

My Experience with English Education

English has never been my favorite subject. In fact, it has always been my least favorite subject. Going through school, I often wondered why I needed to do so many English related tasks, and in wondering, I learned to detest the subject without realizing its future benefits. Why do I dislike English so much? Is it such a dreadful thing to learn? Isn't learning how to correctly write and interpret the English language important? Well, no and yes.

No, English is not a dreadful thing to learn. I suppose my dislike for the subject has become greater through the eighteen some years that I have been learning the different components of the English language. It wasn't actually learning how to speak English that bothered me, my dislike for English began to form when I began getting English education in a formal learning environment. That's when I remember elementary school. I don't recall disliking English then. It was more like I was learning new things - things that I did not learn at home or in pre-school - like reading, writing, and grammar. It felt good to finally know how to read and write (and I suppose it felt good to have knowledge of a little grammar too). These were things that once I learned them, I was using them everyday. Not only did I use the knowledge to read a story in reading class or to do a writing assignment, but to maybe read the newspaper and write a note to a friend as well.

However, then came junior high school. I believe this was when I began to really dislike English classes. Not only was I faced with the same long, boring

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grammar assignments that I was exposed to in elementary school, but I also had to start reading long (or what I thought was long back then) books on topics that didn't really excite me. To top that off, I had the first of a long line of crazy (well, maybe they weren't crazy, but they sure seemed like it at the time) English teachers.

Why does it seem that most English teachers have a screw loose somewhere? Is it just a act, or is dementia a prerequisite to becoming an English teacher? My seventh grade English teacher, Mrs. Garbarino, had this thing with being the chief and the class being the Indians. Whatever she said, we were to follow. Then came eighth grade. Ms. Spell my English teachers name that year (kind of ironic: Ms. SPELL, ENGLISH teacher). Ms. Spell had this obsession with Robert Redford. Every time someone knocked on the classroom door, she would ask the class if it was Mr. Redford. Unfortunately for her, it never was and for the remainder of the class period, Ms. Spell would discuss with the class her obsession. In ninth grade, I had a Mr. Hoest (pronounced "Host"). Mr. Hoest was a pretty cool guy, except when it came to the topic of sex. He loved to discuss it, as well as do a bit of innocent flirting with some of my female classmates. I will never forget the field day he had with "Romeo and Juliet." Mr. Hoest did have his share of flaws, but I must admit that he was probably my favorite English teacher (getting an "A" or two might have something to do with this). Tenth grade came along and brought a Ms. West with it. Ms. West liked to call everyone "sweet puttuty." That class became one that I could blow-off. As a student in her class, I was required to read some material. Often in the class,

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people did not have there reading or other assignments done. If the whole class come out and said that they did not have enough time, or that something was too hard, she would cave in and extend the deadline. The only problem with this flexible policy was that it happened every time something was due. Most of the time, we could get Ms. West to let us do anything. Sometimes she would even just not require us to turn in assignments if others did not turn them in. This all pretty much turned into a waste of a year of English. Although I did not learn

much from the lady, I still enjoyed being in her class. For the remainder of my high school career, I had somewhat normal English teachers, however, I will always remember English teachers as being a little on the weird side.

Although it sounds as if these teachers may have added a little spice to my learning process, they also took away from the my learning and turned me off to English (as a subject). I suppose in the back of my mind, the teachers I had caused me to place a stereotype on them, making me look at English teachers as being in "la la land." Then I would wonder "why do I have to learn so much about English (the subject).....to be in 'la la land' too?" No thanks. English was additionally my worst subject. It was my worst, because it was my least liked. Ever since I began my formal study of the English language, I did not like practicing grammar or analyzing essays. If I was going to read something, I wanted it to be because I wanted to read it, not because my grade was dependent upon it.

Surprisingly, there were some instances where I did enjoy writing in high school, just not in English class. Through high school, history had always been

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my favorite subject. Around my junior year, writing in history became just as common as writing in English class. For history, I wrote on topics that interested me. I did not always have prior knowledge of the topic I discussed, but I would enjoy researching and learning about that topic, so that writing on it was enjoyable.

During my junior year, I learned a lot about writing. I was not only writing a lot for History, but also for English. The beauty of this situation was that I was taking both Advanced Placement English and Advanced Placement History. This was good because both of my A.P. teachers got together and decided to offer a number of "dual credit" writing assignments. This would allow us to write a history paper (the content) while fulfilling English requirements (the form), thus turning in one paper for two assignments. This was different from the past for two reasons: one, I love history and writing about it came fairly easily; and two, by writing about history and then having the opportunity to incorporate history with different styles of writing and techniques helped me learn more about writing. It also gave me the opportunity, in a way that I have never experienced, to learn to write in a more effective way than in the past. I recognize that this was beneficial to my English education, and was fortunate that I was able to learn and practice my writing skills in such a manner.

Now that I am in college, I reflect back to those days when I could not figure out why English was so important to learn. English: speaking it, reading it, and writing it are very important. Just knowing how to do it won't hack it.

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One must be able to do it well, and correctly too. Why is being a good rhetorician so detrimental?

Let's take getting a job for example. When calling to inquire about the job, one must be able to speak in a professional and educated manner. Then comes the important step of submitting a cover letter and resume. Correct grammar, punctuation, as well as being able to make a good impression through the letter's copy is also important when it comes to first impressions. Once in the interview, knowing how to express oneself through the verbal word becomes most important.

That's where reading comes in to play - vocabulary knowledge and application. In the job interview, one needs to be able to express themselves through an educated vocabulary. This "educated vocabulary" is acquired through a lot of reading. Not to mention the fact that a well rounded vocabulary makes a very good impression.

For myself, I plan on attending law school, and possibly becoming a lawyer. Strong English skills are important here as well. All of the correspondence to and from clients, as well as judges, other lawyers, and businesses, as in any profession, needs to be written well. Then there is the litigation side. In a

courtroom, a lawyer only has so much time and so many opportunities to get his point across. No time can be wasted on poor speaking abilities. A lawyer must know what he needs to say, and deliver it as effectively and efficiently as possible, using correct vocabulary, grammar, and diction. Communication skills in today's job market are a needed essential.

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I have been getting an education in the English language for the last eighteen years. I have enjoyed learning proper English, and I have absolutely hated it. Now as a freshman in college, I still dislike the subject of English. However, I do recognize the importance of being able to read, interpret, speak, and write correctly in society today.