Daria Letcher

My family put a lot of pressure on education because of my family history. Mable, my great grandmother, and many of my family members grew up in a time of segregation when education was not easily accessible. Mable was not able to attend school after the third grade, but she taught herself as she grew up. Because only my aunt has graduated from college, my family’s commitment to education was not a shock. With so much of my family growing up when it was hard to become educated, they always pushed me to try my best. They also pushed me to get involved with everything I could, so I was well-rounded. I was involved in swimming, violin, orchestra, golf, and choir. I enjoyed all of these activities at the time and did not want to stop any of them, so I was continuously moving. My mom made sure there was time for reading and school work, so I remember always having pressure on me to be the best I could be.

When I was around 8 or 9 years old, my mom would take me to the public library where I would pick out 2 or more books to read in that week. I loved going to the library and picking out my own books because there were no books that I was required to read. As I grew up I began to go to the public library less and less. I preferred to go to Barnes and Noble because the books were mine to keep so that I could read them over and over. I also enjoyed being able to see all the books I have read on my bookshelf.

My earliest memory of reading or writing is in the third grade. When I was a child I would read at least one book a day if not more than one. I fell in love with reading at a young age and always wanted to read more challenging books. By the end of the year I was reading high school level books. I loved reading at this time. I would beg my mom to take me to the library. I would also ask to go to the bookstore all the time so that I could add to my book collection.

I loved reading until my mom decided I should start writing about what I read. She would want me to write about any book I read. My family put a lot of pressure on education at an early age because of where I was fortunate enough to attend school. I felt that I had to live up to these expectations my family had for me because I did not want to let them down. While other kids were reading and writing for fun I was being forced by my mom to write solely about what book I read that day. I soon became bored with reading because I was no longer reading just to enjoy the book. I enjoyed reading but when it came to writing down my thoughts and opinions on the book I dreaded reading the next book because I did not want to write about it. I would argue with my mom and she continued to say it would help me as I get older. I eventually just tried to write what she wanted me to but it would never be good enough. She would say I did not write enough and that she wanted more from me as a third grader. This is when I started to not like writing because nothing was ever good enough and I felt like if I could not please her then I definitely could not please my teachers. As I got older and writing became more complex and difficult I began to struggle because of my past with writing.

I thought I would eventually get over this difficulty with writing but then I got to seventh grade still struggling. In the seventh grade I began to put off writing assignments until they would become late and I was forced to do it. It seemed like I would push myself into a corner every time there was an assignment. At this point I did not really enjoy reading because I knew writing would come after. As seventh grade went on I began to miss assignments and stop reading the books because I knew I would have to write throughout the duration of reading the book or at the completion of a book. I also knew another one was coming after that. When my grade became very low I had to have a meeting with Ms. Bryant, my English teacher. Ms. Bryant was my English teacher whom my mother and I were not very fond of from the beginning. Ms. Bryant was a senior at my high school when I was in senior kindergarten, so she was still a pretty young teacher. During this meeting we discussed ways to improve my writing until she said “You are not good at writing and shouldn’t even try anymore.” At that moment I truly believed that I wasn’t good at it and went home to tell my mom. My mom was livid and shouting words of profanity. She called my principal the next day to set up a meeting where Ms. Bryant would get in a lot of trouble. After that Ms. Bryant no longer graded my papers but my principal did. While I still wasn’t making great grades on papers, I was able to continue attending my school. After leaving middle school I was able to become more confident in my writing ability when I started receiving better grades based on how I was actually performing. As my grades started improving so did my reading. I was beginning to enjoy reading again when I didn’t think I would enjoy what used to be my pastime.

I began to regain confidence in my writing while beginning to enjoy reading again during my senior year of high school. In the five years between seventh grade and senior year I had just been doing enough to pass my writing assignments and English. In my senior year I had Mrs. Wellford-Scott as my English teacher. Mrs. Scott is the head of the English department at my high school. When we wrote our first paper over our required summer reading books she had meetings with all of the students in her class. During my meeting she stated that my writing is not bad, but I need to put more effort into my writing assignments. She also suggested I get a tutor to work with throughout the year. She suggested I work with Pat Kelly. Mrs. Kelly is a retired English teacher who taught at my school. Mrs. Kelly also created the English curriculum for the high school. I worked with her to improve on my organization and making my writing more complex while finding the deeper meanings of books we read in class. Mrs. Kelly would help me understand the connections between the readings so that I could be prepared for papers. When I would go to write the papers I would sit with Dr. Gilmore who was my school principal. Dr. Gilmore was now the principal but he started at the school as an English teacher, so he was happy to help me with my work. Dr. Gilmore would write down everything I said on the topic I was assigned to write about. I would first decide on what I wanted each paragraph to be about and then I would say as much as I could on that point and continue with all my points. After this session I would go home and find quotes I believed went with each paragraph and would build paragraphs. As the year continued I became more comfortable brainstorming my ideas because I was able to organize my ideas during the brainstorming process rather than trying to make sense of them later. I learned the most about my writing process and techniques in my senior year because I was not criticized but I was given tools to help me grow as a writer.

I have had a lot of moments that have shaped my life. I learned something from every one of them though. When I was little I did not understand the point of writing and really did not enjoy it but I learned reading and writing go hand and hand because writing helped me to better understand what I was reading. I lost my love for reading when I was learning the writing process and struggling to make organized papers. As I grew up my writing grew with me. I learned that criticism on writing is helpful as long as it is constructive and not detrimental to someone’s confidence in themselves. I also learned that I am not a bad writer like I was told in middle school. All of these pieces created the writer I am today and I am now more open to improving and learning everything I can about writing.

To: Stephanie, Brandon, Ronnie

From: Daria

10/2/17

Regarding my literary narrative

I chose this moment because it was the one that I found it easiest to elaborate on. It took me a while to decide what direction I should go with it but I still have some organization of my ideas to work on. Going from the handwritten note to typing was not easy for me to do. Going from the literacy moment to the narrative was the easiest part for me because I had my ideas planned out already. I need to expand the beginning of this narrative. I also need to work on the organization of the moment itself and add more breaks to the writing. I feel I need help on the large paragraph because it is not organized and is all over the place.