

### **Individual Reflection on Literacy Assignment Due 10/15 (Not Graded)**

- Part I: Consider your own history with the written word. Did reading come easy to you? Was it something you struggled with? Was there a particular teacher or piece of literature that always spoke with you?

This month's readings on literacy have led me to seriously reflect on my own literacy and the journey I took to become an avid reader and writer. I am lucky to have had parents who read to me often and helped me with my reading and writing homework when I was a young student. I remember my father reading "Fee fie foe fum, I smell the blood of an English man" from *Jack and the Beanstalk*. I also remember trying to sound out the word "my" (mm-yah) with my mother as we flipped through vocabulary flashcards. It wasn't always easy for me. The word "my" eluded my young mind, and I remember in first grade writing "I got a dog" in the place of "I have a dog" and my first grade teacher announcing to the entire class, "'Got' is *not* a word!" Of course "got" is a word, but I avoided using it for years.

My grandmother's typewriter was probably one of the greatest influences on my budding interest in reading and writing. The machine was fascinating, and I loved to bang out random strings of letters, like "bshjkashdajksadbkjsa," and then ask my mother if I had spelled anything. She would look through the gobbledygook and point out words like "ash" and "sad." This was always extremely empowering.

Then we got one of the first personal home computers sometime in the early nineties, and I began to type out stories. I also handwrote stories with illustrations, and my third grade teacher suggested I submit the stories for publication. I was too nervous to have my stories read by strangers, so I never published. From then on, however, I had confidence that I could be a *bona fide* writer.

- Part II: How did that history influence your success or lack thereof in the classroom?

I never feared reading or writing. I tried tackling books far above my grade-level in early middle school. I was driven by the prospects of entering new worlds through reading; I was particularly drawn to fantasy. Because of this fearlessness, I always had great success in the classroom. There were a few particularly tough teachers along the way (in ninth grade with Mr. Phillips I continually failed to master the art of satire), but I nevertheless persisted. I was a straight A student. That was my identity. So nothing could slow me down.

I would go on to continue writing after my schooling. I have now self-published two novels and a collection of short stories. Ironically, I now write mostly satire and dark humor. Take that Mr. Phillips! My early exposure to the typewriter and to the computer really influenced my desire to write novels. And because reading was a part of my life from very early on, I became a highly literate student, and I loved delving into the worlds of books.

In this later phase of my life, returning to the University of Pennsylvania for my masters in education, I have begun to appreciate the difficulty of reading non-fiction. It is an area that I mostly avoided growing up. And I got away with avoiding it somehow. Now I have to read loads of writings on education, leadership, and literacy, and I find myself employing a whole new set of skills to decode the complex texts.

Nevertheless, I am confident in my reading skills, and it is this confidence that drives me to push myself, even when the reading is hard.