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ENGL 11000

09/21

Cover Letter

This was the first paper I wrote for college. I loved the prompt because it really made me question me and my taste. I usually draw a blank when people say, “Pick a word to describe you” or anything of the sort. However, finding a song to describe me and my journey in life is different. I was never able to just identify my life with a word. Picking a song changes the field entirely.

Music is so much more than a melody and this phase made me understand that. Music has a mixture of words that tell a story and go together so elegantly. I decided to choose “Lost & Found” by Lianne La Havas. This song describes me, and it appeals to anyone who grew up in the USA with immigrant parents or anyone living in between two worlds. Women of color especially will resonate with the message I found in this song. This song described my social life at school and my situation at home so well.

For this assignment, I had to listen to this song repeatedly. I reviewed the lyrics countless times. I had to read between the lines, but this assignment made me really appreciate music. It is so much more. I learned how to take a simple phrase in a song and read more deeply into it and research my own past and find correlations. This phase made me realize just how powerful music is. I learned how an artist thinks and relates to their audience. I used the techniques I learned and applied them to my narrative.

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Written Language & Literacy Narrative

Growing up brown was always a struggle living in America. You were stuck in between two worlds. Convincing yourself you were not brown enough for your family and convincing yourself you were white enough for people at school. I was always constantly comparing myself to others... but I was not the only person comparing myself to others. My parents were always comparing me constantly, but this is normal for children of immigrants. Growing up brown was a love-hate relationship with yourself. The song “Lost & Found” by Lianne La Havas was a song that understood me as I struggled with my identity growing up.

I grew up going to predominantly white schools all my life. I remember things like telling my parents to stop packing me “weird food” and pack me peanut butter jelly sandwiches because it did not smell and that is what everyone else brought. I grew up rejecting my culture because I was always teased when I embraced it. I feel like just the title of the song “Lost & Found” represents me now. I grew up feeling lost in my culture and now I found a part of me that learned to embrace it. The lyrics “Just look at who I have become I am so ashamed You were the one that made me feel the way I do...” strongly describes how I felt at school. I was always ashamed of my skin color and the clothes my mom picked out for me. Having fresh off the boat, parents

meant they did not exactly know the latest fashion trends. I slowly started to change and pick apart myself to match myself to the American beauty standard. The beauty standard was always that you had to be white. These lyrics, “Unfold me and teach me how to be Like somebody else...” holds such a great meaning to me because I felt like everyone was trying to change me into someone else and I felt so lost.

In a first-generation Indian household, the idea that one must work hard and adapt to their environment to succeed is one that was instilled in me early on. My parents came from different, remote towns in India and their generation was the first in either of their families to ever leave the country to pursue a better life. I was always compared to my sister. She always had her nose in a book and had report cards that hung high on the fridge. My report cards also made the fridge, but they seemed to get covered by other items. They always pushed me to read and develop my interests, yet somehow this message got misconstrued until I developed a resentment toward reading and settled myself under the safety of the word “average.” Lianne sings, “You broke me and taught me to truly hate myself...” The two worlds I was stuck in between were constantly trying to change me and I always felt like I did not fit in anywhere. The pauses she takes in between some lyrics really helped me empathize and compare my situation with the lyrics. The pauses made the lyrics sound so meaningful and emotional. Her pauses after such powerful statements have you hold your breath in anticipation of what comes next and make you think how many underlying meanings there are.

This song helped me realize that I changed myself constantly to meet certain standards. However, it also taught me how I should find myself. I tried changing myself to meet all these different standards growing up and constantly felt lost and ashamed like Havas described in her

lyrics. In 2020 after the pandemic hit life changed. The pandemic taught me how to find myself by being alone. I developed my own interest because I was not pressured by people around me to like certain things and learned how to embrace my interests. Like Lianne sings, “And I felt strong enough I was discovered by the love I had been waiting for so long...” Those lyrics really understood how I felt. It took so long for me to realize that meeting other people’s expectations is not the approval I should be seeking. I looked for validation everywhere, but I did not realize I lost myself in the process. The more time I spent with myself, the more I learned about the culture that a part of me grew up resenting. I started expressing myself in little ways by wearing Indian jewelry with my American Clothes which was a big step for me because I grew up hiding my culture. I started being proud of culture and soon I realized that a lot of people loved certain parts of my culture and it was something that I could share with others.

Although this song helped me realize the trauma people of color face in America. This song also helped me feel “found.” This song is so meaningful because it represents a journey that I am on. I was lost all these years but now I am getting the sense that I am slowly finding myself. I looked for validation everywhere, but I did not realize I lost myself in the process.