Example 5

How Writing Has Shaped Me

My teacher wants me to write a literacy narrative about my history of reading and writing and how it made me into the reader and writer I am today. I don’t think that I’m a great writer; however I consider myself an adequate reader. I’m not going to focus on my reading abilities; instead I’m going to discuss the challenges I’ve had in the past with writing. All throughout high school, whenever my English teacher assigned an essay or research paper, I dreaded it. I guess my dislike for writing started to shape in middle school.

The earliest memory I have of writing something for school is in third grade. Third grade was also the year I experienced my very first mean teacher. This teacher didn’t allow her students to wear hooded sweatshirts because “they were a distraction to the other students”. My mom was forced to go out and buy me a sweatshirt without a hood for this exact reason. Now, while she was a mean person, she taught alright. One assignment she assigned had the students write about their life as if they lived during the time of the Native Americans. I enjoyed this assignment, and when I received back the paper, it had a good grade on it! I was so proud that I gave it to my mom to keep. At the end of elementary school came fifth grade. I really enjoyed my teacher, Mrs. McGarty. She was extremely nice, and her classroom had a nice atmosphere to it. In her class we wrote many papers and all of them I enjoyed and did well on. For one of the papers we read a book about a teenage boy who participated in the junior Iditarod. Based on the book, we had to draw a picture and write a few paragraphs explaining the plot. I especially liked that assignment because the dogs that run the Iditarod are huskies, and at that point in my life I never had a full bred husky, but it was my dream dog. Now I have a husky of my own, and I’ve even thought of partaking in an Iditarod; although that’s just a dream. Another assignment we did was for the holiday season. We were assigned to write three poems, each one based on a different sense (sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste). We also had to draw pictures describing what we wrote. I put a lot of thought into writing these and had a great time in doing so! To this day that assignment is hanging up in my house. The last memorable writing assignment in fifth grade was a short research paper we had to do on a country that was part of our nationality. While I am mostly Germen, I decided to write about Scotland, even though I’m only a fraction Scottish. It was very interesting to learn about Scotland, and in return, I received a grade that showed my enthusiasm.

*Finally,* I thought to myself. I graduated from easy elementary school! Now bring on the challenge of middle school and those lockers! Funny story actually, I just so happened to get *stuck* in a locker. I went in because I was small, and someone happened to closed it on me, and it just so happened to be the jammed locker. Ok, back to my writing and how it started to go downhill in middle school. In sixth grade, we were given one of those assignments that asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” At the time, I had my heart set on becoming a veterinarian because I loved animals. I still do, but once I took biology in ninth grade, my whole perspective on that changed. So, I wrote about becoming a veterinarian, and I thought that I wrote it well. My teacher however, had some corrections for me. For me, this was a first. All throughout elementary school, I had done very well on all my assignments, including writing assignments. Come sixth grade and now I’m getting grades back in the 70s and 80s. *OK*, I thought at the end of sixth grade. That was definitely different from elementary school. Next year I’ll do better on my writing assignments. I didn’t. In English I did about the same, receiving 70s and 80s on my essays, but in social studies, a topic I always excelled in, my grades started to decline. Why you may ask? Simple; Document based questions, or DBQs for short. DBQs required me to write an essay using information, but for some reason I couldn’t write it the way my teacher expected it to be written. Moving onto eighth grade, my writing continued to stay at a basic level, while the teachers’ expectations continued to rise. This only enforced the idea that I couldn’t write into my head. In eighth grade, my English teacher was preparing us for high school, meaning we had to write essays and responses based on books we read. While I read and understood the books just fine, again, I just couldn’t grasp the way my teacher wanted me to write. I continued to get grades mostly in the 70s, and the occasional 80. I never received a 90 or above on a writing assignment. It’s as if in elementary school I was on top of a giant rock, and then all throughout middle school that rock started to shake and crumble. Well, what I didn’t know was that things were only going to get worse. If in middle school that so called rock was shaking and crumbling, then in high school that rock split apart and completely fell.

I had a choice of what English class to take in ninth grade, honors or regents. Of course, I decided to take honors, as that is the class all of my friends were going to take; also, I didn’t think it would be much of a challenge. Boy was I wrong. In all of high school, I had never done so poorly in class. We started out the year by writing these papers called ‘critical lens’ papers. I never understood how to write one, and my grade showed that. I don’t recall ever getting above a 70 on a critical lens essay. At this point in my writing career, I was so unmotivated to do well in my English class, because no matter what I did, I couldn’t do well. Well, that didn’t change; instead, it only got worse. Second quarter of ninth grade we read Romeo and Juliet. First of all, I found that play, and still find that play, incredibly lousy. On top of that, we had to write an essay on it. Since I’m much more of a math kind of person, I’ll put my situation like this: Dislike for writing + boring play = terrible assignment. Next up we read Great Expectations. Yay. We had to do a research paper on it, and I did my research. I wrote what I thought was not a half bad research paper. I guess my teacher didn’t find it very good, since when I got it back it had a 33 written on it. At this point, I *hated* writing. It didn’t matter if it was one paragraph, one essay, one research paper. I couldn’t stand the thought of writing a single thing. Now were in the fourth and final quarter of ninth grade. I’m almost done with this dreadful course. Maybe we won’t have a major writing assignment this quarter. Wrong. We had to write a 5 page historical fiction research paper. Ok, at first I wanted to just drop out, but as I started researching and writing, I found it kind of enjoyable. For the first time in a long time, I was able to write something using my imagination. Now yes, I had to be historically correct, but I was able to make my own story. To this day I’m proud of the story I wrote. Once again though, my views on writing were crushed. I received a 76. I worked so hard, was proud of it, and all I got was a 76. I hated writing. Tenth grade. I didn’t receive as many writing assignments, probably because we got a brand new teacher in October of the school year and she was just finishing up classes at college. The most memorable paper I wrote in that year though was a paper about Macbeth, since we had just finished reading it. I wrote that paper, I knew I nailed it. Since I hated writing, I never tried on any writing assignments anymore. This one though, I decided to try. Well, I got that paper back with a 70 on it. Once again I was reminded of how much I hated writing. Eleventh grade. We read the crucible. We had to write a research paper. Now, something must have clicked between tenth and eleventh grade, because when I got this one back, it had an 83 written on it. *Hey,* I thought to myself, *not bad!* That was the first decent grade I received on a writing assignment since middle school. Next up came persuasive essays. It was a new format to the English regents, and so we practiced writing these many times. Each time I got better at writing these and in all I didn’t do too badly on them! I didn’t hate writing as much now as I did in my first two years of high school. Last up, senior year. Although I took an AP English class, we didn’t do much writing. What we did write was never handed back to us, so I don’t know how I did.

All of these events, from elementary school, to middle school, to high school, have contributed to the writer I am today. I no longer hate writing; however, it is not my favorite thing to do, not by a long shot. Also, while I think my writing skills have improved, I still don’t believe them to be where they should be, or where they could be. I hope by taking this course I will further my writing abilities, and hopefully I will appreciate it more.