Summary for “Becoming a Writer” by Russell Baker

In his essay, “Becoming a Writer,” Russell Baker explains the effect that doing something for yourself can have on you. For baker, it wasn’t until his third year in high school that he realized writing wasn’t as much work as he thought. He figured it would be just another year with just another new writing teacher: boring, dull, and burdensome. Baker’s new teacher, Mr. Fleagle, did not prove him wrong by way of forcing his enthusiasm for *Macbeth* on the students and his constant overuse of the phrase, “Don’t you see?” The class became even drearier when Mr. Fleagle assigned an informal essay with absent-minded topics such as “What I did Over Summer Break.” One such topic, “The Art of Eating Spaghetti,” surprisingly sparked images of vivid memories into Baker’s mind. Before he knew it, Baker wanted to write down his thoughts for his own pleasure. After writing away most of the night, he had no choice but to turn in his less-than-perfect paper he had scribbled out merely for himself and not as a proper essay to turn in for a grade. Baker waited two days before it was time to see his grade for the first time; Mr. Fleagle had held on to his essay to read it to the class. His paper, titled “The Art of Eating Spaghetti,” turned out to be a huge success. The class laughed, not in criticism, but in pure humor and joy. Mr. Fleagle praised the essay by stating that the essay was “the very essence of an essay, don’t you see.” In the end, Mr. Fleagle really was a successful teacher, but more importantly, Baker learned he could love to write because he wrote something for himself.

Response to “Becoming a Writer” by Russell Baker
Much like Russell Baker, many people discover an activity they decide to “do for themselves” and realize how much they can love it. Also like Baker, many people discover this talent or hobby in high school. I happen to be one of these people. My junior year in high school, I decided to get more involved, so I investigated and came across the school newspaper. At first it was an interesting experience because I had never done anything like it before. I started out writing stories and found that I had a knack for writing, so I was bumped up to graphically designing a page layout. It began as a tedious process, but my creativity let loose and I quickly learned that I was doing something I actually enjoyed to do. My senior year came, I had a year of experience under my belt, and journalism nationals in St. Louis were coming near. Most people were going just to experience the Midwest, but I wanted to go for something more, I wanted to go to compete; that is when I chose graphic design – logos, which are fancy, graphically-enhanced headlines for reoccurring columns. As a result of picking my category, I got to work so I could have my trio of logos finished in time for nationals. Once I had completed my work, it was to the next step; I took my designs and sat in front of a group of about 20 kids and explained my process of creation. A couple days went by and before I knew it, it was time for the results ceremony with all the other high schools. I waited anxiously through announcements of people who had been awarded in other classes, and then they finally reached my class; “And the one superior for graphic design – logos, Cole Newman from Junction City High School.” It’s moments like these that make you realize that when you do something for you, because you love it, good things happen. I was a national champion in something I had just started, because I loved it and did it for myself.