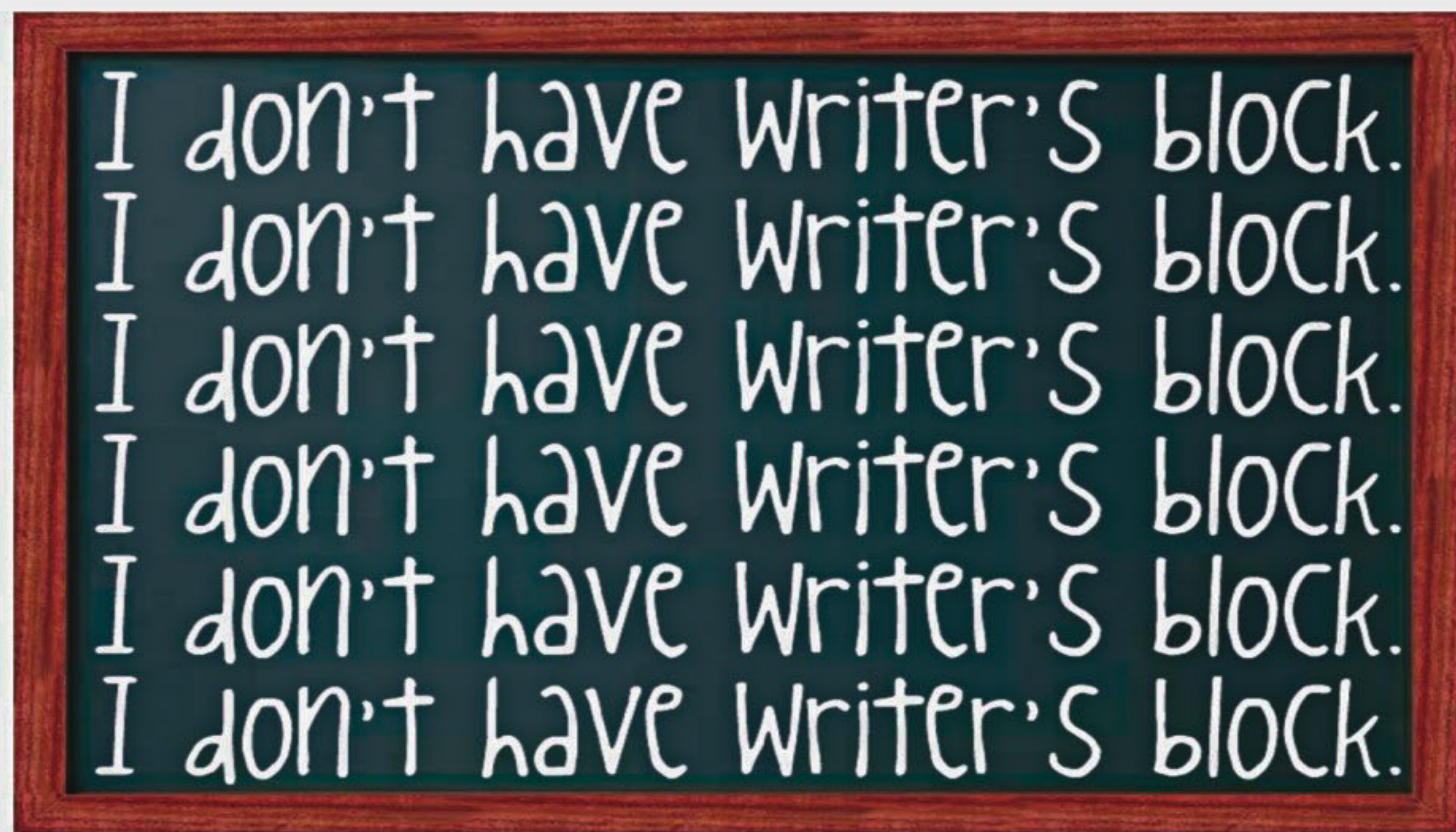
where we talked little about assignments and called each other names and turned so mean? Will hiding behind the classroom door with a massive cake and waiting on your friend ever be so fun again?

Every time I bump into a senior, I ask him how life is like once you leave university. Almost always they mourn having no semester break. Also, no afternoon naps. Meetings don't get cancelled as often as classes and hangouts with friends become a luxury because some have grocery to do, some have Skype meetings on weekends and some have flown off to distant lands.

The one last thing I usually ask them is, "Do you want to go back?" And most of them don't want to. Perhaps it's one thing to remember the bittersweet memories with an overwhelming sense of nostalgia and entirely another thing to go back and live it once more. So, it's safe to say every stage of life poses a different challenge and somehow we prepare ourselves for it when the time comes.

Now that the final bell has rung, we are all worried about the kind of jobs we will get into and absolutely dreading the future nine-to-nine lifestyle. Besides making futile attempts to push our GPAs up by a fraction, we are squeezing in more and more trips and hangouts between classes because one must manufacture enough happy memories to last a lifetime. Final year, amidst all the blues, has traces of cheery orange too, it seems.

Dyuty Auronee is an occasional fusspot who loves her tea and authori-tea. Reach her at dyuty.r@gmail.com



BREAKING Writer's Block

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Whether it's a page or screen devoid of words, writer's block can get crippling. Most of us know "advice" such as taking a walk, having coffee, changing writing tool or going on vacation, is hardly helpful. Because God knows if it's a bad case of writer's block bugging me, it's here to stay even if I move to China and try writing on scrolls instead.

So what does help defeat this terrible, creativity-draining monster? Try these more specific writing exercises:

ANY FIVE WORDS

Choose around 5 random words from an online word generator or just make a friend come up with them. The idea is to write something, a few sentences at least, and use all the words. This is often better than just using one opening line/word or a generic theme as it ensures ease of continuity. Set a timer for around an hour to make this easier. The words are probably random and unrelated (example: cookie, yellow, bridge, journalist, fire) which makes your work all the more fun.

MUSIC IS YOUR MUSE

Listen to a random track/ album and write while the music is playing. Your words don't need to have anything in common with the lyrics, rather channel what the song makes you feel or think about and incorporate that into your writing. Experiment with types of music you normally wouldn't listen to.

MOVIES TO THE RESCUE

The worst way to overcome writer's block is lazing in front of the TV right? Well, not always. Try writing a scene you've just watched in a movie/TV series.

Don't only focus on the dialogue and obvious actions, notice details in the background as well to make your writing descriptive. Just remember, this is simply an exercise to help you pick up the flow of writing - don't try to pass off some screenwriter's work as your own.

VISIT MEMORY LANE

Sometimes it's not about *what* you write but *how* you write. So just write a few paragraphs on what you did today, or about an interesting event in your life. Anecdotes are always fun. You could also try your hand at keeping a journal or diary.

IT'S GOOD TO DREAM

Write what you dream about, literally. Not only are dreams usually weird they're often remembered in fragments, allowing you to invent things along the way and get your creative juices flowing. You know what to write but you also have to fill in some gaps. The inspiration and content are also from within your mind so if you were just feeling incapable of "creating" anything new, interesting or original, your dreams should prove you wrong.

Every small practice run isn't equivalent to a marathon but completing a number of runs can help you finish that marathon one day, similarly not everything you write can be a masterpiece, so when writer's block is holding you back, these exercises can hopefully get you back in the habit of writing, give you some newfound inspiration and maybe lead you to that masterpiece one day.

Salma Mohammad Ali fears she is becoming a crazy cat lady and uses writing as a means to grasp on to sanity. Send her your views/hate/love at fb.com/salma.ali209

