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Whispers of A Young Writer: Influence of My First Childhood Novel

Hickle-up: You fight bad guys?

Corny: Yes. I am a hero.

(An illustration of a green bacteria-like person looking up in wonder at a yellow bacteria-like man in a cape.)

Hickle-up: Wow! Take me with you.

Corny: No. It is not safe.

(An illustration of the green bacteria-like person on his knees, tears in his eyes, holding the yellow bacteria-like person's hands.)

Hickle-up: But we are friends! I want to see!

Going on a rescue mission like superman has crossed every child's mind at least once. To me, it not only crossed my mind, but manifested into something irreplaceable to me. The very first story I ever penned. I could not recall much about it, at least not until my uncle returned from India with it. The importance of that initial book may not lie in its content but in the indelible emotions the memory carries. The first piece of work is possibly the most important piece in a child's memory.

Do you remember when you gave me this book? My uncle brought it up over a cup of coffee. It brightened my day to learn that he had preserved a half-dozen paged book for over

eighteen years.

Hickle-up and Corny, my first novel, if we can call it that. As a child, the pride I felt after completing the novel was indescribable. As I flipped through the thin, deteriorating pages, the scrawny drawings and the one-liner dialogues almost appeared to jump off the page with life. The cover was a large dark blue color paper folded down the middle. The rough texture brought about a wave of nostalgia. I remembered how much I loved making cover pages using construction paper. On it, you could see the title and a picture of the two protagonists smiling. But perhaps the most memorable aspect of that front page was my name. *An epic story written by Tanush Deshpande*. I thought maybe I was the next Dav Pilkey. Even though I could not previously recall the book's contents, the associated emotions have never left me. And now, with the faded pages sprawled before me, I could see the effort and time I had placed into creating this “masterpiece.”

There was a desire, burning like a candle flame, back then as a child to share my story. I wanted the world to know I had written a masterpiece. I had made multiple copies, eagerly handing one to every visitor despite my mother’s scolding. *Write your books, son, but don’t burden other people with it*, she said. *At least, don’t cry when they do not have your book anymore*. The visitors had always replied to this with a hearty laugh, promising me they will take great care of my books. My father had taken a different stance, sharing copies with coworkers and bringing back their feedback. *Keep up the good work! Keep me in touch with Hickle-up’s and Corny’s journey! I love the artwork!* Pride and confidence welled inside me, fueling my burning aspirations. I was beyond elated.

Despite its small and forgotten nature, the significance of that book is undeniable. The

responses from friends and family fueled my future passion for writing, especially my parents' support. My parents are old-fashioned, who put education foremost. While they never discouraged other activities, they always made sure I am putting my own literacy foremost. When I declared my intention to devote time to writing a novel, I expected objections. Instead, they said, *go ahead! Write up something marvelous!* They later invested in my passion. My mother got me my first public library card. She would spend every weekend there with me. I can still remember running down the aisles filled with books on both sides. It was my Shangri-La. My father bought me a golden colored ball-point pen. For a child of five years, that was a treasure of a lifetime. I felt compelled to use that pen in the most graceful manner possible: writing stories.

The feelings and responses associated with the first major “novel” one writes can heavily influence future perspectives on writing. Deborah Brandt, a professor emerita of English at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, explored this in her article “Remembering Writing, Remembering Reading.” She interviewed forty people about their literacy experiences, highlighting the different positions of writing and reading held in households at a young age. They were all unique in their age, race, heritage and the ways they were brought up. While some interviewees had little to no memories of writing, others shared often negative memories. These interviewees had a lonely, solemn feel for their stories. Eleven-year-old Michael Murdoch, for instance, wrote his first story at five when he moved to a new neighborhood, a tale about a pig struggling to make friends. Another example is Carla Krauss. The 60-year-old Midwestern woman recalled her first poem inspired by waiting alone on her front porch for her older sister to arrive home (Brandt). While Brandt did not explicitly clarify whether these individuals did not

pursue writing in the future, it is safe to assume they might not have been as inclined as those with pleasant memories attached to writing. Unlike my positive experience, their early writing memories were tinged with solitude and longing, contrasting starkly with the joy and encouragement I received from my family and friends. This distinction highlights the potential impact of early writing experiences on shaping one's future relationship with writing. I believe this can be traced back to psychology, akin to Ivan Pavlov's experiment of conditioning (Gantt). If your first writing memory is associated with negativity, you are disinclined to continue, and vice versa.

A child's first book should be treasured, similar to how my uncle treasured it. It is a significant source of inspiration. Looking at the faded blue color paper, I can still feel the happiness I felt as a child, like it was yesterday. My parent's belief in my interest in writing is possibly what inspired me to continue.

To encourage interest and passion in writing, I firmly believe all parents should encourage their children to write creatively and subsequently appreciate their efforts, irrespective of the outcome. It is not about becoming the next Dav Pilkey; it is about how their efforts are received. Children will remember the praise they received for their first pieces of writing. A few lines can serve as the backbone for the motivation of a future author. The first piece of writing is possibly the most important one.

Hickle-up: That was so much fun!

Corny: Yes.

(An illustration of a green and yellow bacteria-like man standing on a building.)

Hickle-up: We should do this again!

Corny (nodding SFX): Definitely. In the second part!

Works Cited

- Brandt, Deborah. "Remembering Writing, Remembering Reading." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1994, pp. 459–79. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/358760>.
- Gantt. *Ivan Pavlov | Biography, Theory, Conditioning, Dog, & Facts | Britannica*. 2 Nov. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ivan-Pavlov>.