

AR

English 1001 Section 01

February 21st, 2011

Reluctant Reader and Writer

Throughout my academic career, reading and writing have been neither subjects of interest nor of resentment. I have never had trouble with either writing papers or reading novels for school assignments, but I don't particularly find either subject to be my favorite. I suppose indifference sums up my feelings about the two. Consequently, math and science have always been my main focus, mainly because they're more challenging to me than reading a poem or analyzing symbolism within a novel. The challenge of math and science keeps my attention and interest, whereas the relative easiness of reading and writing makes the two a mundane task.

I will not say I'm a talented or gifted writer but an efficient one. I find satisfaction in completing an assignment well, especially ones that analyze literature or ask for my opinion on a subject. I don't write for fun or journal as it doesn't interest me. However, I understand the benefits of journaling, and I have done so in the past but always because it was school assigned.

As for reading, summer reading and uninteresting reading assignments have caused my interest to waver. I dabbled in a few series of teen novels but eventually fell behind in the series and lost interest. Like writing, I have never had issues reading and comprehending novels, short stories, poems, or text books. The types of novels I enjoy

reading are ones with a more transcendental view, very analytical yet whimsical. I find the more recent novels and newer authors are all written the same. When an author uses more than two pages to describe what a character is wearing, and in the overall novel it has no significant value, it frustrates me to no end. I like more concise writing with focus on important people, places, events, and symbols instead of spending half of the novel reading descriptions of unimportant subjects.

Kindergarten marked the beginning of my long academic journey filled with phonics books and countless daily journaling assignments. My most memorable reading and writing assignments in middle school came in eighth grade. Mrs. Bernard was a kind, intellectual, pig-obsessed teacher that first exposed me to poetry and the analysis of literature. I distinctly remember sitting in her classroom, surrounded by hundreds of figures and posters of pigs, attempting to determine the meaning of Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening." As a class, we were baffled by his well hidden symbolism. Mrs. Bernard read the poem to us over and over until finally we all began to realize what Frost was trying to express in his beautifully written poem. I appreciated her patience, allowing us to decipher the meaning of the poem for ourselves instead of telling us after our first few failed guesses.

She was also the first teacher to make me write poetry. Now, I really did think I was skilled at writing poems. I never had issues making A's on my papers, but one thing eluded me: getting my poem picked as the poem of the week and read aloud in class by our teacher. Every poem I wrote I believed to be worthy of this special recognition, but time and time again, I was disappointed. This didn't crush my interest in writing poems but

pushed me to strive to create an even better poem. I never did get a poem read aloud, but the A's on my paper assured me I was, at least, a competent writer.

After eighth grade, I made the daunting transition to high school. I soon adapted to my new, all girls high school and found myself on a whole new journey deeper into the academic jungle. My freshman English teacher was the first to introduce us to the five paragraph essay and literature analysis. She was a small, thin woman who didn't look much older than her fifteen year old students, but she was another teacher who assured me that I was a competent and effective writer.

Summer reading was something I had done back in middle school, but freshman year was the first time I had not fully read the assigned novel. I am a chronic procrastinator, and the few nights before school began, I found myself speed reading *And Then There Were None* along with the novel *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier. The former novel is an interesting, dark murder mystery that I enjoyed. However, *Rebecca*, in my opinion, is a long, drawn out murder mystery that honestly bored me out of my skull. Consequently, I did not finish that book.

The time came to write a paragraph about either novel, discussing which character in the novels was genuinely innocent. Of course, I picked *And Then There Were None*, chose my character, and began the easy task of writing ten sentences about my character's innocence. Little did I know that I had not read the epilogue of the novel. Had I done so, I'd have realized that the person I chose was indeed the actual murderer. However, when I was given my paper back, I had gotten a B on the assignment. My teacher was amused by my mistake and commended me on my convincing paragraph. As with the

poems of my eighth grade year, my freshman year papers were always above average but never recognized as superbly exceptional.

As high school progressed, I found myself more interested and focused on biology, physics, algebra, and pre-calculus than on English. During my sophomore and junior year, I realized my reading and writing abilities would come in handy.

Sophomore year, I was able to make a perfect score on a test about Shakespeare's play depicting Julius Caesar's rise and eventual downfall. However, I never paid attention in class or followed along with class readings of the play. All I did was skim the play, successfully picking out important people, places, and events.

Junior year was much the same; however, my teacher was a much pickier grader than any of my previous English teachers to date. The first paper I wrote for her was returned to me with a C grade. I was shocked, not because I had never received a bad grade on a paper, but because I thought the paper answered the questions precisely and correctly. My paper was covered in red ink corrections and questions about my wording. Honestly, I was slightly offended by some of her corrections of my work, but at the same time, I took it as a way to learn to write my next paper. Eventually, I caught on to what was expected of my papers, but making A's was still a rare occasion.

Junior year was not the best writing year for me, but it was an interesting reading one. We were introduced to transcendentalism and the poets and their poems of that period. I enjoyed the serene poems about nature and our human connectedness to it and one another. I found the reading assignments that analyzed these poems to be easier than any of the other assignments that year.

We also read two very interesting novels: *The Scarlet Letter* and *Fahrenheit 451*. *The Scarlet Letter* interested me because it was a semi fast-paced story with an intriguing plot and dynamic characters. I enjoyed the symbolism and the many descriptions of nature in the novel. My interest in *Fahrenheit 451* was for opposite reasons. I had read the novel before in seventh grade and disliked it because I couldn't fully comprehend it. Now in my junior year of high school, I was able to understand the dark, dystopian plot and the satirical symbolism hidden between the lines of the novel. It was then I realized I enjoyed reading novels much like that one.

Senior year English was a cake walk because it was so similar to the English classes I had taken all through high school. I could literally produce a five paragraph essay, discussing a novel, play, poem or short story, the night before the day it was due and get an A or B on the paper. Peer proofreading, however, had finally gotten in the way of my night-before writing ritual. All through high school, I had to turn in a rough draft for select assignments to be proofread by my peers.

I had two issues with the system. One, my peers would only find minor spelling or punctuation errors, never anything major. Often, I would turn in my rough draft as my final copy, barely changed, and receive a good grade. Second, I had always been in honors or advanced classes all through middle and high school. Except in high school, I chose not to take honors English because I did not want to write papers every week or read five novels per nine weeks. English was the only regular class I was taking. When peer review came around, I found myself trying to re-write some of my classmate's papers. I was amazed not only by the spelling and grammar mistakes, but also by the lack of comprehensively

formed ideas and arguments. Needless to say, I was frustrated by the process and how little I was getting out of it.

Even today in my second semester of college, my feelings of indifference towards reading and writing remain. I do, however, find myself wanting to read more. I have several novels I would like to read in the near future, and I hope I'll find the time to do so. In the meantime, I'll continue my trek through this academic jungle of LSU.