

27 September 2022

Dear Reader,

My experience writing this paper was definitely an easier one for me. I felt like it was easy for me to write about this topic, because I was just telling stories from my life. I did not have to write about a subject that I was unfamiliar with. My thoughts came naturally, and it just flowed. There was not really a point that I struggled with what content I wanted to write about. I usually never do a first draft, but for this essay I did. I found that it helped my writing a lot because I was able to get out what I wanted to say without worrying about grammatical correctness. Going back after I finished the first draft and editing was easier than doing that from the start. I felt like this paper also took me less time than I normally would take on a paper this length. I think that is because I was not worried about making it perfect and just allowed myself to write. Trying to write informally was definitely a challenge for me and I could not really break that habit. I have always been told to write formally with grammatical correctness and that is exactly what I did in this essay too. The feedback I received from peers was actually very helpful. They gave me advice on different things that I did not even think of myself. It was definitely a helpful tool that I hope to be able to use again. The feedback from my instructor was also helpful. In the past I have never received feedback from my instructor before the paper was due. It was nice to have the teacher edit before it was actually turned in, because it allowed me to know that I was on the right track and the advice was helpful for how I could make it better.

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Because of Them

Reading and writing are not my favorite things to do, but my experiences with them are important to me. There have been various people and places in my life that have shaped me into the student I have become. I have different experiences with both reading and writing that have led me to feel that I am better at one than the other. Understanding why I read and write the way I do today is always something I have been interested in looking into. In “Sponsors of Literacy” written by Deborah Brandt, she explains a literacy sponsor as, “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (166). This idea makes me think of my own literacy sponsors, my parents, my second-grade teacher, and my college English class, and how they each have helped me so much with my literacy.

My first ever literacy sponsors were my parents. My parents would read to me every single night for as long as I could remember. We read everything and anything. My favorite books to read with them were the *Mercy Watson* series by Kate DiCamillo, which were silly little books about a pig who loved buttered toast. As I got older, they encouraged me to keep the habit of reading before bed. I loved to read dystopian novels, like *The Maze Runner* series by James Dashner and *The Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins. I never really understood why reading was so important to my parents, but now that I am older, I finally do. Reading in general serves as a building block for learning. Reading books aloud to children helps their imagination and expands their understanding of the world. It helps them develop language and listening skills and prepares them to understand the written word. Having them read to me and then reading on

my own has definitely been a big reason for my success in school. Listening to them read influenced my way of reading, which then influenced the way I write. It makes sense that I not only speak like my parents but also read and write like them too. My parents also always made sure that I understood the idea that school comes first. It is especially important to them for my siblings and me to always maintain good grades and never let anything interfere with that. This idea of school coming first became a strong value in my life, and I still continue to live by it. Without the help of my parents getting me interested and excited about learning at an early age, I definitely would not be the type of student I am today.

I had many great teachers in my life that were huge influences on my literacy, but one of my biggest literacy sponsors was my second-grade teacher, Mrs. Rosenberg. She was the first strict teacher that I ever encountered. Her class was highly organized and scheduled to the minute. She knew exactly what she was doing while teaching. In the beginning of the school year, she set up a reading assessment for each student. When my name got called, I felt prepared for it to be super easy, but I was certainly wrong. The section of the book I had to read aloud to her was one of the hardest things I remember reading at the time. After I finished, I walked back into the classroom embarrassed that I struggled, but my teacher, of course, had a plan already set up. She held a reading group on Tuesdays and Thursdays before school to help students become overall better readers. After the reading assessment, she invited some of her students to come to her reading group and also made sure to email our parents about it. My parents, being incredibly involved and always making sure school came first, obviously signed me up. We would read all diverse types of books aloud. She would stop to correct us or pause and wait for us to hopefully be able to correct ourselves. We worked on pacing, pronunciation, and learning how to navigate reading challenging books. I have always been a fast talker and she helped me learn to slow down and how to correctly pronounce words to make them understandable. We also worked on

understanding more complex vocabulary terms. By the middle of the school year, I was at a much higher reading level than I ever expected to be. In “Sponsors of Literacy” written by Deborah Brandt, she explains, “Resnick and Resnick lay out the process by which the demand for literacy achievement has been escalating... More and more people are now being expected to accomplish more and more things with reading and writing” (173). Her saying this shows how students, and people in general, have expectations they need to meet to be considered at grade level. Although these standards can be harsh and can be used negatively, I feel that without them, I would not have been pushed to be the best reader I could be. This group helped me so much in becoming a stronger reader.

I would say I am a great reader, especially after all of the help from these people in my life, but I am not as strong of a writer. I feel like I am lacking in that department. Being a good reader has definitely helped my writing in its own way, but I still feel like I never truly grasped how to be a good writer. But now all these thoughts have completely disappeared. Through my college English 101 class, I have learned that there is no certain way to be a good writer. Everyone is good at writing in their own unique way. There are no true rules to follow. Writing is much more than grammatical correctness; it is about what you are trying to convey and the process behind it. This idea is relieving to me because I feel like I am always so worried about following the rules that I find myself not expanding my ideas when writing. In *Writing about Writing* by Douglas P. Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, they explain,

If you think that good writing is writing with no errors, you might struggle to put words on paper... as you attempt to avoid errors. And in the process, you might forget what you wanted to say... or write much less than you would have otherwise. Your conceptions about writing shape what you do and what you are able to create (7).

I am excited to keep studying writing and learning the process of it all. I am also excited to, hopefully, watch myself break old, unhelpful habits of my writing and create new helpful ones. Ones that allow me to use what I have learned through being a good reader and translating that

into feeling that I am becoming a good writer.

All these experiences are the main reasons why I read and write the way I do today. I find myself remembering to always try and incorporate reading into my day because of my parents, to slow down and work on pacing when reading aloud because of Mrs. Rosenberg. When writing I remember to add descriptions and details to make sure I am not rushing like I used to. The support I received from these literacy sponsors is something I will never forget. Brandt's theory of literacy sponsorship is useful for the way it allows us to see how individuals shape our experiences as writers and readers. I believe that the experiences you have with reading and writing, whether they are positive or negative, are particularly important in the way we all individually learn. The positive experiences I have had with both reading and writing have led me to want to continue practicing both and learning more. I have become very appreciative of the people who have helped my literacy and I hope to eventually be that person for someone else in the future.

Work Cited

Brandt, Deborah. "Sponsors of Literacy." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 49, no. 2, May 1998.

Wardle, Elizabeth and Doug Downs, editors. *Writing about Writing*. 4th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.