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Rhet 101

8 September 2016

A Grandmother's Influence On a College Student's Reading and Writing Habits

How did I become the writer I am today? Well, explaining my writing history without explaining my reading history is nearly impossible. Regardless of whether I am discussing reading, writing or even both, I cannot discuss these topics without discussing the inspiration for my reading and writing journey, my grandmother. My grandmother introduced me to reading and writing at a young age, and since then she has given me keys to develop my writing in passionate ways. I started out by reading *Green Eggs and Ham* and writing my own Birthday cards, but through her motivation I am now writing 1000 word essays and reading the Bible every night. How did I become the writer I am today? I became the reader and writer I am today through the best teacher I have ever met, my Grandmother.

The signal for reading time was my Grandmother sitting in her tan cloth rocking chair, and after she would sit down she would pat her leg as a signal for me to sit on her lap. My Grandmother would reach to her desk to grab my favorite book, *Green Eggs and Ham*, as I would sit on her lap eagerly waiting for her to read the title in her funny "Dr. Seuss voice." My Grandmother would read me this book nearly every day, for I knew the book word-for-word. She would sometimes tell me to read the book to her, but instead of reading the book I winged it. I would just recite the book to her through my great memorization skills. My Grandmother essentially tricked me into learning to read when one day she switched the book from Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham* to Dr. Seuss's *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*. After "reading" the

first couple of pages out loud to my Grandmother she said “Wow Lauren, I Didn’t think you could read a closed book.” I was so confused when she told me this, but my confusion turned to embarrassment when she pointed to the “Green eggs and Ham” book sitting on the table across the room. My Grandmother taught me the difference between reading and memorizing because that day I learned to really read.

I was a lazy child. I would rather memorize than actually read, and once I got a little older my laziness only got worse. I preferred buying thoughts as opposed to writing my own feelings down on paper. I would walk to Walgreens to buy my Grandmother a cliché Hallmark card using my allowance whenever it was her birthday because I was too careless to create my own personalized card from me to her. I remember it was my Grandmother’s 50th birthday party. I had already spent my allowance on buying a new Barbie car, so I didn’t have the money to buy my Grandmother a card. I panicked! I asked my mother the day of my Grandmother’s party to buy me a card for her, but she was too busy decorating for the party to take me to the store. My Dad handed me a piece of construction paper and a pack of markers. He told me “make her a card yourself Lauren! I bet she would like the card you made her more than a store bought card.” I really panicked! I just knew I would mess the card up somehow. I knew I would not be able to fold the card right. I knew I would not be able to stop the marker from bleeding through the paper. I knew the heart I drew would be crooked. I knew the card had to be perfect because it was my Grandmother’s 50th birthday.

Aside from all the pressure, I began writing. I started writing down exactly how I felt. I told my Grandmother how much I respected, loved, and appreciated her. After about 15 minutes of letting my heart pour out on a little piece of construction paper, I heard my mother say “It’s time to open presents!” I ran to the living room where my Grandmother was sitting, and I gave

her my handmade card. She read my card out loud, and my words brought my Grandmother to tears. I was so proud. The next day I saw my Grandmother display my card on her dresser. My Grandmother then said to me that “True feelings cannot be bought Lauren. This card is more precious than the most expensive birthday present money can buy because you wrote it.” Those words have followed me throughout my life, for my Grandmother made me love writing. My Grandmother taught me to respect my own thoughts that day.

Today I see myself as a spiritual young lady. I love God and I love praising God in my writings. My Grandmother introduced me to the word of God when I was about fourteen years old, and I have seen my writing skills increase exponentially as a result. I was never a big reader until my Grandmother brought me my first Bible. I opened the huge book for the first time three years ago, and I have not been able to close it since then. Reading the bible gives me joy and fulfillment. I hardly ever understand reading a scripture when I first read it. It takes many rereads for me to understand each passage, for reading the Bible is like a puzzle to me. The fact that I have to put in so much effort to read God’s word is what makes reading it so fun to me. Also, after understanding and reading the Bible so much I see how much it relates to everyday life and everyday topics I usually discuss in school. My love for God is truly my passion, for whenever I connect God to my writings, my paper shines in an unbelieve form. I have my Grandmother to thank for the passion in every essay I write, for without her introducing me to the Most High God my writing style would have never advanced the way that is has.

In life we all have similar beginnings, but we all have different end points. This idea is similar in writing. No one is born knowing how to write 7-page essays, but different people and events can change this throughout your life. One small 4’11 women is essentially the reason why I am at the University of Illinois and writing thousand-word essay right now. My Grandmother

has instilled three ideas in my heart that have not only influenced me as a writer but also a person. The first idea is that reading is not memorization. The second idea is that you cannot buy true thoughts and feelings. The third idea is that God can spark passion in every aspect of someone's life. A small seed can bloom into a beautiful flower over time. We all start out as seeds, but we all need someone to water our seed to guide our growth. In my case I was blessed to have my Grandmother nurture and guide my growth as a reader, writer, and young women, but we all need help. Take the time to thank that person that was patient enough to watch you bloom in any aspect of life whether that be a teacher, parent, friend, or even God. Once again, how did I become the writer I am today? I became me through the strong woman I am proud to call my Grandmother.