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## The Fight to the Top of Educational Ladder

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# The Fight to the Top of Educational Ladder

## **Writing Process**

I completed this essay as part of my literacy narrative assignment. The essay narrated the story of a very significant part of my literacy journey. I included a lot of details to enable readers relate to my story and to make my essay clear and concise. I completed one draft of the essay, but with in class peer review and a visit to the Write Place, I was able to edit and revise my essay.

## **Course**

ENG100

## **Semester**

Fall

## **Instructor**

Prof. Marianne Raab

## **Year**

2014

Nneoma Ezenagu

Prof. Marianne Raab

ENG 100

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### The Flight to the Top of the Educational Ladder

In my five years at Fairfield High School I achieved some awards: Fairfield High School Top Fifteen Graduate, State Corresponding Secretary of the Ohio Family Career and Community Leaders of America, Fairfield High School fundraiser organizer for the Bring Back Our Girls campaign, and I received the Citizenship Award. Though I achieved these titles as a result of my hard work, it would not be fair to say that the core of these accomplishments did not stem from my ability to read and comprehend the English Language.

My literacy journey began eight years ago in my dusty village of Ubulu, Imo State Nigeria. It was on a usual hot summer evening when my sister, my Aunty and I went to visit my grandparents. The day was just like every evening in Nigeria: hot, humid and filled with kids playing on the front porch of their parents' compound. As I trotted ahead of my aunt in the joy of seeing my grandma, I could not help but notice a big change right in front of me. To the left of the dusty road that we were walking on stood a large, two-story building with a black gate. This building has served as a proof to what money can buy in my community. As evidence that everyone was not of the same socioeconomic background, this building was then and still is a symbol of wealth. I stared intently at its magnificence, until I heard the gate creak. "Step back," my aunt alerted almost immediately, and I swiftly did what she said. Slowly, the gate opened. Looking ahead to see what was behind the gate, I saw two girls of my age, each riding a bicycle. They were dressed in very clean clothes and had a look of "civilization" to them. Completely in

shock, I stared at them. Their demeanor also amazed me; there was something about them that automatically made me wish to be in their shoes for at least a day. As I stood there staring at them, the eldest of the girls yelled, “Stop moping at us!” This sounded like a new language to me. I could not comprehend the meaning of “moping,” but the tone of her voice propelled me to move. I looked at my aunt, who was staring at me, expecting me to reply back to them. I saw the disappointment in her face as she noticed that I did not know the meaning of the word “moping.” In shame, she grabbed my frail little hands and whisked me away. As we continued on the walk, I could not think of anything but that word. I wanted to know what it meant at all cost. When we arrived at my grandparents’ house, I could not help but worry about the meaning of the word. The visit felt like forever and I itched to return home and ask my mom the meaning of “moping.”

As I lay on my bed after returning from the visit, my mom walked in to give me a good night kiss. As she leaned in to kiss me on the forehead, I said to her, “Stop moping at me.” Upon hearing this, she backed up and asked me where I learned the word. I told her the story of my encounter with the girls on the bicycles. She lowered her head and asked, “Do you know the meaning of the word?” I whispered, “No” in my most subtle voice.

“The word means, ‘To be miserable or sulk,’” she replied. I looked at her shocked as I realized that the girls had used the word incorrectly. At that moment, it hit me that the reason my aunt was looking at me was because she expected me to let them know that they used the word wrongly. Then, I realized that not only was I ignorant to the meaning of the word, but that it was time for me to expand my vocabulary.

I woke up the next day to a bundle of surprises. On top of my bed was a pile of books, such as *Chinecherem*, *Born to Win*, *Ibu Anyi Danda*, and more. It turned out that my mom had gone to the market to purchase these books for me to read. It was as if she knew that it was time

for me to broaden my educational view. The books, she explained to me, had some new words that she was sure I would love to learn. She also gave me a mini Oxford dictionary and told me to look up the meaning of any word I did not understand. This marked the most significant catalyst in my literacy journey. Step by step, I learned new words, and I did not hesitate to use them to either confuse my peers or sometimes to show off my vocabulary skills.

As the years passed, I went through some major changes. My vocabulary skills have increased tremendously, and I now reside in The United States, a country whose official language is English. My arrival to America was another mountain to climb. I had spoken English in my school in Nigeria, but English in the United States was very different from the English back home, due to the addition of slang. In America, the word scared became “creepy,” handsome became “cute,” and good became “awesome.” Upon hearing these words and more at school, I knew that it was time again for me learn something new and to once again expand my vocabulary.

Rather than turning to books this time, I turned to Disney Channel. I figured that understanding the characters in the shows would help me understand my classmates. Watching Disney also did not put too much pressure on me, since I watched it in the comfort of my home. As weeks turned into months and months into years, I was able to understand the jokes in the shows. Eventually *Wizards of Waverly Place* and *Hannah Montana* became my favorite shows. The more I learned “new words” from the channel the more apt I was to communicate with my classmates.

As my communication skills improved, I decided to get more involved with more school activities. I joined organizations such as the debate team and the Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). I also devoted my time to my studies to enable me to get a good

scholarship to college. As my literacy increased over the years, so did my confidence, thus contributing to my achievements in extracurricular activities.

Many times in school, people ask me the question, “What motivates you?” Every time I hear that, the first image I get is of my experience in front of the house with the big black gate. While the house still stands as a symbol of affluence in my village, it also serves a reminder of everything I have learned so far. I cannot single handedly point out what was responsible for making me who I am today, but I am grateful to my mom for valuing education and to the girls in front of the big black gate for symbolizing the importance of education.