

Line by Line: A Journal of Beginning Student Writing

Volume 3 | Issue 2

Article 1

March 2017

My Struggle for Literacy

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Recommended Citation

Sanson, Kristen (2017) "My Struggle for Literacy," *Line by Line: A Journal of Beginning Student Writing*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.
Available at: <http://ecommons.udayton.edu/lxl/vol3/iss2/1>

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My Struggle for Literacy

Writing Process

One of my favorite parts of English 100 with Dr. Krummel was the amount of freedom I had writing every essay. There were almost no limitations about what to write, and there were no set boundaries as to what I could do. This allowed me to grow as a writer in ways I didn't think possible. The very first essay, the literacy narrative, was very terrifying at first. I had no idea what I was supposed to write about so I just tried to write from the heart. I was unsure if I had done it correctly, so one day I went in for help after class. Dr. Krummel made me read the essay out loud and I was slightly terrified since I'm very introverted. While reading it aloud, at one point I was able to make Dr. Krummel laugh. Dr. Krummel said that this is a hard thing to do and that I'm a great writer. No one had ever said this to me before, since I have dyslexia English is something I've always struggled with and basically given up hope of ever being good at. This was the first time I had ever had confidence in my writing skills.

Course

ENG100

Semester

Fall

Instructor

Dr. Miriamne Krummel

Year

2016

Kristen Sanson

ENG 100

Dr. Miriamne Krummel

Fall 2016

My Struggle for Literacy

From the time I was a little baby and struggled to have the ability to speak and understand words, I have embarked on a journey to become more literate. Every day is an opportunity to listen and grow in my vocabulary and speaking skills. And trust me, I need as much “growth” as I can get. So, what is literacy? I believe that literacy is the ability to communicate, read, and write, and understand what these things mean.

My journey to becoming more literate started the same way as most people. I learned how to talk as a child with basic words such as “mommy” and “daddy.” I continued to expand my knowledge of spoken words, and by pre-school and kindergarten I learned the alphabet and basic reading and writing skills. I was learning the same things at the same pace with my classmates, and I was learning with ease. But this ease, however, soon came to an end. By the time I was in first grade, I started noticing that I was falling behind in my reading, writing, and vocabulary skills. To this day I remember a scarring moment in the first grade. One day my class and I were reading a story about a pirate, out loud. Not only was it out loud, but we were doing “popcorn.” Popcorn is a teaching exercise in which a person finishes reading their part, and then he/she can assign whoever they want to continue reading in front of the entire class. This was my worst nightmare, to be “popcorned” to read out loud in front of the entire class. I remember thinking, “I should be fine as long as no one picks me.” I tried to lay low and not draw any attention to myself, and I prayed that no one would even notice me. But my worst fear came true.

This bully Michael decided to popcorn it to me! I slowly walked in front of the class and started my first sentence, “The pirates found an...” I was stumped, I had never seen this word before. Then, I said with as much courage and confidence as I could find “island” (pronounced is-land). The entire class erupted into laughter and mocked me for weeks to come of this simple mispronunciation.

Unfortunately for me, gaining literacy only kept getting harder. By the time I was in the fourth grade, while others were reading *Harry Potter*, I was still reading *The Magic Tree House*. I was so frustrated and depressed. Every day I would continue to put in twice as much effort as everyone else, and only get half of the result. I continued to get more depressed and feel more stupid, and by the fourth grade I had no friends and struggled through an anxiety attack that would last the next three years.

Once I was in the seventh grade my parents decided to try to solve this problem. My mom would read with me out loud every night to improve my reading skills. This helped a bit, but it didn’t completely solve the problem. That year I found out that I have dyslexia. At first I just wanted to give up and accept my defeat that I would never become literate, but then I realized I needed to do everything in my power to change. I started taking reading courses over the summer to improve my reading skills. This process was very slow and painful, but I’m proud to say that by the eighth grade I was able to finish *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* before the movie came out.

I thought I had finally conquered becoming literate, but by the time I was in high school I quickly learned that in order to be literate you also needed to have the ability to speak well. I am a highly introverted and awkward person, so this was a huge challenge to be able to just talk to my classmates. For example, someone would complement me on my hair and my response

would be really awkward and stupid like, “Thanks I grew it myself.” Let’s just say it was a problem. In order to solve this dilemma I would think of a sentence that I could ask anybody that would force them to talk instead of me. I would ask questions like, “What classes are you taking?” or “What is your favorite class so far?” By the time senior year hit, I was the master of this technique and had finally conquered becoming more literate when I talked.

Just as it has happened to me throughout my life, I have once again discovered that I am illiterate at something else. I’m illiterate when it comes to college. Before college I didn’t own any social media, I didn’t own any “normal clothes” since I had always worn uniforms, and I didn’t understand college terms or locations around campus. Not only that, but I didn’t have any friends or people that I knew that also came to the University of Dayton. It has been four weeks now, and I am starting to adapt to becoming more literate for college life. I am starting to know my way around campus, I have downloaded a ton of social media, and I know what people wear at college. I have even found a group of girls who have become my good friends. I won’t master my illiteracy today or tomorrow, but I hope one day I will finally become literate regarding college life. I will continue on this journey to become literate for the rest of my life. And in case you were wondering, it’s true, I do grow my hair myself.