

Dear Mr. Siegel and Ms. Berg,

I was greatly saddened to learn this week of Daniel's recent passing. I am a grad student in the English department at Yale, and I had Daniel as a student in my section of a lecture course on John Milton in the spring of 2009. It was a pleasure getting to know him; I have never had a student work so hard or improve so much. My time teaching Daniel remains the most rewarding experience I've had as an instructor.

Well before the first paper was due, Daniel came in to talk it over. I was surprised to find he already had a full draft written. It demonstrated a good grasp of the text (*Comus*) but for an upper-level English course was not quite as novel as it needed to be. Though students generally balk at the idea of overhauling a completed paper (and not a bad one at that), I was surprised to find that when the final draft came in, Daniel had reworked it dramatically. It was much better, but there was still room for improvement, and though I did my best to point him in the right direction, I never could have imagined he would improve so quickly. By the term's last paper, he was writing with the skill of an English major. Where his first paper had been a bit too safe, his second was ambitious. Though usually an instructor can imagine a likely trajectory of improvement from a student's initial offering, Daniel far outpaced all expectations.

His hard work was evident in the classroom as well. The other fourteen students were all junior and senior English majors, and in the first few weeks Daniel mostly deferred to their experience. Soon, however, he began to get involved, making perceptive comments, albeit ones I had anticipated in my lesson plan. Yet his progress continued even further. By the final weeks of the class, he was reliably offering insights as sharp and unexpected as those of anybody in the class. Plus, he did it without any showiness, without any self-satisfaction over his own smarts. After the professor in charge of the course came to observe my class in the last week of the semester, he asked me about Daniel, pointing out what a pleasure it was to watch a student so bright yet so humble.

As I told Daniel at the end of the semester, his effort was inspiring. He has given me a model for what a student can achieve with hard work (which I described to my students in my class last week) while reminding me of what a teacher can encourage with careful feedback. Beyond his capacity as a student, I also appreciated getting to know him as a person. Even more important than his success as a writer and thinker was the spirit of kindness and receptiveness he brought to both the classroom and his meetings with me.

After learning of his illness, we emailed a few times (and I regret not communicating more), and I was always touched by his upbeat approach to the obstacle he faced. His academic performance was remarkable, but he was also just a remarkable person, someone it was always a joy to see, be it in class, at my office, or at the gym, where I would often see him instructing martial arts in the room beside the basketball court on which I would play. I came to admire Daniel, and I was really hoping to again encounter that courteous, inquisitive spirit on campus.

I am very sorry for your loss, and I hope the memory of how many people Daniel has touched offers some comfort at this time.