

Ella Corder described her decision to major in English as a “shot in the dark,” with the hope that English could offer her something she couldn’t find elsewhere. Ella is a sophomore Creative Writing major and Journalism minor from Somerset, KY.

The most rewarding aspect of Creative Writing for Ella is the expectation of writers to write and the obligation to express herself as often as she can. “I most enjoy the constant pressure from my professors, my peers and myself to write something every day, whether it’s prose or poetry or just plain free-written trash.” By choosing Creative Writing as her path, Ella hopes to mature her fiction and creative-non-fiction writing skills, hone her ability to control sentence style and structure, develop engaging plots and characters, and to learn how to write more often. While Ella has been pursuing her writing, she’s discovered a few hidden talents. “I’ve learned that I’m not half bad at writing fiction,” said Ella, “I was always too daunted to even try my hand. But also on top of that, I’m not even half bad at non-fiction either, or feature stories in journalism, which is a field I hadn’t before considered.”

Ella’s decision to choose English as a major has paid off, though there were initial reservations about becoming an English—mostly on from Ella’s parents. Their trepidation

over their daughter’s major affected Ella as well, who initially felt anxiety over the decision. “My parents were not, and still are not, very happy about my decision to be an English major, because it made them anxious about my future, which in turn made me contract some high-intensity anxiety about my future as well,” said Ella. “The anxiety turned out to be simply pessimistic and pretty misled, on the whole.”

Now that Ella is well on her way to achieving her degree, she is surprised at the amount of jobs and positions available for English degrees. In fact, narrowing down career ideas to simply two has been a difficult process. “Being an English major has kind of rocked my world in terms of careers,” said Ella, “as there are many things you can do with it. Joining the major has pushed me towards teaching, of all things, which is so typical of English majors. I’ve basically narrowed it down to teaching and/or journalism.” Before Ella realized the opportunities available to English majors, she admitted to thinking that choosing English as a major was “sort of a default setting” for undecided students. Over time, Ella found the opposite to be true. “Every English student I know is driven and focused, and very decided indeed.”

Ella has “mostly” narrowed her career path and is developing her own writing style. She made advances in

not only her fiction writing, but her more journalistic writing, which “took a lot of CPR for my neglected, wimpish left-brain,” said Ella. She has also developed strong connections with professors and mentors at WKU who support and help her.

Ella plans on graduating in 2021, and offers some advice for English students. “Read books all the time, no matter what your concentration is. Read the Greats and read the Not-So-Greats. Read for inspiration and stimulation and rich creative juice, and then read for structure and syntax and grammar. Read what people have written long before you. See that English is old and emotional and important. And then write.”