

Professor McCarthy

ENGL 1121

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Pages in Time.

While going to bed one evening at the age of six years old, I remember my dad recounting to me an old African tale he had heard from his parents growing up. The story was about a boy named “Crocoboy” who was treated horribly by his stepmother and stepsisters, Mia and Maya. One day, his stepmother called out, “Mia, Mya come here, let Crocoboy stay there,” when calling the children for dinner. After they had finished, “Crocoboy” had finally been allowed to eat the remains left behind in their dishes and clean the mess. An elf within their village took notice of the mother's favoritism towards Mia and Maya over Crocoboy and used this to his advantage. He visited their family home one day and called out the famous saying, “Mia, Mya come here, let Crocoboy stay there.” Upon hearing this, the girls walked out for dinner as usual but were instead surprised to find a monster in place of their mother. Unfortunately for them, the monster, craving a meal himself, killed them, leaving the mother with only her stepson, Crocoboy. The moral of the story told to me at that age reminded me to treat everyone with respect because you never know what may happen next. After hearing the story that night, I vividly remember not being able to fall asleep, as the details my dad described replayed repeatedly in my head. Although the story affected my ability to rest that night, I believe the buddings of my interest in reading were officially sprouted here. I have always heard from friends of mine that, “The importance of storytelling or reading is unimportant” or, “My phone can easily do that for me.” I believe nonreaders often find it hard to enjoy a good book because they don’t allow themselves the ability to imagine the stories within their head, or that

the movie version of that same series will produce the same effect. Younger generations also aren't finding the time to read anymore with the amount of time spent on devices. Others may just find it to be a boring experience overall. Although I agree that reading is not always everyone's favorite option, I find reading to be an experience that can fill many of the voids of imagination, fantasy, and freedom.

A non-reader may say that they find it harder to imagine the story within their head, thinking to themselves that there is no point in doing it. Though I believe that imagining characters while reading can be difficult, Book reading can be an immersive experience allowing you to leave the realm of your reality and become present in an almost entirely new reality completely. This breaking of reality calls to mind a story I read one summer titled, *The Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros. The main character, Violet, is set to enter a college solely designated for dragon riders, except she had never been interested in the concept of dragons or riding them. She felt herself to be more aligned with the works of a scribe. As I read that summer day, I didn't just see the words as they ran off the page, I imagined them within my head and became present in an entirely different reality. I felt myself drifting off into a headspace that wasn't my own. It felt like I was in Violet's shoes. All I felt were scales as I fled from danger on the back of a dragon. It jerked from left to right as I struggled to stay upright. Soon, the dragon extended its body in an almost vertical fashion. Pushing upward. The struggle between gravity and my body intensified, and I felt myself falling. My legs came out from under me. I could see the green grass rushing towards me, I thought to myself that this was the end. My mind wandered, and soon I was back to reality. Flipping the pages and reading the words as they ran off the page. This is what reading allows me to do. Carrying the ability to imagine a story in my head lets me be taken to a time and place where I don't happen to exist. I can break the bounds of space and time with the simple pages of a book between my palms.

I've heard many times from people my age and older than me that reading doesn't serve a purpose, because the movie serves a better overall experience, or that the movie will just be out next year. Reading can foster the growth of the young mind. In fourth grade, I had been placed in a group specifically for kids who showed advanced skills in reading and writing. Around that same year, the lady in charge, Mrs. Hubert, had us read a book titled *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L' Engle. I believe that around that same year or later, the movie would be coming out in theaters. In handing us the books, Mrs. Hubert knew the importance of us reading, as opposed to seeing the movie in person. The story described the life of a girl by the name of Meg Murry who went with her younger brother, and friend on an adventure in which she ended up saving her father from an evil brain-like entity known as "it." As we read, we were able to discuss with those in the group and think about the concepts of the book as they played out within our heads. Once we all got to the point of the book before Meg found her father, I remember Mrs. Hubert asking us who we thought had taken Meg's Father prisoner. All of us rattled off answers of earlier characters described within the book. None of us could've guessed that this character was not a "being" at all but rather an "it." Reading what would happen next as opposed to seeing it had us all on the edges of our seats. Later, as I got older, I got the chance to view the movie at home, but my most important memory was the story I got to imagine as the words leaped off the page in front of me. My experiences reading as opposed to watching the movie were vastly different. As I watched, there were no words in front of me, and there also weren't any characters imagined in my head. Each feeling of the characters was thoroughly explained within the book, while I felt the movie lacked these key details. Even the look of the characters, although well thought out, had not been what I imagined in my head as I read. In the movie "it" is just this booming voice that is able to take control of its hosts. In the book, I

remember feeling like “it” was similar to that of a brain. For me, the book experience gave me more liberation when it came to the realm of fantasy.

In addition, younger generations aren’t being as heavily exposed to reading as new technology has emerged. My mind is often confused when I see younger kids spend their time playing games or mindlessly scrolling through their phones. The power of reading can provide your mind with more sustenance than any electronic will ever provide you. My younger sister, Jaylyn, and I had a conversation on the concept of reading when she got home from school. I remember asking what books she had read recently. She replied that she just “brings the books home and never actually reads them.” I sat there thinking to myself why it was that she never felt the need to crack open any of the books she brought home. I then realized that the answer was right under my nose. She had a vastly different experience growing up than my other sister and me. We weren’t as exposed to technology as she was at our age, providing us with more time to look for fun in other ways. One of those ways for me was through reading. It has always left me with a sense of calm, and happiness, that I feel technology has just never been able to provide.

Furthermore, I’ve happened to hear many times from people my age that reading is an outdated experience. Though I believe reading can be outdated, depending on what you read, it has also saved and entertained me in countless ways. During my 7th grade year, I remember going on spring break and never making the return to school that year, or the year after that, due to COVID-19. Losing the connections formed with friends and feeling stuck within the restricted walls of my home, I found friendship in other ways. Through the stories I read, I was able to imagine myself in another world. Stories of love, triumph, and even death filled my time. The emotions that would run through my head after finishing each were endless. At times, I would break down in tears over the endings. A story I felt stayed with me the most during this time was a story titled, *Sickened*, by Gregory Julie. It told the story of a girl who was constantly being

dragged to the hospital, at the hands of her mother, with diseases she didn't possess. The main character managed to fight herself out of this toxic cycle and abusive household, Although the story itself was rather heavy for a 7th grader, it gave me the hope I needed to be able to push through the pandemic lockdown. Being able to form stories in my head were essential to my middle years.

It seems, that most find cracking open a book to be dull, find the movie a better method of telling a story, allow technology to fill their minds, or something that may just be words on a page. I understand these ideologies, but I also believe that if given the time, reading can fill many of the voids most lack within their imagination and fantasy. During a car ride, my dad described to me a story that marked the moment it all started for me. When I was about 4 years old, we went to the post office, and I sat down while he waited in line. Next to me were several newspapers. According to him, I started reading the words. The words themselves weren't very accurate to what was presented on the page, but he remembers everyone laughing as I read them. I was in my little world, and I seemed as If I knew the stories in the newspaper. I guess this moment can also be attributed to the growth of my reading. Hopefully, the importance of reading and storytelling may implant within you the same vivid feelings the images of the story my father recounted to me held within my head and heart.