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*Application Essay (“The Impact of English Studies on My Education”)*

Curious George always seemed to unearth some kind of mischief, while the mouse in If You Give a Mouse a Cookie awakened my senses and triggered peals of laughter. I am thankful to my parents for reading to me every night, even when I chose to hear the same book for months at a time. For some unknown reason I never tired of hearing about Zwibble the Star-touched Dinosaur, or Lars the polar bear. Books have become my closest companions over the years, as their pages open up new worlds through magic wardrobes and underground tunnels.

Somewhere among all the times that my cheeks puffed up like a prickly blowfish so as to get enough air to waft out the flame above my birthday candles, I grew up. Corduroy the bear found his place on my shelf next to Shel Silverstein and Dr. Seuss. I went through every Nancy Drew mystery, Babysitter’s Club, Boxcar Kids series till there were no more and I had to go back through them all again. I progressed and fell in love with Ray Bradbury, Robert Cormier, Ernst Hemmingway, Nicholas Sparks, John Steinbeck, J.D. Salinger, and Maya Angelou. I found poetry in Pablo Neruda, Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, and Gertrude Stein. I found memoirs in Dave Pelzer, Augusten Burroughs, and Jeanette Walls. Late into the night I searched for myself, for the world inside literature.

I found that as humans, we exist in a dreamland where all we can see is the inner darkness of our eyelids, ignorant to all that surrounds us. Are the shadows dancing across the caves of our lives similar to those of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave?” Are they deceitful representations of reality? Even though the shadows of ignorance do not burn our eyes, we have to sacrifice certain things for knowledge and take the good as well as the bad that comes with the light. Similar to Oedipus in Sophocles play, Oedipus Rex we are blind to certain realities that

make up a huge part of the world we live in. Literature tells us tales about truths that we are often too blind to see. Short stories like Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" have reminded me that we are only human. Inevitably, we are all going to make mistakes and eventually slip from the path of righteousness. No one is perfect.

Reading allows readers to view themselves as invented, yet realistic characters. I can imagine myself as Yossarian, in Joseph Heller's Catch-22, trapped in a world confused with contradictions and uncertainties. Samuel Beckett's characters, Vladimir and Estragon in his play, Waiting for Godot, mirror people everywhere, waking to the same monotonous tasks every day. We are all waiting for salvation, only to fall into a repetitive circle over and over. Robert Jordan, in Ernest Hemmingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls, teaches us the similarities there are among people everywhere, even when they stand on two opposing sides; we are all one in the same. When we allow ourselves to inspect fiction more closely we are permitted to see all the clues and details that come together in order to teach us about ourselves, and everyone around us.

School has reinforced the importance of the English language for me. Without the help of my AP Literature teacher, I would have never seen Hamlet in the light that she shined on him. I may have never read Jean-Paul Sartre's "No Exit" and learned about existentialism. Without her I may have never picked up Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried and vicariously experienced the Vietnam War as a soldier. English has allowed me to learn things about myself as a person. It has taught me to apply the meaning of the words that I have devoured and analyzed into my own life. Grammar and vocabulary are not the only things I was taught in English class over the years; I was taught how to be a person.