

Descriptive essay: the best teacher i have ever had

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Identifying which teacher was the best I've ever had is a very simple task, despite the array that I have to choose from. He was my history teacher for four years, taking me all the way through the basic knowledge of Nazi Germany to an in-depth study of Russian Tsarism and USSR Communism. What made him the best teacher I've ever had? It can be described very simply: he was engaging and had an interesting life. All too often teachers distance themselves from their students (which was taken to a whole new level at my school, where two teachers working in the same department got married without anyone knowing about it), which leads to their students becoming disengaged with the person at the front of the room.

It's all too easy, in these situations, to see the teacher as a generic employee who you have no real connection to and therefore don't value. My history teacher was different. Unlike most teachers at my school, he was educated at Cambridge and went to a private school. The contrast between his demeanour and way of speaking and the way that many of his students had been brought up was striking; he wore a fine suit even outside of work, while the typical student at my school wore track suit bottoms outside of school with a scruffy t-shirt and trainers. It takes someone special to engage a classroom of 30 teenagers, but somehow he managed it.

Many people would describe him as an eccentric, but I'd say he was more carefree than anything else. He knew that he had the authority in the classroom, yet had a compassionate side. There was one rule that everyone who met him knew they should break at their own risk: insulting the importance of history in his presence was a one-way ticket to experiencing his wrath. The image of a stuffy old history teacher is not an accurate

description of my teacher. He was young, ran marathons, liked to drink (as demonstrated by his request that we buy him wine for a leaving present, not the generic teacher mug) and had a partner.

He was a friendly man, but there was always a clear line between the student and the teacher. After all, he came from a background where teachers were authority figures, not friends. Teaching history is not like teaching any other subject. To teach history you have to relate what you are learning to your students so that they don't become alienated with events that occurred one hundred years ago. It takes something more than a teacher training course to enable a man to get teenagers arguing about which of the Russian Tsars did the greatest things for pre-Soviet Russia; he was just that man.