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Literacy Narrative

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Jana Robey

Jana Robey is currently majoring in Special Education at Cedarville University. A student from Louisville, Kentucky, she has played the piano for many years and has enjoyed singing in the Cedarville Chorale and Women's Choir. She also has a passion for writing. Jana aspires to work with students and adults that have learning disabilities and continue to write poetry after she graduates.

Literacy Narrative

My eyes darted to each colored post-it note that hung on the back wall of my senior creative writing classroom. I chuckled as I read clever puns that the previous year's class had written. This was my favorite class. Decorated with countless student stories and poems, Ms. Case's 7th period Creative Writing classroom was by far the most exciting room to be in. Today, we would share our poems titled *Home*.

"Alrighty," Ms. Case spun away from her computer and faced us. She reached into a box on her desk and pulled out a popsicle stick.

"Who's first?" She looked down and read the sloppily-written name. "Miss Jana," she called. The eyes of my fellow classmates all looked back at me and I stood, heading to the front of the room. I wasn't nervous, like most students often were. Instead, I felt excitement and pride over the poem that I was about to share. I slowly read my paper, adding appropriate tones as I spoke. After I finished, the class clapped and we moved on. The

next popsicle stick was drawn and on we went. It was looking like an average seventh period on a regular day. Or so I thought.

The following day, as I listened to more poems about other classmates' homes, a knock on the door disturbed our creative writing class. Since I sat in the back, I was closest to the door, and therefore got up and proceeded to open it.

"Jana! Just the person I wanted to talk to." A short, balding man stood in the hall, grinning. I turned towards Ms. Case for her approval to leave with him and she nodded.

"Sir, is everything okay?" I asked, closing the door behind me, my confusion apparent by my furrowing eye brows.

"Oh, yes, yes. Everything is fine. My name is Bill Jerome and I am the editor and creator of the Lake Forest neighborhood magazine. I just wanted to let you know that Ms. Case submitted your poem *Home* to me last evening and I just absolutely loved it. I am here to let you know that I have selected it to appear in the next issue of my magazine."

My jaw dropped. "Are you serious?" I asked, shocked, but excited. He smiled and nodded. I couldn't believe it. Out of all the poems in the class, mine was chosen. I couldn't help but smile. I felt on top of the world. I was extremely proud of myself and all I wanted to do was write another poem. This was it; the moment when my writing was finally celebrated by someone other than my parents.

What led to this exciting moment in my life is what has shaped me into who I am as a writer today: books. Not just any old books, but books filled with adventures, time-traveling,

superheroes, villains, romance, and even magic. I remember the day I finished one my absolute favorites about a young orphan who went on an incredible journey.

The pink polka-dots on my bedroom wall seemed to stare me down as I raced to finish Molly Moon's exciting hypnotic adventure at the Hardwick House for Orphans.

"I'm almost finished!" I squeaked, my third-grade mind wild with imagination. Molly had just escaped from Primo Cell's evil lair and was on the way home to the Hardwick House.

"Three more pages!" My best friend, Taylor, called from other line of the house phone, her toothy smile apparent by the giddy tone of her voice.

Pause. A few minutes went by.

"Done!" I yelled, laughing and rolling over in my bed, relishing in the moment. "I finished first! Ha ha ha!"

"What? I think my version had extra pages or something," Taylor tried to justify the situation.

"No way, Tay. I won, fair and square." She was not about to take my victory away from me.

"Whatever," she laughed. "I'll just beat you in Molly Moon's second book".

"Hah, yeah right, " I rolled my eyes and giggled. I couldn't believe what happened to Molly at the end of the book. *Primo was actually her father? What? How does that even make sense?* I considered all of the possibilities that could explain this. I had to find out. I couldn't wait to start the next book.

That's how it started; my love for books, that is. I loved reading about the super powers, the bad guys, and the traveling that Molly Moon got to experience. I felt like I was with Molly and her friend, Rocky, when I read about their daring adventures. I got to experience another world by reading. Next, I started reading other books, and soon, others, and then, more and more until I finished whole series of Junie B. Jones, Katie Kazoo, The Magic Tree House, and Judy Moody. I loved them all. With each new book, new adventures ensued, new friends were met, and new words were learned. I believe that my passion for reading began my love for learning new, bigger, and more exciting words. Even today, I find joy in learning difficult and new vocabulary words that I can use in my essays, stories, and even letters that I write.

Along with reading all of these books, I started writing. I would come up with alternate endings to my favorite books. I would write one-page descriptions of made-up characters in made-up families. In fourth grade, I even wrote two short chapter books with my friend, Kenzie, about an adventure to Mount Everest, discovering a yeti, and finding magical M&Ms that could make you fly. Needless to say, I had a vivid imagination. My love for writing continued to evolve as I took more writing and English classes. I had countless teachers encourage me to continue to write and to make up stories. My new favorite books became *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* and *Lord of the Flies*. I loved reading about futuristic eras, love stories, and even the savage downfall of humanity caused by natural depravity in *Lord of the Flies*. I didn't necessarily believe in the morals of these books, but I enjoyed reading about different fictional cultures. In my freshman year, I

got the opportunity to interview a kindergarten student and write a fictional story about her life. My story involved Olaf from Frozen, Phineas and Ferb from Disney Channel, and even Bethany Hamilton from Soul Surfer. Yes, it was an insanely unrealistic story, but nevertheless, my five-year-old audience of one loved it. Even today, as I start my freshman composition class at Cedarville, I look forward to writing more and learning about how to better express myself in writing stories and essays.

As I continued to read and write, the journeys that I encountered weren't always so enjoyable to experience. I remember being forced to read certain books for school that were hard to understand and just plain boring sometimes. I started to dislike reading. I mean, why couldn't I just go back to reading Molly Moon or The Hunger Games again? I didn't want to waste time reading difficult books about history, Shakespeare, or the Renaissance Era. I wanted to stick with my favorites; my simple, fictional, and easy-to-understand favorites. Even as a senior in high school, I struggled with the ability to enjoy what I had to read for class. But as my AP Literature class went on, I learned something.

"Class, who knows why we read books like Hamlet, The Iliad, or Antigone?" My senior literature teacher, Mr. Rice, stopped class one day to pose this question. He continued, "We know that we don't go by the moral standards of these books, nor do we support the references to many gods, but why do you think we spend so much time analyzing and talking about them?" *Well, I don't know. I don't see a point in reading them other than to create busy-work for us, students,* I thought to myself. After a few seconds of silence, Mr. Rice proceeded to answer his own question. "Well,

to put it simply, it is to learn." He paused. "To grow in knowledge of other cultures, in history, and in the societal classes of the past. If we stopped reading, we would stop learning. Scripture tells us 'Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands, obtain guidance.'" *Okay, so now Jesus wants me to read these books?* I thought, my skepticism evident. This aspect of reading never occurred to me before then. I never really looked at literature as a way of obeying the scriptures. I figured that it was just for "educational" purposes in school and that I really didn't have to know or remember that stuff after I finished school. What I learned to value that day is God's desire for His people to continue to learn things by reading, writing, and experiencing new things.

This new aspect of literature changed something in me; it changed my view on reading as well as writing. Now, I enjoy reading and learning more about different cultures and past events. My one regret is that I wish that I had come to the maturity to understand this sooner in my life. I can only hope that the young people who read this narrative will see this viewpoint earlier than I did. I wouldn't have been able to write such a thought-provoking poem such as *Home* had I not finally learned to understand the purpose behind reading difficult, more incisive books. I am thankful for the impact of cultural, analytical, and poetic literature.