

## A Different Space

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### Abstract

*The piece, A Different Space, is a five-page spread written in the style of a magazine feature article. The article gives a focused profile on Elizabethtown College's Bowers Writers House and its director, Jesse Waters. It explains what a Writers House is, what functions it serves, and what type of speakers it hosts. Through Waters and Jessica Lowenthal, director of the Kelly Writers House at the University of Pennsylvania, the profile also offers a comparison of a House in a relatively rural area to one in a metropolitan area. It goes over the struggles and successes of Bowers, in addition to telling stories of past speakers. The layout for the piece was done using InDesign and some of the piece had to be cut for space. The presentation itself goes over how it was decided what to cut out.*

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In terms of my process, this article turned out completely different than expected. When writing an article, it is important to decide on an angle, but also keep an eye out for a different one that could lead to a better story. What happened here was my first interview ended up being so in-depth and personalized, it would be a mistake not to change my original focal point. My story went from focusing on five semi-local college Writers Houses to Jesse Waters and the Bowers Writers House at Elizabethtown College. The steps were simple: do research, reach out, schedule the interview, conduct the interview, transcribe it, do more research, build a story, and edit the story.

Following are two excerpts from the finished article, the beginning and the end:

“In three words!” Jesse Waters, director of Elizabethtown College’s Bowers Writers House, repeated back at me incredulously before laughing at the seemingly pure impossibility of the task. “As few as possible? Okay...”

We were in a local coffee shop: Folklore Coffee & Company. Business was steady despite it being slightly after 8 a.m. on a Friday morning. Sitting at the small high-top table against the light-bordered windows gave full view of the square to Waters’ left and an unobstructed view of the movie-worthy interior to his right. Of all places in the small town of Elizabethtown, this definitely qualified as a different space. It was not the space to which he would be referencing, but it is one of two places in this small town that writers gather to do their work.

The other place, Bowers Writers House, sits no more than a five minute drive from the coffee shop, tucked away on the perimeter of the Elizabethtown College campus. It is exactly what the name implies – a literal house with a living room, kitchen, dining room, and full suite; where writers gather. Since the inaugural season in 2010, the now nearly eight year-old Writers House has already seen its fair share of speakers. The House is the newest one in the area, in comparison to some of its seniors – the Kelly Writers House located at the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Alumni Writers House on Franklin and Marshall’s campus.

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The overall goal of a Writers House appears to be to provide engagement for students in a non-academic way on a college or university campus. Most of the students from Elizabethtown College come from within 300 miles of the campus.

“When I bring people from Afghanistan or India or Japan or China or major Americans who are major international presences in their fields, I think it really exposes them to the larger world out there and also validates, maybe, their choice to come to this college,” Waters said.

“I try to give, particularly our students, the opportunity to come and just relax and see something and be turned on to something that they might not have thought would be interesting,” Waters continued. “...we hold our events in a living room and we have dinner in the dining room. So it's not a classroom, it's not a seminar room, it's not a lecture hall - it's a very different kind of space. And if nothing else, I think we

offer people a different space. So there's three words for you: ‘a different space.’”

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The interview also provided me with Waters’ backstory and a few stories of his experiences with the writers who have stayed at the Writers House. These turned themselves into blurbs and sidebars to supplement the story.

Following is a “Meet the Director” and one section of “Behind the Scenes at Bowers,” respectively:

### **Meet the Director**

Jesse Waters  
Director of Bowers Writers House  
Elizabethtown College

“I lived in North Carolina for nineteen years and I was a lecturer at University of North Carolina Wilmington where I also went to grad school. Then, I was the department chair of general studies at a two-year technical college called Miller-Motte College and taught. I remember one semester where they asked me to teach business math at the technical college because there wasn't anyone else to do it.

Right now, I'm teaching the classes Reading a Novel as an Author, Writing and Editing for Publication, and Writing in Analyzing the Short Story. I'm teaching Writing and Analyzing the Short Story next semester along with a Creative Nonfiction Workshop.”

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### **Behind the Scenes at Bowers**

“I brought in this Bangladeshi M.D. and poet who had had a fatwa issued against her and had spent the last five or six years going from France to Germany to Denmark to Switzerland because both Bangladesh and India had revoked her citizenship. She was a person who stood up for women's rights, especially in the Islamic world. She had death threats and was really under a lot of pressure. She was literally going from country to country that was giving her temporary citizenship.

I picked her up at the airport and the first thing I said to her - “really glad that you're here, one of the things I have planned is at dinner for you with some expatriate Bangladeshi citizens that are now living in Lancaster,” and she just looked at me and she said “why” and I said, “I just thought you might enjoy it, we don't have to do it,” and she was like “who are they?” Her guard was very up and I think rightly so. Over the week, she and I became good friends and we are still...when she saw how welcoming this community was, she went and had that dinner with those Bangladeshi expatriates and had a wonderful time. She really loosened up. So I think it started off very tense but ended up being really, really good.”

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#### **Recommended Citation**

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