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Writing Stories

As a child, there were very few times that I went to bed without reading, and I never traveled without having a book with me. I remember a time I was going to dinner with my family by boat. The boat ride was only five or ten minutes, but I was still completely immersed in my book. When my mom asked to take a picture of my siblings and me I didn’t even hear her ask. Today, we still laugh when we see the picture of me sitting on my boat with my face in my book, not even aware that the picture was being taken. I loved reading stories, and at the same time I was writing stories of my own during school. I found this interesting, even as child, and reading and writing stories became what I was good at. I can even recall my first interest in reading stories. Being the first-born child, I required a lot of attention from my parents before settling down for bed. Every night, I would lay in bed while my parents read through every book in my collection. At this age I was only able to turn pages, look at the pictures, and open the pop-up flaps. But throughout many years of schooling I discovered that I like to tell stories. I enjoyed writing memoirs before I even knew what the term memoir was.

Each year in elementary school, we had to write and illustrate our own book. Each kid was given a brand new hard cover book that was completely blank. When we turned the book in, it was filled with the sloppy handwriting of an elementary school student and whatever silly pictures we decided to draw. These books helped us learn the writing process. First, we were asked to write about whatever topic was assigned. At the time I didn’t know it, but our teachers were trying to familiarize us with the different genres of writing. One year we were assigned fiction, and another year we had to do an A-Z book. In fifth grade we were told to reflect on each grade at Lynwood Elementary School. This is an example of how our writing allowed us to be creative and have freedom. Every child’s book was completely original and there was no specific way that our story had to be written. I was able to be creative when thinking of a cute and catchy title. I tried to find the uncommon animals to write about when we were assigned an A-Z artic animal book.

The first time our teacher taught us about rough drafts, I thought she said we needed to turn in a “rough giraffe”. I quickly learned that it was not as exciting as it sounded, and I had to turn in my first copy of my book to be proof read and corrected. After that was done, we were allowed to transfer our writing into our books. I had a paper that helped me to write in straight lines, which was probably the hardest part of the whole writing process as a first grader. After we had our story written in the book, then it was time for the fun part. The illustrations were almost every child’s favorite part of the book, and they defiantly were my favorite part. Next came the about the author page. I included my latest school picture and wrote a paragraph about myself. It usually went, “ Casey Gelderman lives in Farmingville New York with her mom, dad, brother Kyle and Sister Lindsey. She is in whatever grade at Lynwood Elementary School. In her spare time Casey likes to play soccer, and she is a Girl Scout”. The only thing that changed year to year was my grade, and I added more and more out of school activities.

Whoever had the best book got their book displayed in a showcase for the whole school to see as they walked into school. When the book was finally complete, we had a book fair, where all the parents were invited to the school to view all the children’s books. When my mom, or my friends moms came around to see my book I was excited to show them what I had been working so hard on. This whole process made me really interested and excited about writing. I was proud of every book that I created because I was able to show my personality and creativity in my books. I was able to find freedom in my writing and I was excited to write and learn. Writing these stories is what I was good at, and writing the books in elementary school started my interest in writing.

I was in seventh grade, Mrs. Schibani’s class, when I first heard the word memoir. We had just gotten back from our winter break, and I immediately thought of the perfect story to write about when our teacher was explaining the assignment. I was so excited to write my first “memoir”, and it was the first one of the few writing pieces I was assigned that I had been excited about. On Christmas Eve that year, I fell ice-skating, and needed to get stitches on my chin. In addition to that, on the way to the hospital, my mom and I got in a car accident. I wrote in detail about the events that happened that day, and what I ended up learning at the end of the day. I wrote about the deeper meaning in my story. “Was the glass half empty, or half full?” My mom and I were fortunate enough to get to go home healthy that Christmas Eve. I realized some people are not as fortunate. This essay was selected by my teachers at Middle School to be entered for a writing contest. I learned another step of the writing process that year, which was revising and editing. I had to make my paper perfect if I wanted to win the contest. Sadly, I did not end up winning the contest, but I was excited about my writing, and I learned a new genre of writing that really interested me.

As a senior in high school, I was able to explore different genres of writing in my English class. My teacher introduced us to genres such as screenplay, different types of poems, social commentary, memoir, parody, monologue, research paper, and many more. I learned about all of these genres however, one of my favorite pieces was the memoir I wrote. I wrote about the same story that I wrote about in seventh grade, but I was able to go into more detail. I was able to find the essay I wrote in seventh grade and it was funny to compare my seventh grade writing to my current writing. I think exploring all the different genres was necessary and important to my development as a writer. It was important because I needed to learn all of those genres to expand my knowledge, but it also reassured me that I was best at writing memoirs and stories. I was taught at a young age to write stories and be creative, so it is clear why I favored memoirs.

I am grateful that I had the opportunities and freedom that I had when I was younger to be able to find my interests and be creative with my writing. Now, elementary school kids do not have the same opportunities that I had. Unfortunately, these kids have no choice except to follow the common core. It is unfortunate that kids do not have the chance to explore and grow like I did when I was their age. Lynwood Elementary School probably does not write books every year due to budget problems and common core. I can assume that I would be a very different writer if I had not had those books to spark my interest in story writing. Another thing I am grateful for is being lucky enough to have my parents available to read to me every night as a young child. With advancing technology, its common for kids to play on an iPad rather than pick up a hard copy of a book. I appreciate the childhood I had, and the education I received because it allowed me the freedom to develop and grow as a reader and writer.