

# Free essay on literacy

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I remember enjoying reading all the way back to the days when I was in middle school. My favorite form of literature at that time was the short story. I'm not sure if it was the brevity of the story that I liked, or just that I could read the entire story in one sitting, but either way, it is the short story that really cemented my love of reading long ago, something that I still enjoy today.

My interest in short stories continued into high school. When I was taking a writing class I was encouraged by my teacher after my first assignment. She told me about a short story writing contest that the school was having and encouraged me to enter. After I let her know that I was interested, we discussed what I would need to include in my short story to make it a contender for the contest. She explained to me that a short story had to be interesting, well-written, and be a labor of love. Although the many rewrites took a great deal of time, energy, and work, I completed them. Each finished product I felt was better than the previous one. Eventually, I felt that I had written a short story that was interesting, was free of grammatical errors, and would make my teacher proud. I submitted my piece for the contest, and was pleased when I learned that I had earned second place.

It was this experience that led to me writing many short stories in high school. It became a passion that I enjoyed. Those stories were all written in Arabic, my primary language. After high school, I made the decision to complete my education in the United States of America. One of the most difficult challenges that I faced was the language barrier. At this time, I did not write fluent English. I am not one to let an obstacle, such as language, that can be overcome, stop me. Knowing that it would require much hard

work, I enrolled in the English Language Training Institute at the University of North Carolina.

There are many issues in learning a new language. I learned that there are many irregularities in the English language, and many exceptions to the rules. There were times when I felt overwhelmed and I wanted to give up. I thought of returning to my own country because things would be easier speaking and writing in my native tongue. All of the exceptions to English rules can be difficult to remember, but eventually I got back on track and I was determined to be successful in my endeavor. Writing in English seemed especially difficult. It took so much time, patience, and practice to complete many rewrites to make sure that I had followed all of the English rules when I wrote my short stories. It took so much longer to write in English than it did to write in Arabic.

I succeeded only because I remained determined and because of one person. There was one American student at my school who was willing to invest time and patience in me to help me be successful. It is surprising that one person can make such a difference in the life of someone else, but this is an excellent example about how true it is. When I felt overworked, overwhelmed, defeated, and that it just was not worth the effort to go on, I received encouragement from this person that meant so much to me that I was able to look into the face of defeat and decide to overcome it rather than give in to it. He was willing to help me rewrite many drafts to revise my English so that it met the standards the teacher expected. He explained the irregularities of the language to me as best he could in a way that they made sense and I could remember them. He helped me make sense of the

grammatical rules that I struggled with until I felt comfortable with them. He also allowed me to practice speaking English with him. His help was invaluable.

When I came to the United States, I left behind all of my support systems. Everyone I knew, trusted, and would turn to in times of difficulty. When faced with challenging situations after I arrived in the United States, I initially felt alone. My support systems were a half a world away. One person who is close physically can make such a difference in the life of another. After all, people are interdependent creatures, depending upon each other for comfort and in need of relationships in order to survive.

As I slowly began to master writing the English language, it became a little easier each time to write a part of my short story. Each attempt meant a little bit less of a struggle, a little bit more of a feeling of victory and success. I did not need a contest to have the feeling of completion. Just seeing my story written by me in fluid and grammatically correct English language was a reward in and of itself.

This mastery of the written English language also helped me to know that my decision to come to the United States to further my education had been the right one as well. I had overcome perhaps the biggest obstacle that I would face, the language barrier, with success. I was now ready for success in the college system as well. My confidence level had been elevated to the point that I knew that I could be successful in a college classroom in the United States of America, so I decided to take the next bold, determined, and decisive step in my educational career. I applied to be a college student at the University of North Carolina.

Although I am still far from home, I know that I have made the right choice. My friends, family, and other loved ones may not all understand why I have decided to earn my degree in the United States, but they do support my decision. I know that I have made the right choice for myself and my future. English is still not easy. I must think before I speak, and think harder before I write. I do hope that one day I am bilingual with Arabic and English. That is part of what influenced my decision to stay in North Carolina and study here. Being immersed in the English language is definitely helping me to learn the language. I am learning the irregularities along with the grammar and pronunciation. I am trying to watch my accent so that I am understood by others as well as possible. Every day I am immersed in the language, both in oral and written communication, so that my practice is constant and my mastery of the language is practiced frequently. I am also writing my short stories in English, and they are improving all of the time.