

Isabel Weber

Thesis Reflection

Writing the English Honors thesis was the highlight of my undergraduate academic experience. My thesis vastly improved my abilities as a writer, gave me the tools to execute a long-term project, and sparked what I think will be a lifelong interest in my authors. First, I learned valuable lessons about clarity and organization in writing. Writing the thesis required several rounds of review and revision, which allowed me to see patterns in my writing that I could improve. I also figured out how to maintain focus on a topic within a lengthy composition, which was one of my concerns before writing the thesis. Now, pretty much all other writing assignments (including this one) are a breeze! I am also confident that I can successfully take on long compositions in the future.

Second, the thesis showed me the steps required to complete a long-term project. The division of the thesis into short-term assignments helped me stay on track for the final deadline and mitigated a great deal of stress. Splitting my thesis into smaller, readily digestible chunks helped me work on it more regularly, and as a result I was able to come up with my thesis statement really organically. I've now been able to tell potential employers that I am adept at balancing long-term and short-term projects, which I believe helped me land my post-graduation job at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum.

Finally, it was incredibly satisfying to take such a deep dive into a topic and to make it my own. I really enjoyed not only closely analyzing my texts, but also studying the historical context and the biographies of my authors. I grew to really admire the works of my authors for what they meant for feminism, anarchism, and individualism not just in the present but a hundred

years ago, too. The more I learned about Margaret Anderson and Emma Goldman, the more I wanted to know. My thesis has produced a scholarly passion in me that I hope to explore more in the future.

I am actually somewhat grateful to have been writing the thesis during this unprecedented time. I was lucky to have a topic that only required library resources that were readily accessible from home. I was also very privileged that access to food, shelter, and safety were not obstacles for me. While writing a great deal of the thesis, I was able to live with my parents, who are healthy and whose house has WiFi and many quiet spaces for me to use to work. In addition, I had an extremely supportive advisor who even in a pandemic gave me incredible guidance. These factors made the thesis a source of solace and motivation amidst the pandemic, rather than a source of stress. When I felt isolated by my state's stay-at-home order, I could retreat to my thesis, which made me feel connected to the outside world. When the evening news stressed me out and made me feel powerless, I was comforted by the distraction of my thesis, and the control I had over it by comparison to what was going on around me. Even though many aspects of my future and the future of my peers was (and still is) up in the air, my thesis gave me purpose each day. Thank you so much to Dr. Barbara Green, Dr. Susan Harris, my parents, and everyone else who made my thesis the amazing project it has turned out to be.