



English I: Writing: Module 7: Practice 5: Section 5

Strategies for Editing

Tone and Figurative Language

Instructions: Read the following semiformal essay, imagining that it is your own writing.

Pebunny, Shorty, Free Tail, and the Egg Man

“My name is Gabriella, but people call me Gabby or Gabbster.”

“My name is Ray, but people call me Raybo.”

“My name is Susan, and people just call me “Susan.”



Source: New York teenagers, Oct 2012 – 05, Ed Yourdon, Flickr

Which one are you? Do you like nicknames or hate them? How many nicknames do you have, and who calls you which ones? It's very interesting the way nicknames work. Some stick with you as you grow older; some fall away when you become a teenager. Sometimes you have control over your nicknames, and sometimes you don't. Some nicknames are like badges of friendship; some are like brands of humiliation.

Nicknames usually start when we're babies. My name is Peter, but my parents didn't carry me around in my baby blanket talking to me as “Peter.” They made up what I would call “sweetie names” such as Peterpoo, Pebunny, and Sweet Pete. These sweetie names usually do not stick, especially for boys. My sister still gets called ‘Dumplin’” by my father, even now when she's 19 years old. I should be thankful that my mother doesn't call me “Pebunny” in front of my friends. That would be a death blow. I would never recover from it.

When you get to grade school, your friends usually don't use sweetie names. At this stage, you are often burdened with nicknames you didn't ask for and would be happy to lose. Snakes shed their skins as they grow, but some people can get stuck with names they hate. The only one I got called that I can remember hating was Shorty. It is true that I was shorter than most of the other boys, but when people called me that, it didn't feel like an acknowledgement of my individuality as much as an insult. So in addition to the sweetie names of babyhood, I would add the insult names of grade school. Not everyone gets one of these, but those of us that have had them would like to forget the experience.

In junior high, it seemed like I got a different nickname every week. Different friends called me by different names. Sometimes, one of my good friends would call me something that no one else called me. At this stage, a lot of the nicknames were activity related. I played hockey, and at that time, the Ice Bats were the hockey team in Austin so some people called me Free Tail. I sort of liked the sound of that. I was a good Spanish student, so all the people in my Spanish class called me Pedro even when we weren't in class. That also made me happy. One weird one was that once a friend of mine—my best friend—stayed overnight, and in the morning I made scrambled eggs and showed him how I could crack two eggs at one time (one in each hand). From then on he called me Egg Man, and he still does.



Now that I'm in high school, it feels like I have more control over nicknames. I can tell people what I want to be called, or I can tell them that I don't really like whatever it is that they are calling me, and they usually get onboard with my request. I was going with a girl for a while who hated her name. I won't tell you what it was, but there is a classic rock song about a girl with this name. That's all I'll say. Anyway, she wanted me to call her by her last name instead of her first name. At first, this seemed completely weird to me, but after a while, it started to seem comfortable and even very sweet (not to be confused with "sweetie"). So she started calling me by my last name too. I liked that probably more than any other nickname I've ever had. I tried to get other people to use my last name, but most of them couldn't do it. They said it just sounded too much like the military. At a certain point, you have to let things work out the way they naturally work out, so I didn't force the issue.

I probably have lots of names to go before I die. Maybe some of the ones I've mentioned will be recycled. I can just imagine what will happen if I ever introduce my mother to a girl I'm going to marry: My mother will whisper to her that my name used to be Pebunny. Maybe if I love the girl enough, that won't really be so bad.



Source: YaY!!! We Won :-), man's pic, Flickr