

I went back to ISS and they gave me the equipment with very little struggle. It was kind of anticlimactic. They didn't look me up in the system to check that Writing 220 was a class that existed. I got a much nicer set of equipment than I had gotten through my friend. I filmed the video in my room, during the day and didn't deal with the weird glare.

Overall, the making of this project was a little test of endurance and stubbornness.

Regina Chen

Writing 220

T Hetzel

Making of Project II

Choosing a Topic:

This project initially really scared me. As I thought back to everything I had ever written, all I could think was *I never want to go there again*. Those essays I wrote in high school? No, I refused to revisit *Lord of the Flies*. Personal stories I had published when I was 15? No, I lost that flash drive. Eventually, I settled on a paper I had written for a Near-East studies class my freshman year. The class's title was "Magic, Science, and Religion in the Middle East" and my paper was about astrology and horoscopes in decision making in ancient civilizations. I stripped down the research topic to just natal astrology and decided to relate it back to the Chinese zodiac, the Western zodiac, and me.

Regina Chen

Noah Gardiner

AAPTIS 192

27 February 2015

Cosmic Intervention: How Astrology and Cosmology in Past Civilizations Affected the
Astrological Practices of the Renaissance

Through their interpretation of the sky and the rest of the cosmos, past civilizations built religions that strongly influenced their governments. This way of looking at the sky would not become stigmatized until recent history—in fact, horoscopes played a large part in decision making even during the Italian Renaissance. In her article, Mary Quinlan-McGrath analyzes the [use](#) of astrology in the destruction and rebuilding of St. Peter’s Basilica in 1506 (716). The

Figuring it out:

Serendipitously, we were assigned to read “The Devil’s Bait” by Leslie Jamison and “Consider the Lobster” by David Foster Wallace. From these two articles, I gained a lot of clarity on how to tackle my hybrid research paper/personal essay idea. I heavily modeled the format of my paper on “The Devil’s Bait,” but the actual content is probably most similar to “Consider the Lobster.” I think that my mix of personal moments and research is comparable to Wallace’s own use of lobster facts and fair anecdotes. However, the final product ended up looking aesthetically much more like Jamison’s piece.

E S S A Y

THE DEVIL'S BAIT

Symptoms, signs, and the riddle of Morgellons
By Leslie Jamison



Gourmet

DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

CONSIDER THE LOBSTER

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AUGUST 2004

For 56 years, the Maine Lobster Festival has been drawing crowds with the promise of sun, fun, and fine food. One visitor would argue that the celebration involves a whole lot more.



Beliefs between Borders

By Regina Chen

I was born on August 22, 1997 at 5:18 am in Southeast Michigan. It's probably the earliest I've arrived to anything in my entire life. I was born in the year of the Ox and to the fire ele-



and beaded purses. In addition to these common souvenirs, he brought back things that I hadn't thought to ask for, like medicine and matching red-string necklaces for

Originally, the paper had a very different premise. I was going to focus broadly upon all of the superstitions that I had grown up with, including the zodiac. So, the first thing I wrote was an opening anecdote that I've since gotten rid of about the positioning of my bed and feng shui. I don't exactly regret getting rid of it, but I do think that my final product ended up being less direct in the beginning than my original beginning did. However, it totally doesn't comply with the new topic of the paper, so it had to go.

My first draft was not good. It was very long—almost 5,000 words. There were too many competing ideas and it ended up being very unwieldy. Also, as was pointed out to me during in-class writing workshop, not everybody knows what a horoscope is or how zodiacs work. Because of my own background, I just assumed that everyone knew basic things about horoscopes and zodiacs. As it turns out, not everybody knows that Chinese zodiacs are animals. Not everybody knows how important the number twelve is. I had to work out a way to explain those things earlier without betraying the building nature of my project.

Strengthening:

I tried to go kind of chronologically. In the end, I managed to keep the chronologic nature of the project without confusing the reader. Or, at least I think I did. Originally, I started with the feng shui story and kept going on about other superstitions that I grew up with. Eventually I introduced the mechanics of the Chinese zodiac and talked about that for a little bit. Then I talked about the Western zodiac and ended the project after a big realization. My workshop readers pointed out that the “big realization” seemed out of the blue. In general, everything after the Western zodiac section was stronger than the beginning of the paper. This is partially because that’s where I started writing the paper. During spring break, I sat down for an entire day and banged out the 5000 word monster. I was still forming ideas about what I wanted my Chinese zodiac section to look like, so I started with the Western zodiac. Unfortunately, the beginning ended up being relatively lackluster and seemed out of place with the main punchline of the paper.

It was hard for me to figure out what I wanted to say about the Chinese zodiac. Some of the memories were old, and I actually knew relatively little about the mechanics of the Chinese zodiac as compared to the Western zodiac. In the end, I ended up writing mostly about what I

already knew. I knew the origin stories of the zodiac animals because my mom used to read them with me back when she was still trying to teach me Mandarin. I knew about compatibility because of paper placemats at the Chinese restaurant. I think that what I ended up with may have been small in comparison to how in-depth I go into the Western zodiac, but a lot of the information on the Chinese zodiac were things that I just knew. I didn't do a whole lot of new research, besides looking at my Chinese zodiac natal chart and learning how to read it. I think that this preserved the authenticity of some of the stories. The reader has just as much information as I had when I experienced some of the things I wrote about.

Comparatively, the Western zodiac was easier because I actually researched it thoroughly. Parts of the essay, especially those that speak about the mechanics of the Western zodiac, are very technical. I define a lot of things in my explanation of the Western zodiac. I think this is different in comparison to the Chinese zodiac sections because I was learning all of these things about the Western zodiac as I was writing about it.

Before I spruced up my Chinese zodiac section to make it stronger and less weak in comparison to the Western zodiac section, I strongly considered scrapping it. My Western zodiac section was far more developed and could honestly stand as its own paper. However, I couldn't get rid of the Chinese zodiac section because that would be like getting rid of a part of myself. I'm glad that I persevered and stuck with it, because the piece wouldn't have been authentic without it.

Now:

I'm really glad that I chose astrology as my topic. My other option was to remake an essay I had written about *Sex and the City 2* (the movie), and that's something that I never want to revisit ever again. Astrology, on the other hand, is a topic that has interested me since I was a

child. I'm thankful that I got this chance to really dig into it and learn about how horoscopes and the Chinese zodiac work.

I don't know if I love my project—it doesn't feel truly *done* to me. I feel like I could've done more to balance the Chinese zodiac parts with the Western zodiac parts. I feel like I could've done more to ease the reader's confusion. But, I think I'll always feel this way. It's all a part of the process.