

Student's name

Dr. Lucas

ENG 111. FJB10 or FJB22

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### Clara-fying Lessons

As a writing teacher, I have often imagined myself as Yoda, the irascible Jedi master who trains her students to express their ideas with light-saber accuracy. But although Yoda and I are roughly the same height, the similarity ends there.

I grew keenly aware of just how un-Yoda-like I am when I began teaching online synchronously for the first time last month. I found some solace in the knowledge that I would muddle my way through Microsoft Teams for only a couple of weeks before in-person classes resumed. Then two weeks became five, and then five became eight.

Now as we begin week seven online, my true identity as a teacher has moved into sharp focus. While for years I have wishfully envisioned myself as Yoda, I am in fact Aunt Clara.

For Gen Z readers, Aunt Clara may require a bit of explanation, or—dare I write it?—Clara-fication: Long, long before George Lucas dreamed up *Star Wars* in a galaxy far, far away, Aunt Clara (Marion Lorne) entered the lives of TV viewers as the well-meaning but bumbling great aunt of Samantha Stephens (Elizabeth Montgomery) on the sitcom *Bewitched*. Though Clara shared her niece's supernatural powers, she inevitably flubbed her spells, always conjuring or morphing something but never what she intended. That has been my *modus operandi* for the past six weeks.

And now as I stare into the screen of my laptop for the seventh week, I find myself wondering once again whether *breadcrumbs* is the correct term for those little icons for the

microphone and the camera, and then my mind wanders into an enchanted forest because *breadcrumbs* makes me think of Hansel and Gretel, not computer applications, and then I realize I'm lost in the woods—but in this case, the woods is the lesson plan. (If only the figurative breadcrumbs could morph into real ones and lead me back.) As Aunt Clara would say, “Oh, dear.”

Once while Aunt Clara was babysitting her grand-niece, Tabitha (Erin Murphy), she resolved to stop the toddler's tears by playing a lullaby on the piano. But the size and location of the piano—a grand one, no less—presented a problem. Clara's solution: cast a spell to shrink the piano and carry it upstairs to Tabitha's bedroom. Clara's plan worked—until it didn't. As Clara carried the Schroeder-sized piano upstairs, it ballooned to its original size. Wedged halfway up the stairs, Clara wrestled with the piano and plunged the entire Eastern Seaboard into darkness.

At this point, I should mention that none of my technical blunders are to blame for the recent power outages—at least as far as I know, but perhaps you shouldn't take the word of someone who still imagines she's on Dagoba.

*The words my students want to write seem out of reach. With a little coaxing, I help them bring those words to the surface. Voila! There they are, shining out from the darkness, rising like the X-Wing fighter from the swamp.* To the students who are reading this: The last part is real. The writing force is strong in you; with persistence, you will find the words you seek. In the meantime, the struggle is real. Take it from the woman wedged on the staircase, trying to move the piano.

“No. Try not,” Yoda says to me, “There is no try. Only do, or do not!”

After I catch me breath, I answer him. “Fair enough, Yoda—then again, you never had to teach online.”

Work Cited

*Star Wars: Episode V-The Empire Strikes Back*. Directed by George Lucas, performances by

Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford, and Frank Oz, Twentieth Century Fox, 1980.