

Be proud of your artwork



Trevor Hamblin

The eternal curse of being an artist is the feeling your art just doesn't reach the bar you set for yourself, that you are inadequate in what you do and who you are. This feeling becomes worse when seeing another artist of the same kind. After all, you only see your own mistakes when looking at your art, but you'll see the good points of someone else's. So you unconsciously set your bar higher to catch up to them. But while you are improving, so are they. You'll never feel like you can catch up and the cycle continues. The artist, however, is always better than they think, and thus needs some words of encouragement — which is what I'm here to provide.

Now, when I say "artist," I don't just mean someone who draws, paints or sculpts. I'm including writers — poets, novelists, playwrights or screenwriters — and musicians, as well as anyone else who is passionate about their craft. I myself have dabbled in visual art and have some musical talent, but I consider myself first and foremost a writer. I know this feeling of inadequacy has affected me the same way as it has other kinds of artists.

This semester, I have been honing my craft with a screenwriting class. This has been a challenging and rewarding experience. When it came time for me to workshop my script, however, I spent the entire day panicking. I was nitpicking it, and went through a minor panic attack about re-examining my career path and life plan. But when class came, hearing what people liked about my script really helped me relax, and it balanced out my fears and personal critique to something more positive.

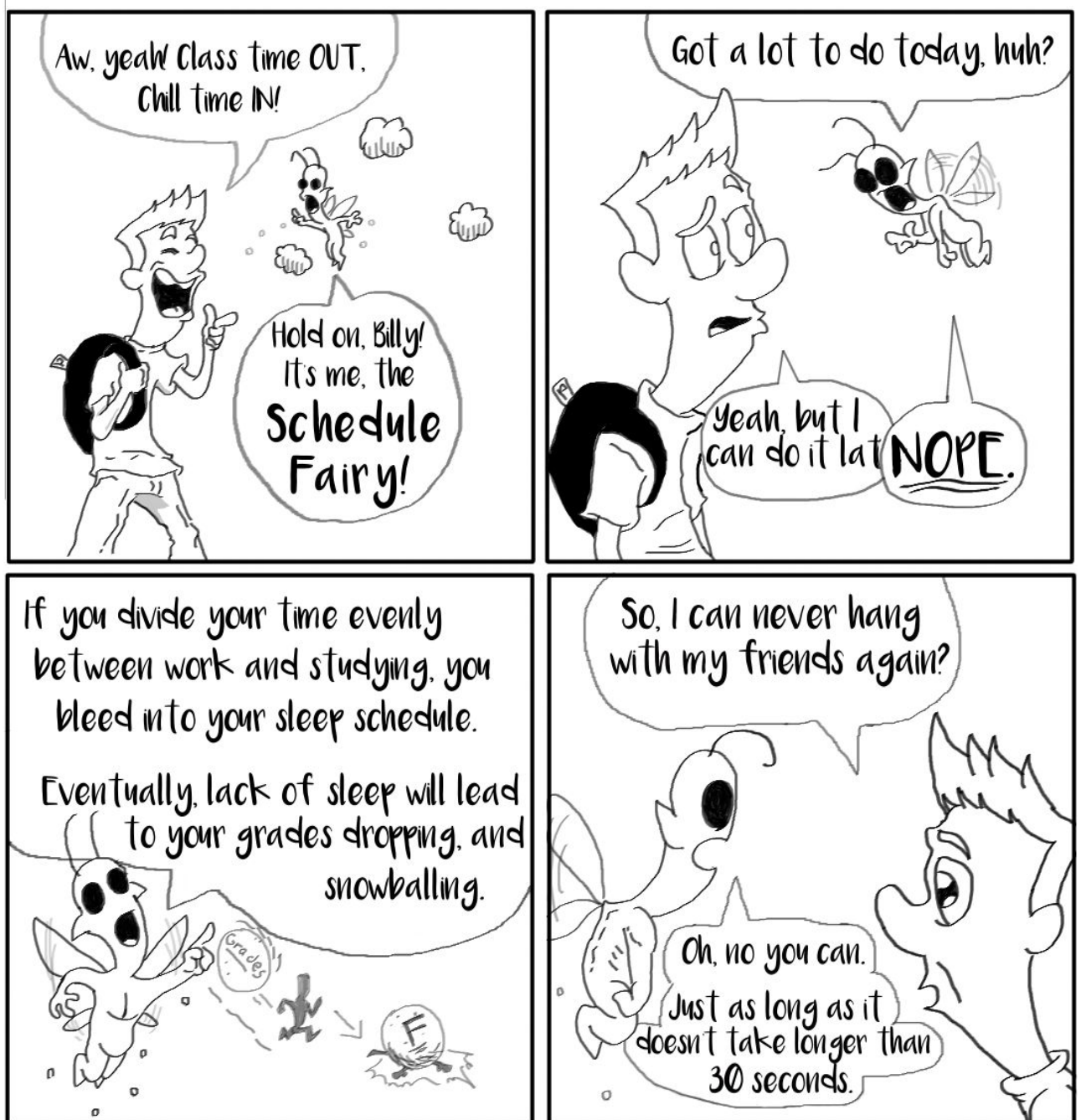
What I'm saying is you are not a bad artist, regardless of the mistakes you have made, are making or will make. You are improving, even if you can't see it. Oftentimes, an artist's eye will improve faster than their hand. You become better at seeing what makes art good or bad faster than you get better at actually creating art. They are, after all, two completely different skills, and if you start seeing what you do wrong faster than you can fix it, then obviously you are going to feel like everything you do is wrong.

If you feel bad about art others say is good, try and think about why they are saying it's good. What merit do they see in it? If you say your work is bad just because you're comparing it to others' work, then you aren't really looking at your art for what is good about it. Constant comparison is another reason why artists feel inadequate, which is why you should break yourself from the habit as soon as possible. As an artist, you already are bringing something new to the table — yourself. So you shouldn't try to be the best artist in the world but, rather, the best artist that can express you.

Really, if you're an artist, then you're already on the path to improvement. Hone your craft when you can and try to take the time to see what you're doing well. Are you good at drawing eyes? Does your dialogue feel natural? Can you hit high notes really well? Being able to identify your strengths is just as important as identifying your weaknesses, and can be the difference between quitting and improving. And if you quit being an artist, then you are quitting being yourself.

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Time Management by August Davis



Group work isn't that bad



Holly Fisher

Most students are familiar with the resounding groan that echoes throughout a classroom in response to one dreaded phrase — group project. No one wants to deal with the hassle of organizing schedules, distributing workloads and collectively meeting deadlines in addition to completing the project itself, so people hate group work. However, objectively speaking, group work really is not bad, and — considering how much the real world values and expects group cooperation — I believe the educational system could benefit from doing the same.

The majority of higher education consists of individual projects. Personally, I think I've only been involved in about four group projects during my four years at Truman State, but I've turned in more solo work than I ever could begin to estimate. So when a professor decides to assign a group project, it's uncomfortable. Students are pushed outside the metaphorical box.

This does not have to be the case. By assigning more group work, the process won't be as unnatural or inconvenient because students will become more accustomed to it and will hate it less. It simply will be the standard way of completing school work. I also believe normalizing this type of work will make students more likely to work actively with their peers. One of the most common complaints of group work is how certain members sit back, contribute nothing and take credit for the end result. Although there always will be students who feel inclined to cheat, the urge to cheat on one random group project is much greater than it would be to cheat on the vast majority of projects. Professors can combat this by requiring simple and easy group evaluations for each project, which would hold individual members accountable.

Problem solved. Now, I'm not advocating for more group work just for the hell of it. I'm currently taking two separate senior seminar classes, and the capstone projects for each require individual research and presentations. However, the vast majority of research I'm using for my individual project was not published individually — almost all of it is a result of group collaboration. This trend goes beyond academic publishing. We hear the same thing when applying for jobs — team work and team building are highly valued skills. If the real

world prefers to deal with groups and collaborations, then why isn't this a focus of our education?

More group work in the classroom cultivates the knowledge students would learn individually and teaches valuable skills for working together that indisputably are required in life beyond school grounds.

By working together, students have the additional benefit of expanding their point of view and learning how to tackle projects from an angle they might never have thought to approach on their own. They learn the different thought processes of their peers, which means they have an exponentially larger number of opportunities to grow their own ways of thinking and react positively to students' ideas. In other words, students learn more than the immediately applicable bits of knowledge they need for the completion of any project.

As the saying goes, give a man a fish, and he'll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he'll eat for a lifetime.

It's also important to note how competitive the field of academia is. There is constant pressure to produce the best and most relevant ideas, to be the first to make the next revolutionary breakthrough. Of course, a little competition is good for anyone and motivates us to do better than we would otherwise, but academia can become competitive to the point of being cutthroat and frustrating. This mentality often trickles down to the students, fostering the same frustration and competitive ideology. I think by implementing more group work we can encourage a more supportive and constructive environment as students are brought together, sharing their work rather than staying in their own bubbles.

Increasing the amount of group work has a number of upsides. I can understand still wanting to measure a student's progress individually, which is why I'm not suggesting a complete dismissal of individual projects or tests. But honestly, implementing more group work has so many benefits it seems one of the only reasons it hasn't been more encouraged is because of the overly rigid and institutionalized nature of education.

Students' immediate response to group work is to say how much it sucks, but that doesn't diminish how much adding more of it can improve the educational system. Students hate writing 10-15 page papers too, but that doesn't mean educators shouldn't assign them.

The educational system, as good as it is, can be improved. We need to stop separating students from their peers — we need to work together.

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