

A log in the river:

Profession, Teacher



A Log in the River: An Analysis of "I Just Wanna to Be Average" It's a typical Monday morning. The alarm goes off and you roll over to get an extra five minutes of sleep. Eventually, your mom comes down and pulls you out of bed because you are going to be late for school. You drag yourself to class and the day passes you by. I agree with Mike Rose that having a strong mentor or dedicated teacher changes one's outlook on education and success in class. The effect a strong mentor or dedicated teacher has on students is shown in "I Just Wanna Be Average," an excerpt from *Lives on the Boundary* by Mike Rose. Rose is a professor at UCLA, an award winning author, and educational expert. Teachers are like the water in a lake, and students are like the boats. The higher the water level, the higher the boat will be. When the lake decreases in depth the boats will sink lower. The analogy shows "Students float to the mark you set" (Rose 164). There are many examples of when I have floated to the mark set by my teachers throughout my education. Some were highly skilled and others were there to just give the lesson and go home at the end of the day. My experience with teachers that had no vested interest in their students was sub par. I dreaded classes with teachers that were not enthusiastic about teaching. Ms. Wennel was my Spanish teacher throughout high school. She was having family problems and her mind was pre-occupied with everything but teaching Spanish. Ms. Wennel was never available after school to help students if they were having trouble. Eventually I acquired the same mentality she had: get there, do what I had to do, and get out. The mark she set was low and that affected my mentality. On the other hand, the classes that I enjoyed and learned the most were the ones with highly motivated and skilled teachers.

My sophomore English teacher just received her masters from James Madison University. Ms. Mulner came into school everyday with a smile on her face and was thrilled to teach. She had achieved something that other teachers could not. I waited for fifth period to come everyday just to be in her class. My teachers affected my success in class. Ms. Wennell is an example of a teacher having a negative impact on student's success while Ms. Mulner shows how a teacher can have a positive impact on student's success. She helped me stay focused in class through her passion for teaching. During the four years spent in high school, students are surrounded by temptation. One has more freedom now than in the past, "Your attention wavers. You wonder about other things. " (Rose 168). and there is always something that could be perceived as being more important than one's education. During school from Monday morning until the last bell on Friday I was focused on the weekend. I would sit in math and everything my teacher, Mr. Sales, said would go in one ear and out the other. The last thing I wanted to be doing was learning how to factor polynomials. One class that I stayed focused in was History with Mr. Rali. He understood that most of his students had no interest in history and that we felt disengaged from the past. In all of his lessons he would incorporate relevant ideas and talk about the upcoming Friday night football game. Jack MacFarland, Rose's English teacher, did the same thing for Rose which Mr. Rali did for my class and I. They both built up our knowledge with facts and connections. Mr. Rali's approach to teaching changed my outlook on education and success in class. Referring to education and effort put into school Rose states, " I did what I had to do to get by, and I did it with half a mind" (164). I can relate to Rose

because for most of high school I had a lack-luster view on education. I would go because I had no other choice and when I was there I would not apply myself. I sometimes felt like a log drifting in a river. Junior year is when everything changed. I met Susan Rosenthal during the first weeks of school. She was my new academic advisor. One day she called me into her office to talk about my grades and what I wanted to do for college. I told her my goals and some of the schools I was thinking about applying to. She made it painfully clear to me that at this point in time, with my low grades I would have a hard time getting into most of the schools I wanted to apply to. She promised me if I made a strong effort to bring up my grades she would do everything she could to help me out. Once a month we would meet to see how I was doing. Our monthly meetings would continue up until graduation. My view on education did not change until I met Susan Rosenthal. She was a strong mentor and without her help and dedication I would view education the way I do now. Attending a vocational education school Mike Rose was subjected to a variety of teachers. Some were unskilled and abusive while others helped change his life. Through these experiences Rose believes that having strong mentors and dedicated teachers changes one's outlook on education and success in class. I also believe this is true because through strong mentors and dedicated teachers my outlook on education and success in class has changed for the better. I went from dreading English to not wanting to leave, daydreaming in class to focusing on every fact given, and not caring about my grades to giving my best effort. Education can be taken for granted or used as a tool for success.