

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

PLEASE STAND IN THE DOOR AND COMMIT

EN101: COMPOSITION

SECTION 44E

CPT WARREN

BY

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___ MY DOCUMENTATION IDENTIFIES ALL SOURCES USED AND
ASSISTANCE RECEIVED IN COMPLETING THIS ASSIGNMENT.

___ NO SOURCES WERE USED OR ASSISTANCE RECEIVED IN
COMPLETING THIS ASSIGNMENT

SIGNATURE:

To tell a war story, one needs to include more than the bare facts. To tell a good war story, one needs to include details that that may be more fiction than truth. These details are to evoke feelings within the reader that range from grief to elation, despair to delight, and fear to love. As a result, some stories are able to give rise to these emotions, whereas other stories do not. Stand in the Door by Pete Svoboda falls into the latter category. The story is lacks emotion¹. Svoboda takes the stance of a historian documenting a simple battle. Please Remember and Commitment by Ch (COL) Larry McCarty are written with a much more personal feel². Instead of re-telling these stories from a third person point of view, COL McCarty tells the story from his point of view. In doing so, the reader is drawn into the story and the emotions of COL McCarty himself. When comparing these two authors, both stories accomplish what they set out to accomplish. Stand in the Door lacks any emotion and, instead, presents an accurate picture of the initial invasion of Iraq. If Svoboda's purpose was to write a documentary, then his story fulfilled his purpose fully. However, if he sought to write a war story, his story was extremely lacking. COL McCarty, on the other hand, presents two stories from his own point of view, and thus attracts the reader's attention and draws the reader into the mind and emotions of COL McCarty. These two authors successfully accomplish the mission they set out to achieve. However, both essays need revisions to make their stories even more effective.

The effectiveness of a story depends upon more than the telling of the story. It is important to have the purpose of the story in mind when reading and analyzing a story. Thus, it can be assumed that Stand in the Door is written to be a documentary describing the events that happened to the 82nd Airborne following its invasion of Iraq. The details of 82nd's preparations and the taking of As Samawah indicate that Svoboda would have to do more than just participate in the battle. Therefore, to have such descriptions of the battle, Svoboda would have to have conducted extensive research consisting of interviews and examination of reports. In this aspect,

Pete Svoboda could possibly be a historian of the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team. This is not only because of the descriptions and details that Svoboda writes but also because this story revolves around the 2nd Brigade only. Svoboda does not write about the battalions in detail. He writes only about each individual battalion and their roles. Now, after having identified Svoboda as a historian documenting the capture of As Samawah, it can be concluded that the audience is most likely soldiers in the 2nd Brigade. However, if not soldiers in the 2nd Brigade, then the audience could possibly be other historians looking to research into how United States forces gained control of As Samawah.

This capture of As Samawah could be much more interesting and relevant to the common person. Without a background in the military or history, one would not be interested in such a dry and tedious narrative. In order to draw readers in, Svoboda should include more personal details. In other words, he should describe the emotions of individual soldiers. Furthermore, he could go into much more detail about the actual conflicts and skirmishes between United States forces and Iraqi insurgents. For example, when Svoboda describes the conflict between 1st BN and Iraqi forces:

The enemy force engaged Nantz's force with at least 150 strong. They fired heavy machineguns, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), AK-47s & mortars. 1st BN/Nantz engaged with every weapon system in the battalion task force. Nantz called for, received and controlled OH-58Ds Kiowa Warrior helicopters assigned to the 82nd along with navy and air force close air support fighter aircraft. This combined arms array forced the withdrawal of the Fedayen and Republic Guard troops (5).

This short description of such a clash does not give enough credit to the soldiers fighting. If Svoboda had only described in further detail the firefight, and subsequent casualties, the story

would become that much more interesting. Furthermore, Svoboda could include individual soldiers' thoughts and reactions. In this way, the reader will not only be interested in the story, but Svoboda can include an underlying theme or meaning in these soldiers' thoughts and emotions. Of course, this revision is only if Mr. Svoboda wishes to make his story more interesting and appealing to a common person.

COL McCarty writes in a fashion so that nearly anyone can read this story and understand it. The basic plot of this story is simple and straightforward. There is no specialized knowledge required in reading this story. In addition, Please Remember is an extremely personalized account. He is telling the story from his own point of view. He writes about what he saw, and thus, the reader is drawn into the story. The purpose of this story is very much like the plot: straightforward. COL McCarty's message revolves around a theme of sacrifice and devotion. Thus, we can infer that the purpose of this story is to ensure that people remember the sacrifice of others. As Mr. K so aptly put it, "Young man, I walked for those who could not. I marched for those who have paid the ultimate price for our freedom" (2). People often forget the sacrifices of others serving our country. And so, Mr. K, withstanding the heat and humidity, marched to make sure that these men and women are remembered. For "the price of freedom is so high that it can only be paid for in blood" (2). As a result of Mr. K's profound statements, the audience can be further narrowed to civilians who have never experienced the tragedies of war. COL McCarty in this extremely profound story imparts to the reader a sense of both proud and sorrow. In other words, he appeals to the readers' pathos through Mr. K's actions and subsequent words. Thus, Please Remember has accomplished its mission: ensuring that everyone remembers the sacrifices of those who have passed.

Please Remember is a deeply profound and poignant story regarding the sacrifices of our fighting forces. There are very few revisions that could or should be made to improve this story. The only issue with this story is its commerciality. Please Remember is an extremely short story that is difficult to publish. Thus, if COL McCarty wishes to publish this story, he would have to either lengthen it or put it into an anthology or collection of other works. Again, there are few revisions that can be made to this story to make it more effective. The only revisions that can or should be made are to make it publishable.

This issue of commerciality is also present in COL McCarty's second story, Commitment. Commitment revolves around a young soldier placing his body in front of COL McCarty in order to protect him. This precarious situation arises when COL McCarty's convoy is struck by an IED that shreds the front tire of a HUMVEE. COL McCarty then volunteers to switch the tire so that everyone else can remain pulling security. A young soldier places himself directly in front of COL McCarty telling him, "Chaplain don't worry...they have to get through me to get to you" (2). This picture of a young soldier willing to risk his life for the safety of another man is astounding. It is in this scene that the purpose and audience of the story can be determined. COL McCarty seeks to remind those who have lost their faith in the war and our soldiers fighting in the war. This young soldier risking his life serves as a reminder that the men and women fighting overseas still dedicate themselves to their job.

Like Please Remember, Commitment is written in the same manner and style. This story is short, which prevents it from being published. Again, this story could be lengthened or added to an anthology to ensure publication. COL McCarty tells this story from his point of view. In doing so, the reader is drawn into the gravity of the situation. However, this scene with the young soldier could be much more dramatic and striking. If COL McCarty would dramatize the event

and include more details on what he was feeling, the story would take on a further personal feel. Also, the story would have a much greater impact on the reader. For example, when COL McCarty writes, “As I lifted the mangled tire off the rim, my hands were shaking but I was working as hard as I could” (2). He could further emphasize the severity of the situation by including his thoughts about what could happen. Also, COL McCarty could include some of his own imagination to perhaps envisage an attack on the convoy and the young soldier actually die. Again, these are a few possibilities that COL McCarty can use in order to increase the dramatic effect of the story and to further drive home the purpose of this story.

All three of these stories have their own purpose and intended audience. Stand in the Door is a documentary style story that accurately details 82nd Airborne’s 2nd Brigade in the initial invasion of Iraq. Mr. Pete Svoboda can be considered a unit historian or military historian because of the narrow and precise language that he writes with. However, to make this story more appealing to the common man, instead of the soldier or historian, Mr. Svoboda should personalize this story by adding his thoughts, emotions, and actions. Also, he should include more details at the squad or platoon level. The lowest level that is discussed is the battalion. This lends to the impersonal nature of the story and thus, to include details at the squad level will give the story a much more personal feel. In conjunction with details at the lower level, Mr. Svoboda could and should include details about the actual fighting- casualties, emotions, thoughts, and descriptions. Both of COL McCarty’s stories are well written that accomplish their purposes well. Please Remember reminds not only civilians, but anyone who reads the story, of the sacrifices that men and women in the armed forces have made. Commitment reminds those who have grown disenchanted with the current war that men and women serving overseas still risk their lives and are committed to fulfilling their duty. There are few revisions that should be made to COL McCarty’s stories except to lengthen them or to include them in anthologies to ensure

publication. Also, in Commitment, COL McCarty should include more details about his emotions and more devices to emphasize the severity of the situation. Overall, these stories are extremely well written and only need minor revisions to turn these good stories into great stories.

Works Cited

Melnick, Isaac. Discussion with author. 22 October 2008.

McCarty, Larry. "Commitment."

McCarty, Larry. "PLEASE REMEMBER."

Svoboda, Pete. "Stand In The Door."

¹ CDT Isaac Melnick, A-3, '12, assistance given to the author, written discussion, West Point, NY, 22 October 2008. CDT Melnick suggested that what I had said earlier was too harsh.

² CDT Isaac Melnick, A-3, '12, assistance given to the author, written discussion, West Point, NY, 22 October 2008. CDT Melnick reminded me not to compare the two stories.