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The Beginning of My Love for English

I read Percy Jackson in 3rd grade. I loved that series of books. I remember reading them and then thinking about how the stories were so real. As a kid, I read these stories and I thought about how the stories felt true to life despite being fantasy-style fiction. They were the first books that I read that were written for “big kids”. I was enamored with these stories. I was especially interested in reading Percy Jackson. I loved how a boy with ADHD was the main character in this story. Instead of his ADHD hindering him in this book, his ADHD was actually a superpower. I was easily able to connect with this as I also grew up struggling with ADHD. While I have been able to manage it in my adult life, it seriously hindered my social abilities as well as my academic abilities. I had trouble fitting in with other kids as they would think I was too spastic and energetic. I always had trouble sitting still in class and this ruined my learning ability.

When Percy Jackson showed up I immediately thought he was awesome. He had ADHD, had trouble in school, had trouble making friends, and wasn't really popular. When I first read this book, I was instantly hooked. I even ended up reading all five of the Percy Jackson books within a 2-month time span in 3rd grade. I became obsessed. But I became a little bit too obsessed.

As young kids do, my imagination got the better of me. Because of all the similarities that we shared; I thought I was so much like Percy Jackson. In my head I thought that I was so much

like Percy Jackson that I thought I literally *was* Percy Jackson. Because I wanted to be so much like Percy, I managed to delude myself into thinking that I was actually him. I would play games at recess with other kids that were all Greek god themed or Percy Jackson related. I thought to myself, “We need to train at recess so that we can be ready if monsters attack us.” Or, “This metal tower on the playground is a portal to Mount Olympus” (At the time I had no idea why there was a 50-foot-tall radio tower on the side of the schoolyard.)

While this all sounds very silly, I took this very seriously. I accidentally created a Percy Jackson fan club at lunch. I would make up my own stories, essentially writing fanfiction that involved Percy Jackson and Greek mythology. My imagination about the world of Percy Jackson permeated all aspects of my life. I would sit with the few friends that I had and tell everybody who their “godly parent” was. While this might seem weird to an outside viewer, I was starting to make friends through a shared love of books. The friends I had made that also read Percy Jackson would all sit and talk and gossip about what was going to happen in the next book. (I remember *Mark of Athena* ending on a massive cliff hanger, which all we would talk about for about a year.)

While my imagination ran wild, it also made my friends think I was crazy. Later in life, while reminiscing with a friend about this particular moment of our childhood he said to me, “Yeah, I stopped hanging out with you back then because I thought ‘wow he’s really into this Percy Jackson stuff’”. While I was gaining friends, I was also getting in my own way and losing some at the same time. While this did upset me, I think it opened my eyes to what was real and what was just my imagination.

I stopped thinking I was Percy Jackson in 5th grade. Thank goodness. Instead of using my imagination to tell myself I was a characters from book, I would instead read books and take

concepts from them and play recess-yard games inspired by them. This allowed me to continue to make friends. While I had trouble with making friends in the past, I had inadvertently made friends by thinking that Greek gods were real. Through the use of books, I managed to figure out how to talk to people and use my crazy ADHD-ness to be hyper and excited about a passion of mine. Books have allowed my imagination to feel like I could fit in. While my imagination ran wild, I was able to use these experiences to figure out how to take these books and let my imagination run wild in a way that wouldn't let me hinder my social skills. In the end, I think that this was a positive experience for me. This experience in my childhood allowed for me to be able to start writing stories of my own. I had a lot of crazy stories in my head that were begging to come out. While most of them were Greek god related, they were still there and it allowed for me to have an outlet for my ideas.

I ended up being less outspoken for my love of reading and writing by the time I got to middle school. In my awkward pre-teen phase I thought that it was uncool to like to read. However, my passion remained. While I no longer relied on books to make friends, I still loved being able to read and to write my own stories. I loved the ability to create my own world and influencing the world that I had created. My passion for reading and writing would continue to expand and it grew so much that I am now graduating with a degree in English. While I would prefer to forget about the period of my life where I thought I was Percy Jackson, I think that without it I wouldn't be the person that I am today. These books really helped with managing my ADHD and allowed myself to fit in with others (while also helping me learn how to continue to fit in). Books have the ability to inspire and if I hadn't had this experience, I don't think I would have pursued English later in my life as this was the spark of creativity that started it all.