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ENGL 1000 Writing Studies 1 Autobiography Contest

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2019

## 3rd Place Essay - ENGL 1000 Literacy Autobiography Contest 2019

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Anyinniana Little

Professor Laura White

Cover Letter

I can remember the first day we were introduced to literacy narratives; we were sitting in class learning about what a literacy narrative is and going over some of Laura's previous students' narratives and I was asking myself "what could I write my paper on that would stand out and be unique to my writing style?" The next class period Laura asked us to write down when we first noticed a change in our writing and that's when it hit me. In middle school I completely stop writing for personal enjoyment and did the minimum in school. The process in writing my paper was very natural. I just wrote down everything I could remember and how I felt during that time period then over the next few days I went back and removed parts, revised wording and fixed the format of my paper.

Anyinniana Little

September 17, 2018

Literacy Narrative

### The Letter That Destroyed Me

In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade I wrote my first love letter. It was the most awkward thing I had ever done. I sat in the back of my English class writing during free write, just pouring my feelings into this letter. I was so focused on the letter I ended up writing through part of my lunch period. I always wrote little shorts during my free write that I often shared with my best friends at the time during lunch. On this day, I hid my notebook from my friends who were so eager to read what mystery I would bring to the lunch table. I remember telling my friends that I could not think of anything that would be storytime worthy, so I wrote compliments instead, which was always an option. I made sure to hide my notebook from everyone for the rest of the day until I got home in my room where I could secure an indefinite hiding place for it.

Over the next two weeks I would have read that letter about a thousand times, reconfirming that the feeling I had written on paper was what I actually felt. After reading and confirming this letter, I decided to just give the letter to the person whom it was addressed to. I went to my grandma, asked for a stamped envelope, and mailed the letter. This was my first time ever making myself vulnerable to any of my friends, let alone my crush. I remember giving my older brother a hypothetical situation about receiving a letter from someone that confessed their feelings for him and asking how he would respond. He told me that no matter how he

responded it would not do me any justice because his response would not be the same as the person to whom I had sent the letter.

About a week after I sent the letter, I went to hang out with the person who I will refer to as Z. Z and I had been best friends for about a year at this point. Every time we hung out we always laughed and had a thousand things to talk about. This time it was different. Everything was awkward. The aura surrounding us was off. He was the one who brought the letter up. He told me he received a letter in the mail and he had an idea who wrote the letter, but he wasn't sure that he felt the same way as the person who wrote it. I instantly felt chills run across my body. I asked who he thought wrote it and he responded "I think you know." At this exact moment, I knew he knew.

I vowed to never write another letter expressing any form of feelings or emotions. This vow had an impact on everything I wrote. My daily shorts became very dull. My friends who were once excited to read the mysteries began to express how the shorts bored them. I was now incapable of expressing any form of feelings or emotions through writing even if it was for an imaginary character. This did not just have an impact on my free writing, but also my personal writing such as my poetry and even my diary entries. My poetry shifted from being about positivity, rainbows, and sunshine for example to something a little darker like the death of roses and shadows in the attic. I began to write fewer diary entries, and when I did, they were usually about things that angered me. I saw a shift in my personality.

Writing was my outlet, and that all changed with one letter. Due to no longer being able to express my emotions through words, I began to hold everything in and lash out once I

reached a tipping point. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, my parents decided that I needed anger management to figure out what was making me so angry. The ironic thing about these sessions with my anger management counselor is she often wanted me to write how I felt when I was angry. Many of my papers consisted of the words “I don’t know.” She figured I was being a sarcastic 13 year-old when in all actuality, I honestly did not know. After months of getting nowhere in anger management and realizing that I had just lost my grandfather, coincidentally around the time I sent the letter that I never told anyone besides my brother about, my family began to dismiss my anger as grief.

Two years after I sent the letter, I transitioned into high school. I was placed in a class that was meant to help freshmen transition into high school smoothly my freshman year. I enjoyed this class until it was time to write, as you can imagine. A lot of the assignments at the beginning of the school year were based on my emotions and how I felt during the transition. My responses were like speaking to a brick wall. They almost never showed any real emotions. Due to my “lack of enthusiasm” according to my teacher, she referred me to the school counselor because I appeared to be “going through something depressing.” My counselor then recommended that I join a group called “Go Girl!”

Go Girl! was a group that consisted of an ace, someone who is completing grad school to become a social worker and needs a certain number of hours working in a school, and about 7 or 8 freshmen. In this group, we talked about things that we were going through or had been through that were influencing our behavior. We did a lot of talking instead of writing, so I participated a lot more. Approaching our last couple of weeks of school, our counselor asked us

to write letters of appreciation for our ace. My letter never got completed. Instead, I bought my ace a nice card from Walgreens and signed my name in it.

By this time, I had completely given up on free writing. I was sticking strictly to required school assignments only doing the minimum requirements for the assignments. This was my way of sliding by high school for the next two years. I did not start back free writing until my senior year. Right before I started my senior year in high school, I experienced my first heartbreak. I had completely cut myself off from my emotions all together. I was no longer writing and no longer had any interest in speaking to anyone about how I felt. I was in a dark place with no outlet. At one point, I had told my brother that I was ready move on and start a new life. He asked about my friends to which I responded "What friends?" He responded by listing a few good friends I had made throughout high school then the name Z.

The first serious thing I had ever written was a love letter in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade addressed to Z. This letter would become the flapping wings of the butterfly that seemed to frequent my life. It is the very thing that destroyed my passion for writing. It is the very same letter that would spark my interest in writing again. I met with Z at a family function and we spoke for a while. He told that he still has the letter and he often thinks about the person I was when I had written it. He too had enjoyed the mystery shorts I wrote and observed the decline in my writing. As I progressed through my senior year, writing essays for scholarships, I noticed the shift in how I would write and which prompts I chose. I began journaling again. My writing style shifted from being formal to relaxed. I began to choose prompts that were more geared towards me as an individual and not just me as a student. By the end of my senior year I was awarded \$365,000 in scholarships and was accepted to 11 out of the 13 colleges I had applied for. After I graduated, I

received a letter in the mail. It was a response from what I had written in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and it was encouragement to never give up on what I am truly passionate about.