

Introduction: Hi, my name is Kevin Kilgour. I graduated from Oxford College in 2016 and then Emory University in 2018 with double majors in English and in Marketing from the business school.

Question 1: Can you tell us a little bit about your journey (and where your headspace was at) from your Emory graduation to your current role?

Response: As a student, some of the things that really centered me around storytelling were, of course, my English classes. I really did not know what I wanted to major in. And I love sports. That's what I knew. If sports was a major, I would have done it. And looking through the course catalog at which courses had the word 'sports' in it, business courses had that the most so that seemed like the logical path for me to take. But as I went through that first year, I really don't know what it was, but I started to think more about like, I guess what careers I could work that would connect me with sports. I kind of took that jump like, *Well, maybe sports writing is something I could do.* And so looking at Emory, there's no journalism program. So I was like, *Well, I guess English is the way to get there. If I'm going to be here, I guess I have to do English.* So I signed up for a Victorian novel class and a Shakespeare class, which again, has nothing to do with sports writing at all. But I needed some English classes so that's what I took. And I really loved them. I really enjoyed the courses. Did not expect it to happen, but halfway through this semester, I was like, I knew that's what I wanted to do pretty much. I knew that I really loved those classes and I was going to keep going until something changed. And so at that point, once I realized that, *Okay, maybe English is something that I can do and do well. Let's look deeper.* And so I joined the Spokesman and started writing more. And that took me to writing at The Wheel. And I just kind of kept going. I found this interest and this thing that I could pursue and I enjoyed it. And I kept running with it. From working at the newspaper to my internship at Georgia Public Broadcasting, I put myself in places to do those things that I loved. Theoretically, it wasn't necessarily a cost-efficient decision maybe. But I do think it helped me get to where I am now. Even just small things like, the amount of editing that I did at The Wheel helped me become a teacher now because I feel like my writing skills are so much better. And I'm so much more prepared to grade my student's writing. And I think if I hadn't had that experience, it wouldn't have prepared me for this.

So currently, I teach 10th grade English. I've been doing that since I graduated. Moving from Emory, I really got to the place where I wasn't sure what I was going to do senior year, which obviously a lot of people are in. Teaching had been on my radar for a long time. My mom was a high school teacher for most of my life and so it was something that I was kind of familiar with. And in my kind of path to being an English major, it was something that I always thought, you know, would be a career possibility. So really, what kind of made it move from an idea to legit possibility was the program that I applied to, which was called Urban Teachers. For me, that ability to kind of ease my way in rather than jumping straight into the pool made me feel much more comfortable with kind of the transition to becoming a teacher. I really enjoyed my experience and just kept with it. And that's where I am now, still doing it.

Question 2: Reflecting on your journey from graduation to now, what were things that were unplanned/unexpected but meaningful to your growth?

Response: There's so many things that I learned and kind of grew from just in the first couple months post-graduation. And a lot of those things I had been told before graduating, but it's just impossible to internalize and really believe them. But I think one thing that really helped me grow post-graduation was just meeting a lot of my co-workers and co-teachers in this program. It made me aware of just how people's life paths are constantly changing and moving around. While at Emory before graduation, people talk about changing careers and like, you know, adjusting their life path all the time, but it's tough to really visualize that or entirely accept it just because it feels like there's so much riding on that first kind of step you take. Like it's putting me on this path instead of this path. Hearing from all those different people and kind of seeing, like, *Oh, like I could have done this and still ended up in this way or, you know, I could be like this person and start here for five years, or for two years, or for 10 years, or however long and pivot and go somewhere else.* That perspective is kind of freeing just because it made me feel a little bit less trapped in the decision I was making. And so for me, that was like a really big growth point, I think.

Question 3: What does creativity and living a creative life mean to you?

Response: With COVID and I guess with challenges in general, it often does force you to be a little bit more creative. I think no matter what path you take, creativity keeps people going, especially when things get difficult. And so kind of embracing that side of yourself or your job or your co-workers, whatever it may be, can be a really powerful tool. That said, I'm still looking for the perfect solution to helping students stay motivated during COVID teaching. Things that I've tried... I've really tried to focus more on concepts rather than skills this year. If we're working through *To Kill a Mockingbird*, we're talking a lot more about race and justice as ideas and as conversation starters more than we're talking about the components of a persuasive argument, right? More than we're talking about pathos, ethos, logos, or than we're talking about how to take a sentence and make it more complex and more powerful to the reader. And my hope is that talking and having these discussions and kind of giving people a chance to tell their stories, really, right? Because we talk about race and justice, those are stories that we're hearing from people, experiences people have had with those issues. And getting students to talk about their own experience, their own stories with them. And my hope is that that builds some motivation and builds some sense of purpose in what we're doing.

Storytelling really does kind of connect a lot of the things that I've participated in and I kind of pushed myself into. It's something that I'm just continuously curious about because in each of those small paths that I took through storytelling, whether it was on the radio or the newspaper or teaching stories, especially now as a teacher and working through books and other articles and short texts, some students really respond to one story that others don't. And it's really kind of like a hit or miss, you know. Sometimes you really reach a person and other times a story that I love that I think, *Everyone has to love this*, falls flat and it doesn't reach someone in the way that I thought it might. I just really do believe in the power of stories. And for stories to change people and to make their lives better. It's what helps me stay focused and helps me enjoy the work that I'm doing when perhaps other things aren't going exactly the way that I might like them to go.