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English 1121

Professor Kim

My Literacy Experience

 First and for most, I’m not a writer, never had in interest in being one, so forgive me if this isn’t a high-quality paper. My experience of writing has always been an up and down model, kind of like an EKG machine or the stock market. Sometimes I wrote a paper that that my teachers enjoyed and sometimes I wrote like “you’re trying to plagiarize Dr. Seuss or something?” as my high school teacher once told me. I can never pin point what exactly I was doing wrong because while writing a paper, I feel confident in myself and assume that I will get a high grade since I’m putting so much effort into something, only for the teacher to comeback and hand me a barely passing grade and telling me you can do better. That’s the problem, that’s the better, I don’t know what you else want me to do.

 I remember it so well, It was my senior year in high school and we have to write an essay about Othello, Now to be fair, the book is in English but any other student who has read some William Shakespeare, can tell you that half of the time you have no idea what you are reading. So, then our teacher assigned my class to write about a specific character and write about the characters moral view and inner personality and characteristics. I got Othello and wrote all of his views his reasoning for his action and how he stood out as an unorthodox protagonist and I was really thinking that I wrote a good article and because I did everything from the checklist of what he wanted from in the essay. I get my grades back barely got a 70 out of 100. Now I was clearly upset and went to talk to him and asked why did I get such a low grade and his response at the time didn’t make sense to me but now I understand. He said,” Israel, to be honest with you, it was bad, you put nothing from your perspective in it, as a writer, you have to do that. No one is one hundred percent neutral, that’s nonsense, I got nothing from you out of this paper, it seems like you only wrote what I wanted to hear or what was in the checklist. It’s like giving an assignment to a computer. It was way too simple, Israel. It’s like you’re trying to plagiarize Dr. Seuss or something, very amateurish. Come on Israel I know you can do better than this. You have to start now because in college it’s much more difficult and they want to hear more from you”. Now that I’m college everything he said was right. It makes me want to go to my old high school and personally thank him. It all changed when I entered my first English college course in my first semester.

 I’ve had many teachers in my entire life. Some I will never talk to again and some but few that have help me grow as an independent thinking individual. One of those is my first college English course Professor Sears. She helped me understand how to write essays with a clear and understanding message or theme put into it. She helped me put more of myself in all of my writing and in ways that I never thought I could’ve. She helped me in a time where I didn’t know anything about literacy. I knew the broad term, the “it’s reading and writing” term but not the personal connection to someone’s or mine literacy. Coming to college I was still on planning to do the same tactics from high school, just check off everything from the assignment chart and hope to get a good grade. I was clearly “lost” going into college and to be honest with myself, I was too arrogant to admit it to myself at the time.

 I remember our first assignment was an essay about Procrastination and the problems and causes of it. One part of the essay was to write about our experience with procrastinating and in a very funny ironic sense I waited till the last few days to write my essay and like most of the time with last minute work, the essay was badly written, clearly looked rushed and not much thought put into it. My professor knew this a gave me a very low grade and this time I didn’t get upset because I was finally starting to understanding on where I was going wrong and what the issue I was really facing. I had no passion for writing, and a big part of the reason was because my whole school life, majority of the essays and writing assignments that I had to do, I had no interest in them. I think I can speak for human beings in general when I say that people don’t want to put their full potential in something, they don’t have an interest in. It’s the same with students and essays on topics they will forget a week later. I can’t even remember most of the essays I worked on in my senior high school year alone. My college professor then told me that the writing assignments in college are going to be more relatable or exciting and that I might enjoy writing more but that also that there will come a paper that you have to do that is boring but that is no excuse to hand in a bad essay. She was clearly right, I mean think about it, my grades depend on my good work. If I do bad essays then I’ll get low grades and if I get low grades then what am I even doing in college? Hat if I did this at work? I would surely get fired. It’s seems like common sense to many but for me that talk with her was a wake-up call. Our next writing assignment was about gentrification and I was defiantly excited. This whole topic I am very aware of and know a lot about but there is no one I know that can talk about with. Not my friends, not my family, not my girlfriend because they either don’t have enough details on the subject or they just don’t care and it can get a bit annoying but I deal with but when it was said that gentrification was going to be our next topic, I was happy to discuss with my peers, especially that ones with different views than mine.

 When our first draft was due, I handed it in and it was much better than my first essay draft but it was still lacking something that made me not get a high grade. Instead of complaining I sat down with the professor and asked what was missing and she said that It needed more of my thought into it and how gentrifications affect me and my surroundings and my neighborhood. She was right I barely put any thought into that part of the essay. She assigned us to do interviews with someone from the neighborhood who has been there for a long time and I did pretty good on that because it was authentic. I asked honest question to someone I know and surely enough my professor loved the interview. That’s when it hit me, That feeling when something you write is approved by someone with more expertise on the field, it felt really nice. I was starting to understand what she meant by putting more of a personal connection to my writing, It felt “real” It felt like a part of me was reviewed and passed some sort of big obstacle. It felt like when you’re a chef and someone does the “MMMHMM” sound when they take a bite of your food and you can’t but smile. I felt proud, that’s the word I’m looking for. Proud. The work wasn’t done just yet, we then it had to revise our paper and make it to the best ability we can. I spend a whole week plotting where certain quotes and data information will go but as well, I thought of where I can put my input and my experience and my thoughts on the topic and where I can put the interview. After everything seem perfect to me I went to go hand in when it was due and I did amazing, I went from a 70 to a 90 out of 100. She even left a not that it was such a great improvement. I never knew I could’ve gotten a high grade like that.

I finally knew how to write a good paper, It takes a bit of time but now I understand where all my errors were. I guess the lesson that I learned and the one I’m trying to show is that literature is weird to understand. Some of us learn in different ways and this was mine. You have to make some sort of connection with literacy in any way you can, as long as you put a bit of yourself in it. Whether it’s how you take notes, how you highlight text, how you perceive books and stories, and how you write any form of writing. Add any personal connection to your literacy and it will make you happy. It made me extremely happy because outside of college I was going through a tough time but this helped a lot with that. After that, The English exam we took, I had no test anxiety and I passed easily. Now I have more confidence in the coming essays I will have to do for college. But that’s my experience with literacy, It’s an experience I hope many can share to and relate but if you have a great professor and a strong mentality, you can definitely become a good writer.