Part I. Abstract

My project will be a collection of poems surrounding the life of Seth Croak, a fellow native of Lock Haven, Pennsylvania and close acquaintance. These poems will aim at capturing the life, goals, and pursuits of this truly interesting person whom I’ve come to respect since knowing. I hope to interview and potentially spend time living with him over the summer while he is away for his job cutting down trees, getting a sense of how he lives at work, and what his experiences are with his job and work mates. Ultimately, this project will capture in poetry the life of a working-class, rural Pennsylvanian, and how his life represents an often overlooked class of American citizen.

Part II. Project Narrative

My project aims to understand and explore life for a working-class man who is beginning to carve out his future with the tools of a blue-collar region. Through interviews and potentially first-hand experience, I will capture the facets of his life in poetry. This subject matter tends to be written in fictional or non-fictional accounts, but it is uncommon to find this sort of account expressed through poetry. This project holds personal significance, since I’ve known the subject for a number of years, and I believe his story has the bizarrely intriguing features perfect for poetry. My object is to faithfully recount his experiences in a fashion that is as entertaining as his own accounts. I will write on three distinct topics, which will be organized into three sections, including his life at work, his life outside of work, and his feelings about his experiences. My goal is produce a book-length account of a kind of life that many people are unfamiliar with or even unaware of, which I will go on to publish myself.

My primary source of inspiration is the desire to capture the heart of rural Pennsylvania through the accounts of the personally compelling life and idiosyncrasies of my subject. This work will put this kind of account in a new light through the medium of poetry, and will be able to explore this topic in methods and style unavailable to prose.

Part III. Process

I will write this collection after gathering content-related information from Seth Croak through interviews and first-hand experience over the course of the summer. I will be working with Kevin González to write the poems themselves, meeting with him at least once a week during my senior year. He taught my Advanced Poetry Workshop the spring semester of my Junior year, giving me invaluable insight into my own work and the form itself. I will gather information over the summer and work on the poems during the year. Afterwards, I will self-publish the collection.
Part IV. Biography

My primary training in poetry has been during my time at Carnegie Mellon, but I have had much experience writing poetry outside of the classroom as well. I took Survey of forms: Poetry with Gerald Costanzo, Beginning Poetry workshop with Terrace Hayes, and Advanced Poetry workshop with Kevin González. I have had two jobs doing manual labor with different contractors, which may or may not help me understand the mentality accompanying a blue-collar job. In the past, I've written poems focused on capturing people and their experiences, which will be the primary goal of this project.

Part V. Outcome

The final outcome of this project will be a collection of poems, which I will self-publish. This will help me go a long way in understanding how to write thematic collections. Also, it will give me a lot of practice writing poems about a very specific topic and capturing the essence of a person’s work in poetry. This collection will be a major supporting feature of my portfolio, which I hope will get me into an MFA program, allowing me to continue my pursuits in writing and eventually lead to a career teaching creative writing. Publishing this work will get me a foot in the door into a network of publishers, and inform me in the future when I want to publish another manuscript. I will present this collection at the Meeting of the Minds, and hopefully publication will allow my work to reach a wide audience.