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The Book Fair

Everyone has different backgrounds when it comes to how their literacy formed and how they evolved throughout the years. There are those who came from a different region and adopted English as their second language. Those same people probably had to read a lot of books and practice the language in conversations. My experience with literacy, on the other hand, I would consider was more simpler than that. It began with the annual Scholastic Book Fairs that would occur in my elementary school. While it may seem silly, these book fairs were more or less a gateway to not only my expansive literacy, but also creativity and imagination.

The Scholastic Book Fair was an annual occurrence during my elementary and middle school years where kids would purchase a couple out of the hundred different books that interested them. These books would range from standard novels to comics to activity books, no matter what genre it was. A favorite among elementary school kids was the “*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*” series because of how funny and relatable the books were to us.

Over the years, I wanted to evolve and challenge my ability to read, so I would purchase books that were long (more or less 120 pages) and even ones that had complex themes and undertones that were beyond my level of comprehension. Some of these books would be “*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*”, “*The Hunger Games*”, “*We Beat the Streets*”, among many others. The first two were interesting to me as a fantasy fanatic, while “*We Beat the Streets*”, due to it being a biography of three best friends who later would become doctors, not only intrigued

me, but challenged my perception on forgiveness. While I admit that I ended not finishing some of them, I remember having the feeling of wanting to learn more---new words, different story elements, how sentences were structured. It was as if a globe of knowledge was orbiting around my head and was waiting for me.

Whenever I got home from school, one of the first things I would do after finishing homework was read a book. It didn't matter how long it was as long as I was reading something. If it had the "big words" I didn't understand at the time, then my next course of action would be to look those words up in a dictionary. Of course, I would also always write those words down in a notebook, along with their definition, in case they come up again somewhere. I wouldn't necessarily say that the books I read made me fully literate to the extent that I knew every single word in the world, but the experience has made the way I interpreted words and sentences more clearer. Even something simple as where a comma is placed or how a semicolon is used in context has been made clearer to me thanks to reading books.

Throughout the years, I found that writing essays have been somewhat of a breeze thanks to reading books. I was able to understand and learn some writing strategies: structuring paragraphs helps me organize my thoughts more, having a good flow that makes said paragraphs transition smoothly so they won't feel disjointed and ruin the pacing of the writing. Another thing that I also find is that when it comes to certain work like book review or a history report, I do tend to struggle, since I have to constantly check over my facts to see if they were accurate and legitimate enough, which becomes tiring after a while. But when work involves your input on certain topics, such as the state of America's obesity issue or even this very essay you're reading right now, that's when I have little to no issue. I would already have what I have to say

in my head then write down those thoughts on paper or an outline and translate them onto my essay. However, I also have to make sure I don't confused objectivity and subjectivity because sometimes I would accidentally state my opinion and present it as a fact. That, admittedly, is a tricky situation; I don't like to alienate the reader and treat them as sheep who will take my opinions seriously.

On the flip side, a caveat to writing essays that I still struggle with is, ironically, getting started. Introducing a topic of discussion in the first few sentences can be difficult for me. Not only do I want to prevent it from sounding cheesy, cliché or stiff, but the goal is to introduce in such a way that even someone who isn't too familiar with said topic would understand and be engaged in it. That's why hooks are great! Not only do they give a general idea of what the essay is going to be about in one or two sentences, but they're fun to write if you want to get the audience intrigued fast.

Looking back, the book fair really did shape my literal knowledge and helped me learn a lot. While I'm not much of a reader these days, I still am glad that I was able to learn from reading books.