

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

Sample Cover Letter for a Draft

Dear Wilson

First, I'd like to make clear that the question I'm really trying to answer is: Who is Horatio? A basic reading of *Hamlet* tells us that Horatio is Hamlet's friend who stands by him even when he has no others. But a close reading reveals that he may not actually be the best friend Hamlet needs. Furthermore, Horatio is a storyteller and a bit of a gossip; holding the role of a bard, he may serve Shakespeare's purpose as a vehicle for self-reflection. This is what is at stake—exploring the character of Horatio is actually an exploration of Shakespeare, a person whose writing and life we have studied for centuries. Perhaps his character reveals more about Shakespeare than we have realized in the past.

When I wrote this paper, I tried to order my ideas in a clear, logical way, and I would really like to know if the arguments that I put forward flow from one to the next in a way that makes sense to you. I think my strongest argument comes in paragraph 4; in my opinion, the short quotes that I chose to use there fit my analysis especially well, helping me get my point across.

Something I'm wondering about is whether I should find more quoted evidence to support my claims. I would really like feedback on that subject. Also, do you think that the text I chose to interpret (Horatio's words and actions from throughout the entire play) is narrow enough? I realize that changing the text would require an entire reworking of my paper, but I would like to know if you think that the subject I'm taking on, that is, Horatio's entire character, is too wide for a five-page paper.

Finally, what do you think of the title? Do you think that "Exploring Horatio" is too raunchy or provocative? It wasn't exactly my intention to give my title such an aspect, but I think that it sounds good and accurately foreshadows what the paper aims to do.

Thank you for reading my letter, and I look forward to hearing your comments on my paper.

Sincerely,

Justin

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

Sample Cover Letter for a Revision

Dear Wilson,

Thank you so much for choosing my essay to be workshopped. The comments I received during that session coupled with the comments and suggestions you provided me have really helped me to re-envision my paper.

I want to express my appreciation for your suggestion to start with a blank page. This is how I approached this revision. Though I retained much of what was originally written, the process of transferring it to somewhere new led me to notice moments that could be smoothed out with just a small change and also helped in deciding the order in which I included everything.

First off, I'd like to discuss how I changed my introduction. Realizing that my in-class spoken explanation of the thought process that led to my paper was a more effective introduction than my written one, I employed it. I believe that this new introduction, which begins with the instance in *Hamlet* that got me thinking about Horatio in the first place, is a better lead-in to my thesis and is also more compelling. Furthermore, it shows the reader the rabbit instead of keeping it in the hat until the end of the trick i.e. Horatio isn't such a good friend, and his purpose lies elsewhere.

Next, I'd like to speak about word choice. As we discussed in our conference, I needed to decide which word to give for Horatio's true role in the play—of bard, storyteller, gossip, etc., which was the correct choice? Centering on “storyteller” while revising, I was able to unify my idea throughout the paper. I decided not to explicitly define storyteller in the introduction, but to save my definition for paragraph 7. I admit, it does seem strange to keep the explicit definition so deep into the essay, but hopefully upon reading my paper, you will agree with me that it belongs there and that it works well. Of course, relocating the definition to somewhere earlier in the paper would be something to consider in a further revision of this paper.

In my opinion, paragraph 7, which is almost completely new to my paper, was among my greatest successes in revising. While reviewing Horatio's appearances throughout the play, I found some wonderful quotes from his telling of the ghost story to Hamlet that really advance my ideas. I was really happy upon making this find, and I think it adds a good deal to my paper.

I think the most challenging thing about revision is the desire to always add more and never to take away. As the ideas posited in the draft bounced around in my head for two weeks, I kept seeing it from new angles, or more accurately, more focused angles. I wanted to write more to expound upon it, but I knew I had to keep it to five pages, which I failed to do perfectly (sorry, Wilson, there's too much to say).

Finally, I'll mention that my new title is definitely more directed toward my paper's argument. It may have lost its possible provocativeness, but it fits the paper better.

Sincerely,

Justin