

The project I worked on this summer is titled “How We Carry It: Poems.” The goal behind this project was to write poetry focusing on the social and medical aspects of what it means to have a rare disease. My focus over the summer was to read and write poetry about how a condition can change your life both socially and medically. I wanted to be able to write poetry that used this as a tool for advocacy about what life looks like for people with a condition or disability. I aimed to write 16 poems over the summer and read three books.

I was able to meet these goals and more. As of now I’ve written 26 poems and revised 14. Some of these poems have been revised more than once, with the largest amount of revisions on one poem being four during the summer. Over the course of the summer rather than reading three books, I was able to read 5, and am currently working through two more as well. The most helpful book that I read is titled “*Poetry in Medicine: An Anthology of Poems About Doctors, Patients, Illness, and Healing.*” The book featured poems in many different styles, time periods, and from prominent poets that allowed me to study poetry while also generating ideas for my own work.

I believe that my project is important to Albion and beyond because there is little poetry in existence that discusses the medical side of the world, especially in regards to a rare condition or disability. If they are discussed, it is often used vaguely. In my poetry, I was able to blend science and humanities into one project. This will be beneficial because it is from the perspective of someone with a rare condition, not an outsider; as well as being able to blend two fields that don’t typically interact so it has the potential to draw an audience from both fields.

I think this project made a difference in my life because I was able to focus on my emotions and how it truly feels to have a rare condition. I often don’t think about this in my everyday life so having the time to sit with it and write through everything I was feeling was monumental for me and my growth as a person. As I move forward with my project I will continue writing and revising poems so they can form my Honors thesis and my presentation at Elkin Isaac this coming spring. Beyond this, I hope to one day get my poetry published.

I wouldn’t have been able to have this experience or explore my poetry and emotions without the help of the amazing individuals in the Provost’s Office! Thank you so incredibly much for sponsoring my project, it means a lot to me! A piece of my work from this summer is on the following page.

Lindsay Ratcliffe

The trail

Somewhere South, in the heat
of Kentucky, I went on a hiking trail
with someone I used to know
who died, and our parents were with us
since we were so young and yet
we still got lost, missing all
the markers indicating a harder,
steeper path, and because he was so young
he had forgotten to use the bathroom,
so he and his parents walked faster
through the woods ahead of me
and he faded away, only glimpses
of his shirt through the tree leafs, while I
was left behind.