

Write About Writing

I was always a fast learner so I remember my mom teaching me to write before I started school, I even knew some cursive. My mom said the teacher discouraged us from jumping ahead because I might get bored in class. Other than that, I don't recall doing much writing in school. I never had a traumatic event like the ones mentioned in our text where a teacher shattered my hopes and dreams of writing. I feel that writing was never emphasized in my school years, until college of course. Wait a minute, all of a sudden I remember my 11th grade English teacher, Mrs. Hannah. Everyday it seemed like we had at least ten pages to write. She would have a list of prompts on the board, mostly personal, creative prompts such as "The time I was most scared was..." I remember writing about seeing my father abusing his girlfriend. I suddenly remember writing about a lot of things, and Mrs. Hannah would always write some type of positive comment on the margins, she would never pick out all of the mistakes. How could I forget this? She is exactly what the text and this class is saying a good writing teacher is. As I graduated high school and went on to college, I just assumed she did not want to give us any *real* work. I always looked at her as a mediocre teacher, but now I see her rationale and I realize that she was doing much more. It's interesting now to look back and see how the education system and society in general do not count creative writing as a priority or a tool that will be helpful for our futures.

As a teacher, I hope to change this trend. Being a Social Studies teacher with plenty of state objectives to cover, I do not have the flexibility to assign ten pages of personal, creative writing per day like Mrs. Hannah did. I do plan to fit writing in as much as

possible. Before experiencing the Summer Institute, I mainly focused on technical writing assignments, the product and not the process, and I was prone to pick out grammatical errors instead of praising. I plan to adapt to all I have learned; I plan to try to give more creative writing assignments, work more on the process of writing, and give positive comments to encourage children to keep writing. I see all the benefits that writing can bring now. With one little writing prompt titled "Write About Writing," I remembered a forgotten experience from high school and finally gave a good teacher credit for her efforts. Here is the letter I plan to send to her: (As soon as I can locate her!)

Dear Mrs. Hannah:

I don't know if you remember me but I was one of your students in 1998-1999. I graduated in 2000. I went on to Concord College to become a Social Studies teacher. I teach 11th grade US History and Psychology at Man High School in Logan County. I will be marrying Bruce McCoy (another one of your former students) next summer on 6-7-08. We currently live at Huff Creek, but are looking for a home somewhere close. We love this area!

I'm sure you are wondering why I am writing. Well, I am currently taking a class through Marshall University's Writing Project. It has been a wonderful experience so far, as I am discovering so much about myself through writing, and ways that I can help my students.

The reason I am writing you is I wanted to say thank you. One day in class we were given a writing prompt to "Write about Writing." I went on and on to say how no one in my schooling years encouraged me to write. Then suddenly, I remembered your class. You were such an amazing teacher of writing. I did not realize this fact when I was actually in school because of the emphasis placed on technical writing, essays, term papers, or college credit.

By taking this class, I realized how hard you worked to let your students write daily, as much as they may have complained! We were able to be creative and think onto the paper. You did not restrict us by constantly marking our errors. I remember reading some of your comments and they really touched me. I always thought that there was no possible way you could read all of those papers, but you did. To know an adult was interested in what I had to say and actually took the time to write something back to me instead of pointing out all of my mistakes, this made me feel so valued and important.

This class has helped me realize you played a huge role in who I am as a writer. You gave me the courage to say what I feel without the fear of the teacher "making my paper bleed." I'm sorry that it took me this long to realize it. Thank you so much.

With respect,

Angel Johnson

PS- I would love to hear back from you to know how you are doing!