

Figure 1: Sample Tutor End Comment

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Professor X

English 101

History Writing

Can you imagine having to choose between everything your family has told you your entire life, and what your textbooks and teachers say at school? Haunani-Kay Trask, author of, “From a Native Daughter”, discusses the complicated struggle throughout her life with understanding her native history. From an early age, she was told stories by her parents that were later contradicted by her Western education. Native stories, chants, and songs told her of a peaceful culture centered on the sacred land, and Westernized textbooks told her of a land full of cruel, savage, and primitive people. In each conflict there are two sides, each side having their own perspective and opinion based on the events and the outcome, therefore history is written differently by each side.

In order to fully get a clear understanding of history, it's important to look at the source and where its loyalties lie. In every argument, conflict, and war, each side will have a different version of what happened. Even when we were five years old, we had a different story than the kid who pushed us on the playground. Just like in Trask's essay, the *haole* (white) and the *kānaka* (native) stories are very different. “There was the world that we lived in – my ancestors, my family, and my people – and then there was the world historians described. This world, they

had written was the truth” (Trask 394). Everyone, including Trask, feels obligated to believe what’s written in the history books, because it’s written by highly educated people. However, regardless of how true it looks, sometimes we need to research and investigate for ourselves instead of believing what others tell us. In German history books, subjects including Hitler, the Holocaust, and World War II are simply omitted. The German government is either so ashamed or in denial, that they don’t educate their youth on some of the biggest events in world history. Trask argues that Western historians have altered what really happened to make America look heroic. “They had said that the Americans “liberated” the Hawaiians from an oppressive “feudal” system. By inventing a false feudal past, the historians justify – and become complicitous in – massive American theft” (Trask 396). By simply changing the story, not only do we now have a different understanding of how Hawaii’s government was changed, but we have a much different perception of their culture. “No one had owned the land before the *haole* came; everyone could fish and plant, except during sacred periods. And the chiefs were good and loved their people” (Trask 394). The Western history books lead us to see Hawaiian chiefs as oppressive and controlling, and the people in need of being liberated. However native people, like Trask’s mother seem to have a much more peaceful and happy recollection of the land before the *haole*.

Just as the people from each side have a different story, the perspective we have based on where we come from influences history as well. Americans see the Revolutionary War as a time of bravery, strength, and heroism, as our founding fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence and eventually won freedom from Britain. However, the British look at the Revolutionary War rather negatively, as to them it was a time of uprising, rebellion, and treason. Based on where you’re from, your perspective is very different. Trask discovers that the natives see things quite

differently than the Western historians do. “Land tenure changes instituted by Americans and in line with current Western notions, of private property were then made to appear beneficial to the Hawaiians. But in practice, such changes benefited the *haole*, who alienated the people from the land, taking it for themselves” (Trask 396). A very famous quote by Winston Churchill says, “History is written by the victors.” The winner writes the story as they want it to be seen and because they were victorious, for some reason we’re more likely to believe their story over the losers. Although there was no actual war between the Americans and the Hawaiians, Feudalism in essence won, as the Americans successfully imperialized Hawaii, and forced their society to conform to American customs and culture. “The first step in the colonizing process, Fanon had written, was the deculturation of a people. What better way to take our culture than to remake our image? A rich historical past became small and ignorant in the hands of Westerners. And we suffered a damaged sense of people and culture because of this distortion” (Trask 395). The Western historians wrote about the imperialism of Hawaii in the way that they did, because to them it was a positive thing. They were gaining territory and saw it as helping the Hawaiian government improve. Their perspective was simply different.

When I first read Trask’s, “From a Native Daughter”, I sympathized with the Hawaiians and had a very different point of view than I do right now. The more I came to realize that these discrepancies are everywhere in history, it became clearer to me that it’s simply a clash of perspectives. In each conflict there are two sides, each side having their own perspective and opinion based on the events and the outcome, therefore history is written differently by each side. No one side is necessarily correct, and each person is entitled to their own opinion.

Works Cited

Trask, Haunani-Kay. *From a Native Daughter*. Longman Pub Group, 2008. 393-401. Print.

Hi Hailey,

When reading through your essay I see you explaining two main points (as presented by your two major body paragraphs): first, the writing of history differs based on *who* is writing (source and loyalties), and second, the writing of history differs based on the perspective of the writer. As an overall response to this, I have two large questions. 1. Can you make a clearer distinction between loyalties and perspective? These seem very similar, but you offer a range of different examples and more clearly setting them apart would strengthen each of your points. 2. After reading your assignment sheet, it seems your purpose in this paper is to explain what Trask says about writing and respond or develop those positions with your own position. It seems here that you emphasize your understanding rather than Trask's. Your paper seems to say—generally—“These are things we should understand about history writing, and they are positions I came to after reading Trask.” I would think about what you've discussed in class and the assignment sheet and decide if you need to emphasize Trask's positions more. I hope that these two responses get at it your questions that you left on the virtual request form about how well you answered the prompt, your organization, and your thesis support.

As an additional suggestion, you should consider introducing and interpreting each of the quotes you use. Right now, each time you use a quote it stands separately from all your words. Sometimes we call this “hit-and-run” quoting. Instead you might consider “sandwiching” your quote like this: Trask explains the conflict of learning differing histories by explaining “quote” (cite). She shows that...

This format shows that you've selected quotes purposely and are trying to prove a particular point with them.

I hope these suggestions help you. Best of luck with your paper, and we look forward to working with you again at the Writing Center.

Best,

Alice