

The Impact of English Studies on My Education

When I reflect on how I became the inquisitive woman that I am today, I recall all the surreal and vicarious experiences which the study of English has given me. When pondering the development of my perceptive abilities, I'm drawn to Joni Mitchell's song lyric: "it's life's illusions I recall." It's the illusion of living beside the scintillating snow fields in *Ethan Frome* or of being Hedda Gabler jokingly shooting at Judge Brack. It's the illusion of feeling blood rush through my veins as I pronounce "sanguine" or of living in an eerie hyper-reality after reading Jean Baudrillard's *America*. With every word I read, breathe, or recite, whole universes beckon—so I depart. Studying English has stretched my ability to imagine; and thus, to reason and to communicate.

My analytical nature and acute attention to connotation began in Mr. Baker's sixth grade English class. Studying song lyrics of metaphoric mistresses such as Mitchell, Merchant, and Morissette awoke me to the world of deeper meanings. After Mr. Baker took my class through a close reading of Joni Mitchell's song, "Both Sides Now," I began to search for symbols and connotative nuances in everything I read. Learning to recognize symbols in seemingly dainty song lyrics has enabled me to probe deeper in other classes. In Spanish class, my search for deeper meaning led me to find the symbolic political criticism in Nicolás Guillén's poem "Sensemayá." As my awareness of the interconnected world of ideas blossomed, so did my need for a broader vocabulary to explore and express it.

When I realized that my cognition was limited by the insufficient pool of words with which I could think, I began inhaling words like oxygen. I wanted to breathe out poetry, so I needed to breathe tools for expression. I enjoy educating myself, learning

new words via email subscriptions and word-a-day calendars. Journaling words for AP English was so enjoyable that I now keep a personal journal of words and quotes that inspire me.

I see language as my access to the world beyond. For me, studying English is never really studying—it is, rather, exploring. As I close the covers of an old friend or set down a favorite pen, I reemerge from a lucid trance into a heightened state of perception. Filled with vicarious experiences and novel sensations transmitted through the creative power of words, I am ready to share with the world the vivacity I feel. Exposure to literature has pushed me to explore the literary community beyond high school: I attend poetry readings where I am the only soul under 30; I participate in such readings; and I submit my poems to contests. The enthralling feelings I get from learning new words or hearing a clever poem far outweigh the satisfaction I get from winning literary contests or earning A's on essays. For me, the joy in studying literature lies not in lists of literary accomplishments, but in the adventures of creating and unmasking novel truths.