

Becoming literate

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



From Spanish to English: Becoming Literate Mark Twain once said, “ The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read. ” It was in first grade when I first learned how to read. Mrs. Garza was my teacher and I will never forget her because she is the one that taught me how to read, write, and speak English. If it was not for her encouragement and push she gave me I would not have been where I am today. It was a book that contained a collection of short stories. Words like ‘ mat’ and ‘ hat’ were in this book.

After that year my mom was so happy and proud of me that she bought that book from the school. To this day I still have that book and I look at it from time to time. I was born and raised in McAllen, Texas but the weird thing is that I am the only person in my whole family that was born in the United States! My parents are from Monterrey in Mexico so of course they speak only Spanish with a little bit of English. My first language was Spanish and I did not start speaking English until the end of first grade.

I had already learned my English alphabet in kinder but I never wanted to speak or use English for some reason. Mrs. Garza would have to force us to speak English but my friends and I never wanted to! One day, after trying so many methods, she put little jars in each of the groups in the class. She told us that for every person that she would hear speak Spanish, she was going to place a marble in the jar. At the end of the week whoever had the least marbles would get rewarded with either a candy or an item of some sort. That is how I was forced to speak and write English.

It was then that I started talking to my friends in English as well. At home, I was still speaking Spanish with my parents and siblings. I already knew my

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alphabet so I began to read, write and speak English. To this day, I thank my parents for teaching me Spanish first because it has been very useful. I have never really liked writing. I am in a way kind of like Junot Diaz, I'll be writing and I will not think it is good at all and will just doubt myself. Being a successful writer does take a lot of thinking, years of hard work and dedication, and of course the passion you have for writing.

The words just do not come to me as easy as other people and that frustrates me. I have to really think about it and re-read and re-write it many times before I have a finished product. When it comes to people like Malcom X, he did of course have all of this dedication to learn new words. He did not grow up with all the resources that maybe Junot Diaz and Stephen King did so that pushed him even more to teach himself. These three writers help you realize that these famous authors also have struggled to have a finished product.

They helped me realize that doubting yourself and trashing the first, second, and even a third draft always come before you have it almost perfect. “Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body,” said Richard Steele. This has always been one of my favorite quotes because unlike writing, I have a passion to read. I have always loved to read especially a series. The first series that I ever read was the Junie B. Jones during my elementary years. I would check one out in my school library, return it by the end of the week and quickly get the next one.

To this day, I still consider myself to be an active reader and ever since I got an Amazon Kindle, I read much faster. It is easier for me to take it to anywhere and anytime. I enjoy mostly fiction books but do read other genres

from time-to-time. I have memories of being so excited to add new books to the list whenever I completed them. I always challenge myself to read as many books as I can in a week because of the rush I get after finishing another book. I still read every single day and often cannot put down a book once I start it.

My older sister loves to read as well. We have the same taste in books and I love it because whenever she reads a book she will tell me to read it because she knows I will enjoy it as much as she did. Since she also has a Kindle, we can share the eBooks electronically so I will not actually have to buy a book. She is also in a book club, which sounds nerdy, but she has a lot of fun. They read a different novel every single week and then they meet on Fridays. She loves being in this club because it gives her a chance to talk about the novel to her friends.

I know I am not the only person to say this, but I hate it whenever I read a novel and I immediately want to talk to someone and share my thoughts about it but no one that has read it! My sister has convinced me to join a book club sometime because it is a great way to have fun and enjoy reading even more. Although I love to read, whenever I am assigned a novel it is so hard for me to read it! Last year in my AP English class, my teacher Ms. Grace would assign us a reading list with novels we had to read by specific dates. Some were good but some I was just not interested in so it was very hard to pick up the book and start reading.

For some reason, whenever I am assigned a novel to read and finish it by a specific date, I cannot get myself to read it. Whenever I choose a novel that I want to read I will finish it the very next day, which I find very ironic. I am

thankful that I had the resources to become literate. Life would not be the same if you do not have that skill. I cannot even begin to imagine not being able to read or write. I am glad that I had such a wonderful teacher for first grade because without her encouragement I would not be here today reading, writing, or speaking English.