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Title?

I was introduced to reading with Hooked on Phonics. It was around the summer after kindergarten and my mother had insisted that my high school aged sisters spend at least an hour a day working on phonics with my younger brother and me. Even though it was relatively soon in my literary career, I can remember being incredibly bored. I would have easily elected to be ^{word choice} doing thing of a much more productive nature; things like convincing one of my older sisters to give me a "make-over" or playing and the subsequently fighting with my younger brother. ~~What~~ I could not have known ~~was~~ that this activity that I so despised would aid in my becoming an exceptional reader. A trait that would follow and aid me throughout my years of schooling. ^{Fragment} Not only did being exceptional follow me through my academia, but also my personal endeavors as well. All of which aided and continues to aid not only in my comprehension of words, but, as a result, in my writing as well.

avoid passive voice.

Reading became an outlet for me. ^(Is this the most important thing?) It was not long after being given the opportunity to employ the knowledge that I had acquired from the dreaded one hour sessions in school that I was identified as advanced. At the time there was not much anyone could do about this. So I was usually just tossed readings in hopes of being kept busy. It worked. Reading became a viable alternative to absolute boredom. Such a practiced extended outside of school, as my family traveled often and an escape was necessary from time to time. It became clear to my mother early on that she could not afford my new habit, although she did support it whole heartedly.

Now, I could have my own library card. This sounds like a minor feat, but to me it was like I had a one way ticket to Disney Land. When I was reading, time flew. Like Pearl Cleage my parents [?] restricted my readings to nothing, and she truly does speak truth when saying that such freedom is a gift that leads to the world being a bigger and more dynamic place (89). I too, like James L. Lewis had theologians for parents of whom finished graduate school at a historically black seminary, like Wilberforce, at what I believe to be the peak of my interest in reading (The Word). Their required texts were just branches of the adventure to me. The books not only expanded upon my view of what it was to be black, but also introduced me to it as well. Referring again to Pearl Cleage's ideas on limited restrictions on reading as a child, this was truly a gift (89). Among the readings of a black college student, I also delved head first into literature more of my age group like that of Junie B. Jones, which reflected my love for things of a simple, and happier nature. As I was just a child at this time, not even out of primary school. I continued to read across age and color barriers, which I believe truly had an impact on my views on myself. Many of the accounts of child hood reading that I have come across, lead me to believe that reading singular perspectives leads to a singular perspective in regards one's writing, and also one's sense of self. It was this diversity that inspired me to write. I was drowning in the feelings of the characters, real and imagined, that I was continuously becoming infatuated with. As a result, writing became an outlet for me as well. [This time one of the emotional sort] - fragment

^{transition?} When I wrote, it seemed to always be about the way that I felt. I'm sure this has a lot to do with the fact that diaries were extremely romanticized at the time, or maybe with the fact that I had shifted my focus to teen fiction and these tend to be very emotional books. I expressed myself either way, and I enjoyed doing so. As Cleage so clearly states in her interview "I think they both [reading and writing] do the same thing for me, which is to make sense of the world"

This paragraph needs development.

Syntax

what

context?

cliche

(90). Making sense of the world came to be my general purpose for writing. Cleage again shares my sentiment, saying that she understood that somethings she was just unable to understand if she had not written them down (83). No matter the issue, if I was to write about it, it made sense and I was able to come to a rational conclusion. On a different end of the writing spectrum there is creative writing. The problem with particular venture though, is that I never really felt quite creative. I always felt the books I read, however numerous, seep through into the idea I was trying to get across. This still has an impact on the topics that feel comfortable writing about now, things that generally tend to involve what Royster calls "me and mine" (30). In the context of my "voice", as she calls it, I do have a continuous struggle trying to interpret what actually is myself and not the thoughts of those in power that I have continuously been exposed to. Frustration with this internal debate, and a close to the years of teen angst that I faced led to a drastic decline in my desire to write. Now I find myself generally unwilling to write things as simple as grocery lists.

Currently, reading and writing only function in my life as a necessity or a requirement. In retrospect this seems to be a result of an idea that Royster brings up in her essay only briefly, but is expanded upon in the original writing of Patricia Williams, is spirit murder (39). I cannot help but feel subject to a system that does not encourage a love for reading or reading, but a standard set by the aforementioned authority an authority that knows very little of who I am or who I would like to be. Royster also refers to a good intention that I agree is generally present even in those who reinforce the standard (39). The standard crushes passion and interest in the practice of reading and writing, even in assignments meant to be engaging. This is at least the effect it has had on me. I have never come across a term more accurate than spirit murder to describe the effects of continuing and higher levels of education have had on my perspective of myself in

literature. Though I am sure might shock some and cause others a fainting spell, I can actually admit that part of my problem is not the system of which "me and mine" have very little say in, but that I tend to have issues with authority. This has never been a problem of significant consequence, as I am very aware of how the world works and my place in it, but a problem all the same. It is quite possible then, that I don't read or write anymore so as to stick it to the man, or my English teacher. This depends on the target of my indirect wrath.

at what point were you struck?
What struck me the most in musings about who I am to be as a writer, was Royster's

observation that "...genius emerges from hybridity, from Africans who, over the course of time and circumstance, have come to dream in English.." (Royster, 37). I am inspired in a way that
subject verb agreement
have not been since I began to understand the alternate worlds that reading and writing provided.

Especially in a time such as the one in which I currently live, where the word "appropriation" is hurled not only at those who have been taking land and culture as their own for hundreds of years, but also towards African Americans. [A people just trying to find out who they are and where they stand in this world. A people that definitely includes me as a young black woman. To step outside of the usual boundaries of one's usual reading and be told that my "voice" matters, and not only that, but has the potential of a beautiful genius is grossly under-represented by the term inspiring. In the near future, I see myself returning to internal debate of what my "voice" is (Royster). I intend to test the waters of my creativity. To write not only to understand who I am, but also to see where my passion will take me.] *Sent. Fray.*

I realize that as I have progressed, so has the world around me. Books are not really a thing anymore because people can get them on their laptops. Writing my feelings has become excessive, because I could just as easily condense it into one hundred and forty characters and tweet them. A practice in which I don't have to validate myself because social media is set up so

that others can do that for me. My lack luster for the literary practices that used to bring me joy might be a result of any of these things or those mentioned throughout my analysis of how I came to be in the position that I am as of now. Yet still, having been influenced by the works of powerful women who are writers themselves, I can feel my desire return. I can feel the familiar need to absorb a book within hours. The need to gain all that I can, and then to read the material all over again in case I missed something. It feels great.

Organization: 16pts

Analysis & Support: 15pts

Rhetorical Strategies: 15pts

Language Control: 15pts

Grammar & Mechanics: 14pts

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