Research Statement

It’s a school day that we’re all reluctant to attending-- the words “Meet in the Library, Room B30” are posted to Learn-- and, personally, it’s the third time I’ve met there this year. When I arrived, the classroom cliques had found a way to sit together, cemented by the Dells in each row. My class, English 250, Literary Textual Analysis, was there to learn about research tools for our upcoming research paper, a 2,500 word analysis. I could see my classmates getting antsy. The pattering of feet and the swiveling of chairs; it was all very distracting and drowned the librarian’s voice out. Because we had all attended the information session before, I think that many of the students decided to drown the librarians voice out. We forget, though-- librarians are resources too.

So what was my topic? I knew that I wanted to talk about Shakespeare because I understood his language better than anyone else I’d read that year. What was I even good at? It’s funny how you can take hours upon hours of language and literature courses and, when it boils down to it, not know a single thing about the matter. This is my Major for goodness sake! I decided to relate the sonnets back to rhetoric.

At this point in time I had asked for two extensions to the final topic proposal. “It’s a process” I told my instructor. I remember walking into her office and hearing that I needed to refine my research. Refining is a lifelong lesson. I went into the library after that to look for
books on rhetoric. I walked up and down the aisles of books only to find *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* by Edward P. J. Corbett. It was my enlightenment.

After developing my thesis I set aside a day to sit in the library and find books, academic journals, and research reports pertaining to the idea of tragedy and catharsis. I primarily used the search engine on the library website and typed in “Shakespeare's Sonnets.” 7,640 results came up. Too Broad. I messed around with different terms like “today” but that didn’t really bring me to anything with substance for my report. I decided that I would need more than just a day.

Going back to the website five or six times, I decided that I needed to separate my keyword search into three different categories: 1) Shakespearean Sonnets, 2) Rhetoric and Pathos, and 3) Benefits of Catharsis. After finding 20 resources, some online and some in the Library, I set off into the abyss. I realized that I had never checked out a book before. This was my sophomore year.

I was a bit overwhelmed and embarrassed to ask but I decided that I needed to find an employee for help. The lady at the help desk told me to “Just go up to the third floor and look for the signs,” luckily for me there was also help, there. It was as if I were in the Labyrinth. I snagged six books and returned to the help desk. I was in shock to hear that I could check them out for so long. That day, I walked out into the winter sun feeling triumphant for I had conquered the Zimmerman maze.
In my research, I primarily used the library search engine and the employees for help. When looking back on it, the long meeting we had in room B30 introduced me to sites like JSTOR and Google Scholar, two resources that I used a lot. That day we learned about Boolean Searches which, little did I know, are just as fun to use as it is to say the name. I wish I had paid more attention, though, because if I had, I could have combined the three keywords listed above. I looked at a lot of academic journals and a lot of literary critiques but I wish I had found more information on rhetoric. For English majors, rhetoric is all ways and means of writing a convincing piece. I also learned that I needed to start the assignment much earlier because even though you can read a page a minute it doesn’t mean you should. Something that helped me save time was the pre-written MLA Citations that each resource has on the web-page. This was extremely handy. It was all extremely handy and thanks to the institutions set up in Zimmerman, I conquered my first research assignment.