

Kaylee ben Yosef, Creative Writing major and TESL minor, 2023

By Joseph Shoulders

Intern Translator Franklin Precision Industry

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Kaylee ben Yosef is a senior majoring in Creative Writing with a minor in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). [She works as an intern translator for Franklin Precision Industry \(FPI\)](#) and as a private English language tutor for many people in the local Japanese community.

Having gone to middle school and high school in Bowling Green, ben Yosef always thought, "WKU is the one place I'm not going to." Thus, she first started college at Morehead State University as an Elementary Education major. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, she moved back to BG to be close to family, and she realized that she wanted to stay. When she transferred to WKU, she realized, "I actually really love Western. The student body here is so nice. When you're in a class with someone, you form a bond with them even outside of class."

At WKU, ben Yosef decided to pursue her passion for creative writing, saying she has been writing all her life. She has developed immensely with the help of the English faculty. "They get to know you and help send you along your journey," she said.

"Professor Folk's Intro to Creative Writing was extremely influential in giving me confidence about my writing and to see that I'm deserving to be with other writers," ben Yosef shared. She explained that Prof. Folk shared the message of: "it's not important how 'original' a story is; it's one's voice and perspective that makes a work unique."

In that class, ben Yosef wrote her first screenplay, "Duet's Solo," which she describes as "super important to [her]." The story is about a girl whose father passed away. The characters share a passion for playing the cello, and in her grief, the girl feels that her

playing will never live up to her father's talent. However, she learns to appreciate her own talent and feels a new connection with her father as she performs the solo in Elgar's Cello Concerto.

Ben Yosef was inspired to write this piece after hearing a performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto at the WKU Symphony, where "the whole story came to [her]." The screenplay became one of the first works ben Yosef felt proud enough to share with other people, who provided a lot of encouraging feedback.

The story highlights ben Yosef's aim to send affirmative messages to readers such as "Love yourself; love other people" and "Try to hold onto the little bits of positivity every day." She expresses this by prioritizing conveying emotions in her writing rather than details. "I run purely off of emotion. Emotion and caffeine," ben Yosef shared. "What makes us people is our emotions. It's what drives us, fuels our passions."

In the Creative Writing Capstone course, ben Yosef has begun to understand needing a balance between emotional content and sensory details. "My capstone course has been instrumental in me seeing, 'Yes, I'm a good writer, but there are areas I can improve,'" she stated.

Ben Yosef reflected on the importance of this growth mindset when submitting creative writing to contests and publications: "When we don't get picked for something, we feel personally rejected. That's a hard thing to overcome, but I have to remember that they're not rejecting me; they're seeing that my writing needs to be improved to reach more people better." Being rejected made ben Yosef scared to submit her writing for a long time, but she has learned to accept rejections as a message of "This isn't quite what we're looking for yet. Take another look at it for next time. There always is a next time."

Recently, ben Yosef received the anticipated acceptance as she was a finalist for the [2022 Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing](#). As a finalist, she attended a workshop with the event's guest writer Court Stevens. Ben Yosef commented, "That workshop was one of the most enriching experiences of my life." She explained how she had been so focused on writing for class assignments that writing had become monotonous. Hearing Stevens express why she writes reignited ben Yosef's love for the creative aspect of writing. The experience also reaffirmed to ben Yosef that "everybody deserves to be heard."

Initially, ben Yosef thought that the Creative Writing major would be easy, but she quickly realized that the courses force you to do the hard part of writing: completing a work. Additionally, she held reservations about the literature elective requirements, but

she has since recognized the importance of “consuming stories to help you put out good stories.” Through all of her classes, ben Yosef expressed growth across many disciplines. “It’s not easy to do what we do as English majors. There’s so much variety of disciplines in English I didn’t realize was here.”

For example, ben Yosef has recently found an area that bridges English and her love for Japanese. Her Japanese instructor, Paul Collins, invited Dr. Alison Youngblood to talk to the class about the [JET program](#) and the TESL minor. Ben Yosef realized that teaching English to Japanese people was a path she was interested in, and she switched her major to TESL. Soon after, she learned of the open position as a translator intern at FPI through Instructor Collins, and she applied and now works there. The job led to her being recommended as an English language tutor throughout the local Japanese community.

As an English tutor, ben Yosef started her TESL courses this semester with new eyes. In her first linguistics course, she felt confused and overwhelmed by the technical concepts and theories. She told this to her professor, and Dr. Trini Stickle collated a folder of background information, which encouraged ben Yosef to continue the minor. Ben Yosef described, “When I start to see those concepts and theories in motion on the field, they start clicking. I see that the teachers really are right.” Now, ben Yosef is motivated to learn in order to better reach the people she tutors and translates for, and she considers how to adapt classroom theories for the needs of the individuals.

Because of her position at FPI and what she has learned in TESL, ben Yosef is considering becoming a full-time Japanese-to-English or English-to-Japanese translator. Her greatest long-term goal is to work as a translator for Nintendo of America. For the time being, she has fallen in love with Bowling Green and appreciates her many connections to the local Japanese community, so she would like to remain here and continue her current line of work. As for her creative writing, ben Yosef would prefer to keep her efforts as a personal hobby rather than turning it into a job. However, she hopes that once she is settled in a career, she can start the process of publishing a novel.