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Conquering Literacy

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Conquering Literacy

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ENTJ. Four letters which quickly tell people the way I think, feel, and will handle upcoming situations. If you are familiar with the oh-so-famous Myers-Briggs test you will see that I am someone who feels a need to be in control at all times. With this omnipresent need to be the best within the room, I, even as a child, saw “reading” as one more thing to master, but once I had control, I never wanted more.

It started innocently enough. My mother, who at the time was able to stay at home, would instruct me in the “sight words”: words that every child should know when he sees. Then came the magnet letters; these, I enjoyed. I could now command minions to do my bidding. The “minions” were small, plastic, held the smell of a sterile kitchen, and came in a variety of colors, I preferred purple. First, my small hands arranged the words I knew from heart. “Dominic” the name of the master. “Mom” the name of the provider. “Dad” the name of the master’s master.

Even with this massive personification of letters, I knew what letters were: tools to be used. Up until this point, nearly all work had been done independently at home; however, that changed when my pre-school teachers attempted to offer a new way to look at these letters.

“Words are letters trying to be friends. Just like friends, they work better together!” Explained Miss Jenny over the chorus of children murmurs. She was a tall woman, taller than anyone I had known at that point. Her voice carried, and I heard it.

“That’s wrong.” I announced to anyone who would listen, who, at

that time, was my mother after school. “Letters aren’t people. They can’t be friends.” I explained as the clear expert on letters.

Eventually I outgrew the magnet letters. My minions they may have been, but minion or not they were too far beneath me; I yearned to make and learn longer words. This call for a higher level introduced me to the literary genius who would captivate the next few years of my life: Dr. Seuss. This man held such a command of language he could weave together sentences that not only rhyme but did so with purpose. I had always enjoyed basic rhyming, but rhyming for the sake of storytelling captivated me.

Immediately, I was enrolled within the Dr. Seuss fan club both in terms of spirit and postal subscription. This sent me the wonder of a new book authored by the legend himself every month. When a package in the mail would come addressed to Dominic McClung, mail I checked daily, I was more enthused than any other day. For you see, I was to be like this “Seuss”. Many pieces came to thank me for being enrolled for such a long period of time: a Sneetch plushie, a Green Eggs and Ham clock, and even a hat which was said to have belonged to the cat himself. None of these items held my attention for more than a few days.

As you can probably tell, I was only interested in the books. These toys existed to entertain fools who did not realize the true value of this man’s genius. I may not have understood at the time how correct I was, even if for the wrong reasons. *Oh, the Places You’ll Go* made my mother cry. Why? I had no idea. My father, who normally was interested in growing my abilities, and therefore had no interest in reading the same book more than twice, would suddenly allow me to continuously recite *Green Eggs and Ham*. At the time, I thought this was some rite of passage, but it was just because he enjoyed the content of said book

Then came the great literacy depression. A well-meaning professional, one who did not understand the extent of my sinful need for control, recommended that if I could not understand all the words present upon the page allow me to make my own story based on the pictures. The story was my own. That was not good.

I was no longer interested in learning to read past what was expected of me in school. I was the Seuss. I now decided what Sally did. The eggs were mine to control. Nothing could stop my reign of omnipotence upon these books. I decided if I refused to learn to read, it was now me deciding what every story meant. With that small recommendation, I headed down a path of emptiness in which I transformed from one of the most promising readers to a kid who nearly failed his state testing in reading.

This lack of reading lasted for roughly a year and a half. My books endured this change more than anything else. The texts went from daily use to collecting dust on the tops and bottoms of shelves. I no longer had something to fill my passion for learning. I turned to excessive video game consumption, an exorbitant amount of television, and disrupting class. If I wasn't mindlessly consuming the media put in my face I was spewing it in order to avoid learning within the classroom. I plateaued.

After toiling in the mud of stagnancy for so long, a teacher saw the potential buried within in me and recommended that I not only be placed within an advanced setting, but also receive whatever extra aid and encouragement I needed to grow to the position I would soon take as a kid within the "advanced class". This teacher is Miss Leone, someone to whom I owe much of what I have today. Sadly, due to moving I have been unable to communicate with her in over ten years. If this essay were to ever end up within her grasp all I can say is "thank you."

Moving past Miss Leone, the people in my life had now realized both that I had the capacity to be reading much more, and that I had no idea what to do with my unearthed talents. That was when my cousin recommended *Harry Potter* and that series managed to captivate me. This was the backbone of my literary education. As the series begins to become somewhat adult, I then moved to the Percy Jackson series of books. These held me, as they not only allowed me to explore a new fantasy world, but also taught me about the Greek Pantheon.

After these two collections I was reading non-stop. One Christmas,

I believe I was 10, I received a box set of the newest universe which grabbed my attention. *The Keys to the Kingdom* series. This set of seven was able to hold my mind for a record time of roughly three months. That same Christmas, I had no desire to be with my family, for I had a new book to devour. I slipped the book beneath my shirt at and at dinner I read said book.

As made evident by my semi-related tales, reading was and is important to me. I often find myself searching for that next series to encapsulate myself. Without the love of reading instilled, and later reinstalled, I might have been just another problem child who amounted to nothing. Someone who had no interest in reading this *Holy Bible* he had been hearing so much about. I will not pretend I am a perfect reader, in fact, I have not been able to read a book for personal enjoyment in nearly two calendar years, but without my literacy and growth I would not be the man I am today. Without books I would certainly be worse. Praise the lord for literacy, because without it I would not know him like I do today. If you, reader, have any good recommendations please, send them my way.