

“The Impact of English Studies On My Education”

A famous satirical and often cynical author, Mark Twain, once quipped something about schooling getting in the way of his education; a quote that has now been copied, distributed, and scribbled down all across the world by frustrated students who cannot seem to find the value of the world of academia in their daily lives. English is often just another course credit required for graduation, but, for me, English may have saved my life.

Half way through my junior year in high school, my best friend and former boyfriend, Peter Marenakos, committed suicide. I was drowning in a world of helplessness and grief without him, and there were often days when I simply lacked the strength to carry my burden, I and fell prey to the dark despair that was trying to consume me.

My first class every morning was English with Mrs. Russler. As we entered the second semester we began preparing in earnest for the AP English Language exam, and we concentrated on patterns of development in our essays. Our first assignment was a descriptive essay, and I went home that night with memories and senses of Peter still twining themselves around me. I sat down to write the essay, and suddenly nothing seemed more natural than to write about him. I poured forth a story and took it in the next day and, to my astonishment, was able to read it aloud to the class without collapsing into the painful aches. As the year continued, Mrs. Russler gave me many more opportunities to use writing as a channel for my grief. I wrote memories that Peter and I had shared together; I typed an essay on how much love and compassion my younger sister had

given me, and I even created a process analysis on how to put together a scrapbook, which I had done for Peter's parents.

I fell in love with Emily Dickinson that spring and avidly devoured each poem we had to read for class. Her words were my thoughts and my emotions, and I have a notebook with her timeless quote scribbled down: "Parting is all we know of Heaven, and all we need of Hell." I am still entranced by her eloquence in conveying the feelings that I had come to know so well.

As a senior in high school, I have been given the inspirational opportunity to study Creative Writing under our Dean of Faculty, Nick Bozanic, who is a published poet. I have learned more about writing, philosophy, and life in his class than I ever thought possible, and I can only hope to carry some of his passion and knowledge into my next four years of learning. My time at Ashley Hall has given me the tools and skills to write well, but my teachers have given me the power of individuality and have had confidence in my ability to succeed and survive. I fought back from the dark pit of despair, because I was given the opportunity to breath life into a few typed, black letters on pages of bright, white paper, and for that I can never give enough thanks. English has not only given me enough classes to receive my high school diploma on May 31st, but it has also given me the chance to live again.