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My Journey with Writing

Ever since I was young, reading and writing has come naturally to me. Unlike many other school subjects that required all my attention, reading was one thing I could focus on easily, even though I struggled with keeping my focus on something and concentrating on certain things. I loved getting lost in stories, and English quickly became my favorite subject because it felt comfortable and familiar. Still, looking back, I realize that part of the reason it seemed so easy was because I wasn't actually putting much effort in. I would read when a teacher told me to and write when an assignment required it, but I didn't go much deeper than that. I wasn't asking myself why the characters mattered, what themes were being explored, or how my writing could be more meaningful. At the time, I thought being "good" at reading and writing just meant being able to do it quickly and correctly. What I didn't realize was that there was a much bigger purpose behind those skills, one that I would only come to appreciate later as I grew older and as a reader and writer.

For a while when I was younger, I treated reading as just another school requirement. Whenever my teacher told me to read a book, I did it because I knew that we would need it for class and it would be important in the lesson. I would go through the chapters quickly, focusing only on the parts I thought might show up on the test or assignment. I wouldn't pay much attention to the details, and I wasn't interested in analyzing characters or themes. I wasn't

reading because I wanted to, I was reading because I had to. To me, reading wasn't something to enjoy. It was a task to complete. I was good at it, but I never thought about why I was doing it or what I could take away from it beyond the grade. I never realized I was missing out on what books really had to offer. There were lessons, emotions, and perspectives in those stories that I didn't allow myself to notice because I was too focused on getting the grade instead of experiencing the book.

I have had many influences in my life that have encouraged me to enjoy reading. One of my biggest influences has always been my dad. He loves to read and reads almost every night before bed. When I was younger, I would sit with him, and we would read together. That routine showed me that reading could be something calming and enjoyable rather than just schoolwork. My teachers also played an important role in my journey with reading. Throughout elementary and middle school, I had English teachers who were patient, supportive, and made reading feel exciting rather than boring. They introduced me to books that challenged me but also drew me into their stories. Even my mom was a big influence. When I was still learning how to read she would come into my classroom to help not just me but my whole class. Having her there made reading feel special, almost like it was something to be proud of. Looking back, I'm grateful for all of these positive influences in my life that helped shape the way that I see reading today.

Learning to enjoy reading was one of the most important lessons I gained in both life and school because it helped me realize that it isn't just about finishing an assignment and moving on. Reading became about understanding, reflecting, and analyzing the ideas within the story. Once I started reading for meaning instead of just grades. I noticed a major difference in how I approached all of my schoolwork. My essays became stronger because I actually had something to say and write about the book. I could form my own opinions about the characters, the themes,

and the conflicts in the book. I found myself caring about the material in a way that I hadn't before, and that made my writing sound more authentic, and I started to enjoy writing. Instead of skimming for quick answers, I paid attention to how the stories made me feel and what lessons I could take away from them. Annotating suddenly felt easier too, because I wasn't just highlighting random sentences. I was making notes about moments that stood out to me and that connected to me and my experiences. The more I practiced this, the more it started to feel like less of a requirement and more like a choice I enjoyed making. Over time, it even gave me confidence outside of English class, because I learned how to think critically, explain my thoughts clearly, and actually engage with what I was learning.

The real change in how I viewed reading came once I started discovering books that actually spoke to me. Instead of reading just to get through an assignment. I began to notice how certain stories could grab my attention and make me want to keep turning the pages. For example, when I started the Harry Potter series I instantly felt like I wanted to continue reading. I was surprised with how well I connected with the characters and how the themes made me think about the world differently. I found myself wanting to keep reading when it wasn't for school, just to see what would happen next. Books like that made me realize how powerful stories could be because they made me feel connected to the characters and excited about the plot. For the first time, I wasn't reading just because a teacher told me to. I was reading because I was genuinely interested in the books. That shift helped me realize that reading could be both enjoyable and meaningful, something that could stay with me long after I closed the book.

When I got to high school, we started reading more serious books like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Animal Farm*, and *the Crucible*. These books made me realize that reading wasn't just another task teachers forced on us, it was a way to understand people,

history, and ideas on a much deeper level. I began to connect with the books and see how they related to the world around me. Reading became more than a homework assignment. It was something that I would look forward to doing. High school and growing older taught me that literature could challenge me, inspire me, and even change the way that I think. I now don't see reading as just an assignment, I see it as an opportunity to learn, reflect, and enjoy reading.