
Writer's Statement about "Literacy in My Life"

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How did we learn to read? I had never really considered that question before, I assumed that my parents taught me and that was the end of it. I hadn't considered a great deal of things before college. I never thought about who my literacy sponsors were or what discourse communities might be. How could I have thought about these questions? I had never even heard the word discourse community until I came into college. When I was first given the assignment of trying to piece together my own literacy narrative, I thought I would encounter some struggle. How could these foreign concepts I had just learned somehow apply to a part of my life I could barely remember? To me the very idea seemed crazy, but I kept with it. I began to dig into my early life and give serious thought to how my literacy began. I remembered my parents reading to me, knowing now that they were literacy sponsors. I thought about my early teachers who encouraged their students to read by giving out toys to the top readers. It seemed to me like those teachers and my future ones shared some of the same characteristics, reminding me that they formed my discourse community. As I began looking deeper and deeper into the idea of my literacy, I began to see hidden ideas emerge.

When I first realized my parents were literacy sponsors, a thought struck me. With literacy sponsors, there is always a motive behind teaching the literacy. This struck me as odd, what motive could my parents possibly have for teaching me to read? Then I began to think of it outside of my family, maybe teaching literacy to your children was a way to show you care about them. Maybe the motive for teaching literacy was to show compassion for your children. Then I began to think about the discourse communities. School was definitely a discourse community, but could my family also be? We communicated with each other, had the same goals, shared a lexis and genres, and we had experts, my parents, and members, their children. The members could eventually become experts by becoming parents themselves, with their children then being members of the discourse community. I realized that I was a member in a community spanning back generations to my earliest ancestors, but what did this have to do with literacy?

Literacy and my family discourse community are connected to each other. The goal of my discourse community is to be successful in life, which being literate accomplishes. This was the key to understanding the rest of my literacy narrative. All new discoveries pointed back to this fact. My parents' motive for sponsoring my literacy was a form of caring, caring enough about me to try and help me be successful in life. My identity kit was formed around my discourse community, causing me to also internalize the values of literacy. A project that I initially thought would help me learn how I began to read instead showed insight into my own values, why I liked to read. I had achieved insight on my own characteristics.

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Cameron Gill is a freshman at the University of Central Florida where he is majoring in Biomedical Sciences and completing his pre-medical requirements with a minor in Psychology. He plans on entering the medical field with the goal of becoming a clinical pathologist. Along with academics, Cameron is a member of the student chapter of the American Society for Microbiology at UCF. Here, Cameron devotes his time to learning and getting involved with those who are studying microbiology/molecular biology. Cameron was born in Columbus, OH, but was raised all around the country due to his military family. When he's not concerned with academics, he enjoys reading and watching sports.