

29 November 2012

Coluccio Salutati Essay Writing Composition

The itch of a mosquito bite, the purr of a moped; as Chianti wine saturates the tip of my tongue I attempt to expound on the experience of these past three months. I can easily admit that I have been made sick, though not sick at the amount of tequila shots I have witnessed some of you take. Sick at the sight of beautiful art that I have not been able to escape, sick to my stomach after the third and even fourth serving of my host mother's delicious meals, and also partially brain damaged after the amount of concentration I had to spend on our last all-school lecture that was held entirely in Italian. It would be an understatement to say that I have experienced sensory overload, in fact I have rather been in a continual state of awe.

"Italianization" or the process that occurs when an American feels judged by an Italian and therefore conforms to their standard, has spurred me to wear winter clothing in 65-degree weather, to pack away my flip-flops after the month of September, to blow dry my hair before I leave the apartment, and above all to believe the insane notion that my feet may in fact "catch a cold" if I do not wear shoes in the apartment, as my host mother suggests. Having to adapt to this new terrain, I've gotten used to hiking up nine flights of stairs to my apartment, I'm savvy at staring ahead while dodging seemingly insurmountable piles of dog poop, and I've even mastered the intense gaze required to stop a car, as I play Frogger, across the Viale. This absorption of Italian culture, mixed with the emotion of being an outsider at times, has allowed me to interrupt my old patterns of thought as well as the way in which I view the world. The model in my mind that perceived and then judged cultural differences has now been transformed into a system of thought that can deconstruct cultural barriers and reinvent the old habits to form new experiences.

The big question, however, remains: why are we here? The answer may be different for every person in this room. Some of you may have thought Italy would be artistically stimulating, others could only come here due to course planning, while most of you may have been studying Italian for your entire academic career. This morning I found myself reverting to the lazy habit of blaming my dissatisfaction with myself on outside sources, professing to my Italian teacher, not only that I felt as though I could not relate to this culture but likewise expressing my dissatisfaction in English during a class discussion that was supposed to take place entirely in Italian. Probably a double-slap in the face to which I must say, I'm sorry, Antonella, my homesickness may have gotten the best of me. The point of the story, however, remains that we can find a purpose and a way to expand our model of the world and of ourselves in every situation. If you cannot identify an empowering element during your semester in Italy then you've been self-indulgent, as I was during Italian class, and you haven't stepped outside of yourself.

Through art history site visits, cultural excursions, and the sheer joy of grabbing a gelato (or three) between classes, it has become obvious to me, from the first week in Italy, that what I've experienced here can be in no way, shape or form the realistic impression that a college Freshman should have of first semester. Yet, I'm so happy to be a part of the delusional minority of kids that can call themselves "Discovery Florence Freshman" who will go on to be bombarded with coursework at Syracuse and probably even more underage drinking citations, come Spring. Although what occurred this semester may seem a far off memory in the years to come, it has undoubtedly transformed each and every one of you sitting here today and I, myself, am not quite ready for this experience to end.

