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The Effects of Motivation on Reading & Writing: A Student's Perspective

When it comes to reading and writing, I only found myself highly motivated when I was interested in the subject matter. I reasonably drew this conclusion based on the fact that I consciously worked harder if I enjoyed what I was doing. Motivation is something that energizes, directs, and sustains a behavior, it makes people go the extra degree, pushes them in the right direction, and keeps that momentum going. It was the biggest contributor to my literacy trajectory, besides literary sponsors, and I can assume many students have had a similar journey to my own. I believe that if a student is motivated they are more likely to be creative and product higher quality work.

As a young child I learned how to read because of my literary sponsor: my grandfather. He was a self-taught World War II veteran who dropped out of high school at the age of sixteen. My grandfather would tell me war stories about his time served overseas, which sparked my initial interest in history. When I hoy a little older, and he ran out of stories to tell, he started reading books from his library about the war to me. I still remember being able to picture the stories in my head: a Polish pilot dog-fighting with a German fighter over Britain, and his account of the

story from his cockpit seat. I felt this struggle

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and every fiber of my being wanted him to win. This helped my literary skills develop before I was even out kindergarten and prepared for me for a lackluster reading experience through grade school.

Elementary school introduced me to the world of uninteresting literature. My teacher would let students pick the books they wanted to read, but the selection was full of boring fairytales and other childish stories. I was not motivated to read any of them because I was used to more sophisticated literature by this time. Reading in school felt like a chore, while reading at home felt like a reward. I found myself discovering new genres of literature, but the books *Artemis Fowl* quickly became my favorite. It taught me about morals and friendship, while also helping me add more depth to my own literacy. I still remember the lessons the teenage criminal mastermind taught me even now in college, and I have applied them throughout my entire life. I learned much more by reading what I wanted to and basically ignoring what my teachers wanted me to read.

This trend continued all the way into middle school and into my writing process. I would only read books that I thought were interesting. If I had no control over the subject matter I was writing about, I had no drive to do it well or at all. Writing a book report on a book that was forced upon me was the hardest work I could be assigned, because I didn't make a concerted effort to understand the material. Looking back, I rushed through most of my assignments so I could either read something interesting or just do something else. This caused my writing skills to suffer, as I not only had no interest in what I was writing about, but also knew very little

about the subject matter.

High school turned out to be a different story. My teachers focused on giving their students the freedom to choose their subject matter and the books they read. My English teacher, Dr. Dean, was my

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biggest influence during these years; I had as a teacher every year for four years. For our first assignment, he let us choose any book that was written before the year 1900; I ended up choosing *Dante's Inferno*. I wanted to read it anyway, and now I had an excuse to read as much as I wanted, provided I didn't neglect my other class work. I quickly went from being a student of high risk to being a high achiever. The motivation I had when being able to choose for myself led to a dramatic increase in performance. Now, in college I practically have free reign over what I write. I can choose whatever I want to write about within a very broad subject with every paper. For me, and probably many other students, there is a high correlation between freedom, motivation, and success.

I am a prime example on how motivation and passion can push a lackluster student onto the right path towards literacy. If a student is given the freedom to choose a subject that interests them, they will be motivated. This would cause them to more easily make sense of the information and apply what they learn, while also increasing the odds that they will read and write more in the long run. Motivating students to continue to read and write, even after they leave their formal education behind, should be the number one goal of teachers as literacy sponsors.