

TED Talk Responses

Red Text: what the sentence does

Black Text: what the sentence says/is

I most related with Alain de Botton's Ted Talk regarding success and how we view success in modern society. **This sentence introduces the subject matter (Ted Talk) and begins to create a connection without naming specifics of how I personally connect to the subject and therefore why I am writing about it.** I kept thinking about how I view success, what my own definition of success for myself is, and how this relates to the definition of success of those around me. **This sentence continues to connect my own experience to the Ted Talk and brings the text outside of myself to those around me.** Especially in terms of occupation, people tend to judge success as status or wealth, which then in turn defines one's character. **This sentence gives my own idea of society's definition of success, but doesn't offer what Alain de Botton defines success as, or offer my own definition yet. The definition I give here is purely based on my own interpretation of society's definition of success and is not backed by any hard evidence or quotations.** The standard view of success is that those who work hard and deserve to be successful will be. **This sentence continues to define success in order to contextualize the Ted Talk and my own experience within a wider range of society.** My own idea of success is completely unrelated to occupation, as I don't even know what I want to do for a living. **This sentence sets up the introduction to my own definition of success.** My idea of success is based on my own personal goals (including traveling the world, adopting as many dogs as possible, etc) rather than getting to the top of the ladder in my occupation or in society. **This sentence undermines society's definition of success and gives my own definition that is the opposite of society's.** I think Alain's view of who deserves to be successful (that there are factors other than work ethic that go into success, like privilege or luck) is an idea that should be applied to all aspects of life rather than just occupational success. **This sentence begins to introduce another new idea, that success is not based on who deserves it and who doesn't, but doesn't point to specific quotes or moments in the Ted Talk that develop this idea or back it up.** We don't know a single person's entire background, the struggles they may have faced, or what they've been through, and we can never come close to knowing a person this intimately without being inside their brain. **This sentence was meant to connect to the sentence before it but doesn't quite work to show how not knowing a person's life can change how we view their success. Perhaps a quote or an addition of why we can't judge success of others without knowledge of them would make this sentence work better.**

As a tutor, we occupy places of privilege because we have the apparent knowledge and success in the writing fields in order to tutor others. **This sentence begins to bring in my**

experience as a writing tutor and introduce how levels of success define authority and value. We are seen as the "authority". Continues to show how tutors are set up as all knowing and authoritative. Students who come in to be tutored have very different lives and unique backgrounds that shape how they write, why they write, and what they write about. This sentence connects to the first paragraph in which I discussed being unable to truly know a person and their background, but doesn't connect it to the idea of the tutor as an authority or why this does or doesn't determine the success of a writer/tutee. It shows the variety of circumstances that influence writing. Breaking down our authoritative role as the one who decides what is right and wrong, what is good writing and what is bad writing, is a huge goal for a writing center. This sentence suggests a goal as a tutor and at a personal level of disrupting the authoritative role of a tutor in order to open the definitions of success in writing. Allowing the writer to express him/herself and the experiences they've been through creates a new perspective, and a valuable one. Though this sentence doesn't explicitly state that introducing a new perspective is a success in and of itself, this continues the idea that the authority of the writer in their own experiences trumps that of the authority of a tutor in general knowledge about writing. I don't believe any writing is "bad" writing; every piece ever written introduces a new standpoint and perspective that has been previously unexplored. This sentence brings in my own personal opinion about the merits of individualist or expressive writing and supports the idea that a writer's perspective will always be valuable and successful. The success of a writer is not determined by the authoritative position of a tutor because success is something unmeasurable and unique to each individual person who walks through the doors of the writing center. This connects back to the first paragraph and furthers the idea that success in a writing aspect is not defined by society's idea of success, but rather the success of writing comes from individual perspectives and personal ideas of success. Therefore, success cannot be fully or completely defined as a general idea, but rather depends on individual definitions.

We have gone over many purposes of writing, especially regarding to genre, but I think at the basis of it all, writing in and of itself is purposeful in that it creates a new perspective and expresses individual ideas. This sentence connects my own experience in the class to my idea that all writing is successful if it introduces a new idea. I could use more concrete examples from class discussions here. There is no single audience who can receive a work as successful or unsuccessful because this is determined by the writer and whether their ideas were completely and wholly expressed. This sentence recalls the original position that success is not defined by society or by a tutor in our case, but rather by the writer based on individual goals. Bringing back the original argument brings the writing full circle and keeps continuity. Everything to an outside audience is interpretation rather than a direct knowledge of the purpose and the perspective of the writer. This recalls the idea that we can never truly know a person, their experiences, and what they believe is personal success I think Alain de Botton's

idea of success as unmeasurable and undefinable holds a lot of relevance in modern society's pressure to perform and can be applied to all other aspects of life and I'll continue to personally explore this ideas as a tutor and as a writer. This closing sentence provides a look into the future of my own engagement with writing and writing center theory. It brings the writing back to Alain de Botton and his ideas of success but doesn't really apply my own definition to it. I also don't provide specifics of how this theory of success could be applied to other aspects of life, though I state that it can be.

Reflection:

I found this exercise extremely helpful. I've never gone through any writing at the sentence level looking to make sure every sentence and word functions the way I had intended it to. It made me realize how important it is to really focus on the basics of writing in order to express what I needed to. I found disconnects between sentences that didn't further the ideas I had originally introduced, which I think is the biggest thing I have to look out for in my writing. I tend to get carried away when I write, so having this exercise as a tool to go back and look at the sentences I wrote and how they relate to each other can help me find that continuity and revise if needed. Just like Chapter 4 of OGWT states, "thinking back on how we've written something can help us become aware of what we do and decide whether there are changes we might need or want to make to our writing processes" (pg. 90). Realizing that I tend to word vomit all at once without regard of the continuity of my ideas will help me in the future to potentially use the word vomit method as a warmup or an outline of ideas rather than the writing itself. The word vomiting method tends to break connections between ideas since I write whatever comes to mind. I could also use a strategy of word vomiting the writing onto the page but going slower with it and really thinking about what I'm writing in order to make sure everything connects and is continuous in terms of ideas.

Though I found this helpful, it's also challenging to step away from your own work and read it objectively. I know what I'm trying to express in my writing, but an audience may see it completely differently. Trying to maintain an objective standpoint and look at the writing as simply words on a page rather than a direct translation of my own thoughts was difficult to do. I think this will get easier with practice, as I'll certainly use this practice in the future with essays and creative writing pieces.

I also realized that I need to use more evidence in my arguments and examples of texts I am referring to. I never quoted Alain de Botton and his Ted Talk, though that was a huge focus of this writing. By using hard evidence to back up what I'm writing, my ideas will become more supported. I referenced the Ted Talk throughout the writing, but never used any quotes. A more in depth, sustained connection and analysis of the Ted Talk would improve this writing. I think writing down specific quotes that I relate to or that I think could relate to my writing would help

when reading/viewing outside material in order to incorporate it into my own writing. Reading or viewing the material multiple times would also help.

In regards to providing evidence for my arguments, I think adding in specific examples of my own experience in writing and tutoring would help this piece as well. As it currently stands, the piece is all simply projections and opinions, so potentially including a time when I felt like my writing was/wasn't successful, if someone else deemed it successful/unsuccessful, or if I had an experience in tutoring relating to this could giving my writing a good push in the right direction as well.