

Natasha Belanich

Literacy Autobiography Outline/Summary

Quotes can be interpreted in many ways. A simple quote can help to explain the exact message you want to convey to any audience. As stated in *Les Miserables*, **“To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable spelled out sparkles.”** My life has been filled with sparkle, from significant family members who have been influential in my development not only as a reader and writer, but also as a speaker a listener.

Background Focus:

Literacy includes four aspects of communication: speaking, listening, reading and writing. I have always made an effort to continually represent my best work through a creative twist on anything that is brought my way in life. I recognize that nothing is ever perfect, yet I know I can try to make a difference in some way. I strived and continue to strive to be a student who persevered when needing extra help in reading and now to be a teacher who is remembered. I try to create and transform lessons with engaging learning. I believe that lessons which include creativity, allow for memories to be made and learning and collaborative engagement to occur.

I have seen the transformation of literacy with the use of technology through the years. When I was little, I remember always interacting with my sisters and playing teacher with our toys. I remember the large chalkboard in our basement which surrounded all of our lessons. As a teacher today, the SMART Board and Eno Boards (interactive whiteboards) have replaced these chalkboards. Teachers have put down the colored chalk and now have an electronic pen where we select colors on a side panel. My literacy development has changed with the times, yet traditions and family influence will always remain a backbone.

Literacy Autobiography Scrapbook

I. Page 1- The Beginning

***The education and literacy levels and literate activities of current and preceding generations of your family**

There is no substitute for books in the life of a child.” – Mary Ellen Chase

The pictures on this page represent the beginning of my growth as an individual who would later follow in her mother’s footsteps to become an elementary school teacher. From the time I was born, March 5th, 1992, I entered a family who loved learning and had a passion for books. I grew up in a big family with three sisters. Both my parents are certified teachers. The times have changed from when they taught in the past from chalkboards being replaced by SMART Boards and interactive plays replaced with technology projects.

My mom and dad both attended college and received their masters. My mom has a Master’s Degree in Special Education and my dad received a general Master’s Degree. As an elementary school teacher, my mom created innovative activities to include literacy and learning that was interactive and expressive. Represented in these pictures you can see her with her

students seated in front of a chalkboard which is almost obsolete today. Her students are also seen in dressed up costumes to make learning enjoyable. I have learned so much from her and I try to emulate this passion for teaching in my teaching career. I have always been drawn to the creative aspect of education and I incorporate this in my own teaching. One particular event which my mom has always talked about was her role as a co-director in the production of, *You're A Good Boy Charlie Brown*. These pictures are filled with memories and they allow for so many family conversations.

My dad is also seen in a few pictures. Although his literacy is reading music, as a high school music teacher, his goals for interacting and communicating are represented through storytelling using musical instruments. My parents have inspired me to support all diverse learners and to develop into the person I am today based on their literacy practices.

II. Page 2 – Family Inspirations

***The role that written language has played in your home and in your family's social, cultural, occupational, and religious practices (also consider the role of oral language – storytelling, for example, or family talk)**

“Children are made readers in the laps of their parents.” – Emilee Buchwald

“Write down who you were, who you are, and what you want to remember.” – Natalie Goldberg

-Pictures with influential people in my life

My mom and dad

- As a teacher my mom created a time capsule with her students of the things they believed would be nonexistent ten years from when they were in school. A handwritten letter was among one of these “soon-to-be extinct” items and I have included one she wrote to me in 1999.
- I do not know the last time I received a handwritten letter, besides annual birthday cards and my first grade pen pal letters that I would send and receive. Today, the elevation of social media has increased with Facebook sending notifications to write a quick “Happy Birthday” and cellphones with texting. The mailbox is now represented on a cellphone as compared to the box outside a person's house.
- My mom has always shown me the importance of a book and would always read to me when I was little. The physical touch of a book and the action of turning a page is more memorable than sliding your finger to the side to change a page on a technological device. My mom has instilled in me the importance of books and all the knowledge that can come from a single book. I have been collecting books since I can remember and I find them so special because each holds a special memory.

My Auntie Auntie and my Grandma Rosie

- My Auntie Auntie and Grandma Rosie have been an extreme influence on my view of reading and writing. Whenever I was over my grandparent's house in the summer, my great great aunt was always ready to talk and have a face-to-face conversation.
- When she was little, my Auntie Auntie became blind in one eye, but this did not push her away from reading or writing. Even up until the last time I saw her, she was reading books that my grandma would buy her or would take out of the library with the "large print" labels. I could always count on her when it was my birthday and I received a handwritten letter. I have learned from her that communication is key to success and authors communicate stories in books where we can escape and writing is an outlet to communicate with another person. I will always remember my Auntie Auntie's passion for reading and writing.
- Grandma Rosie- on the back of pictures would hand-write the name of everyone in it

III. Page 3 – Family Influence

"The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease to ever be able to do it." – J.M. Barrie (Peter Pan)

***The kinds of reading and writing you have done in school and outside of school (including purpose and audience)**

- Family has been an extreme support system to my development as a reader and writer.
- Family gatherings and mini traditions have laid the foundation for developing my speaking and listening skills.
- My parents and sisters are always there as a support system.
- Storytelling has occurred based on these memories made.

IV. Page 4-5 – Family traditions and storytelling

"Stories are the single most powerful tool in a leader's toolkit." – Howard Gardner
"Speak in such a way that others love to listen to you. Listen in such a way that others love to speak to you." – Anonymous

- Family traditions: every year my dad reads my mom's childhood story, *Twas the Night Before Christmas*
- Birthdays with siblings
- Christmas traditions : Miss 1996

V. Page 6-7 – Shifts and Continuations of Traditions

“The desire to write grows with writing.” – Desiderius Erasmus

“You learn to write better by reading. You learn to read better by writing. Reading and Writing work together to improve your ability to think!”

“What if I fall? Oh, my darling, what if you fly?”

“Creativity is now as important in education as literacy.” –Sir Ken Robinson

- Past Christmas gifts – Whiteboard and markers: influencing a love for writing and print
- Books- From the past to present and current teaching book of quotations from my family
- Movies- Spending time together and making memories to reflect on in the future with conversational talk
- “Natasha Goes to School” – Perseverance to, “Not be labeled as average” and pursue my dreams in my educational goals by becoming a better reader and writer
- Art- The importance of creativity to express yourself. This has influenced my writing and teaching experiences with literacy in the classroom.

VI. Page 8-12 – Writing Samples from the past

***The role reading and writing in developing your identity**

“I have found the most valuable thing in my wallet is my library card.” – Laura Bush

“Everyone is a reader...Some just haven’t found their book yet.”

- Page 8- Influential teachers and school years- first grade
- Page 9- My writing started out as broken and rough. I was inspired by my teachers to increase my writing from journal writing during the school year to pen pal writing with my favorite teacher years later.
- Page 10-12: My third grade teacher influenced me to write and read and reflect on my reading and writing through an open house activity.
 - How I See Me, Who Are You?, Library Resource Center Inventory, Interest Inventory
 - Various pictures of visiting my sisters’ classrooms
 - Inspired by my sisters and education

VII. Page 13-16 – Creativity influences the present

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Include me and I will learn.”
“If I can think it...I can say it. If I can say it...I can write it. If I can write it...I can read it. And so can others.”

- Student Fieldwork Observer and Student Teacher Experiences
 - I created interactive literacy lessons and interspersed various content areas to include reading and writing.
 - Think Pair Share – Read 180 adapted lesson
 - How Do Plants Grow?
 - Fiction vs. Non Fiction : *Owl Babies*
 - Math Lesson – *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*
 - Stoplight Paragraph writing
 - The Three Branches of Government
 - The Mayflower Compact journal writing
 - Hula Hoop Venn Diagrams
 - Graphing with pictures – pictograph
 - Activating Schema
 - Box of Crayons
 - Page 16 – Preschool Classroom
 - Library, phonics, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* crafts
 - Handwriting with tracing, letter associations
 - SMART Board usage in addition to whiteboards

VIII. Page 17-20

-Growth of a writer, listener, communicator (speaker) and reader

-Page 18 **“I won’t be labeled as average,”** was stated by Rachel Joy Scott. I have continued to use this outlook on life as a writer and individual. I had the opportunity to be a writer in my middle school newspaper and included an article I co-wrote with my younger sister in 2004, regarding this quotation. Flash ahead about ten years to 2014 and I included the same inspiration in my Valedictorian Candidate Speech.

- Page 19 With a 4.0 GPA and various volunteer hours and honor societies, I was a Valedictorian Candidate. I wrote a speech which included my message of making a chain reaction like Rachel Joy Scott wanted.
 - I have grown from being a shy student from elementary school to earning Departmental Honors in Child Study and Speech Communication.
 - Admittance letter into Literacy and Cognition (Master’s Program)
- Various writing samples through the years (handwritten to typed)