



My Evolution of Literacy

Anthony Laub

1. Throughout my life I have been exposed to a wide variety of literacy genres, and I can safely say that literacy is an exploration of oneself and those genres. While I have my favorite genres and least favorite genres, each and every one of them has played a significant role in my life. There have been numerous experiences that have shaped me to the man I am today but the three most influential would have to be experiencing new types of books and authors with my parents in the car, reading historic and classic books in tenth grade English, and being introduced to new genres of television and music.
2. My family has a tradition of everyone going down to our family beach house for a week in the summer to enjoy the warm weather and water, as well as spending time with the entire extended family. For my family, traveling the long, painful, distance from Pennsylvania to North Carolina is about twelve hours. To pass the time, my parents would often find ways to distract themselves and in an ever growing world of technology, it was fairly easy to do so. During the summer following my freshman year of high school, my mother scoured the internet, searching for something new that she'd enjoy on the treacherous journey and stumbled down the rabbit hole of audio books. In the shockingly excited mood for so early the next morning, my mom would wake me up right before we would leave while my dad finished packing the car and would wait for us with my dog. I would enter the car, tired under the darkness of night to start the journey at four am, guided by only the dimly lit street lights and blinking stars. After about two and half hours of speeding down the construction-filled highway, the sky started to explode with color, a bright red, a light blue, a shining yellow,

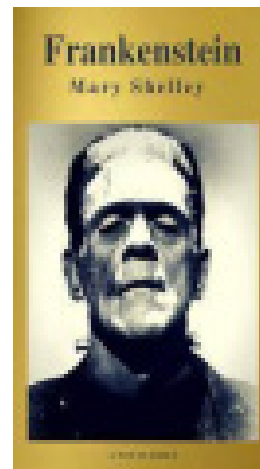
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a glowing orange, the sun had finally risen, waking my dog, dad, and I. Following this event restaurants began to open for the day so we stopped to fill our bellies and our tank. The smell of gasoline along with the taste of hot coffee and cheap, powdery donuts would become the wake up call I needed to stay awake for the rest of the cramped next ten hours. Once we reentered the car, my parents switched drivers, it became my dad's turn to drive and my mom's turn to introduce us to the books she found. She whipped out her phone and played a book called *The Innocent* written by David Baldacci, which was both a genre and author I had never taken an interest in. This book changed that. The booming deep voice of the main character Will Robie along with the graceful voices of the supporting characters painted mental pictures of the entire story and my parents felt the same way. After that drive audio books became our new long car ride tradition. We quickly finished the entire Will Robie series in less than a year with an increased amount of trips down south due to my grandpa's medical condition. During the summer following my sophomore year, the setting and book changed drastically. That summer the family beach house was open for the week after our family week and I invited all my friends to vacation with us. The car was now filled with my friends along with my parents, making the journey even more cramped but also more enjoyable. The new book series was based on Baldacci's new character, Amos Decker which quickly became my favorite book series of all time. Flash forward to present day, my family and I have finished the Amos Decker series as well and have been exploring new books to listen to on our journeys. I'm still searching for books to listen to on my drive back home for Thanksgiving and Christmas, to continue the tradition even when I'm grown up and by myself.

3. In the midst of the beginning of the audiobook phase, my English teacher started a new project. This project would be to read the Classic novel, *Frankenstein* and take notes on it for a test, a comparison with the movie and graded discussions. I was enraged by this, I had already known about the story of Frankenstein and having to read old writing did not sound appealing. The class agreed with me based on the sighs and look of displeasure on everyone's, besides the teacher's, faces. On the bright side we were allowed to read in the library for it meaning I got to sit with my friends for the next week or so.



The library was filled with our class, accompanied by the smells of all the food people were eating before. Reading wasn't the easiest thing with the snoring from some of my friends, talking amongst other groups, and the news played quietly near our seats. This process would repeat itself everyday until we finished the assignment with each day being a new experience by witnessing my friends do random things during the boring part of the novel. The most famous being by my friend Rhys who asked "Do you eat your gum with or without the shell?" then proceeded to chew gum with the wrapper still on it. *Frankenstein* surprised me, from a book I thought would be long and boring that actually felt manageable and was very interesting during certain plot points. I had always believed that *Frankenstein* was a simple, long, and boring tale when in actuality it was a beautiful tale with many plot twists and imagery that followed a plot that was incredibly different from the story Disney Channel would tell me it is. The character of both the monster and Dr. Frankenstein had so much more substance than I originally thought. The part that shocked me the most was how intelligent the monster was! He could not only communicate but in such a professional manner and at such a high level it was truly shocking. I was under the belief that the monster and the novel itself was bland and boring and could be described in a few groans but in actuality it was an in depth story that only reading it for yourself can describe. *Frankenstein* taught me to form my own opinions before I judge a book and to try new genres even if they seem horrible. Knowing this led me to try reading other classics and while they weren't my favorite they certainly weren't as horrendous as I originally thought.

4. Speaking of discovering new genres that I previously believed I disliked, my friends helped me grow my taste, especially in music, television, movies, and video games. While these topics may not be the most typical when it comes to literacy, they have impacted my knowledge in the field of literacy and even have indirectly influenced my taste in more traditional literature like novels. When it comes to music, I would let my friends play their playlists while I drove, giving me great music that connects to great memories. Memories like a car filled with excitement going to an amusement park, windows down, wind in my hair, all that replay in my memory whenever I hear the song or even the artist at some points. My music taste evolved because of these experiences. I was exposed to artists I had heard of but never listened to like Chance the Rapper and Tyler the Creator who quickly became two of my favorite artists who have some of my favorite songs. I used to think that type of music was garbage and not worth the time to

listen to, but when I listened to it actually and didn't judge it based on a broad genre, I realised that it was music that I enjoy and now I still listen to those artists and others my friends set me down the path to find for myself. My friends also introduced me to new kinds of television shows, especially the genre of anime. I used to think anime was weird and simply unwatchable, but one day when my friends put the show *Attack On Titan* on to watch while at my house, I became quickly invested and loved the show and so far the entire genre. While my friends watch it in Japanese, I prefer the English version but we are still able to bond over it and discuss it in a serious manner. One of my favorite moments was when I first started watching with my friends was the sound of leather couches and twelve almost adult men making tons of noise and them comparing me to the character I had just insulted, all because we shared similar hair and personality. My friends were, and still are, family to me. I would do anything for them and they did an outstanding job of expanding my comfort zone. They exposed me to so many different types of things I normally wouldn't experience which has broadened my taste across numerous forms of literature and made me more likely to explore by myself.

5. Exploration of my own self has always been a goal of mine. To get an in depth understanding of just what I really enjoy and who I really am as a whole, and literacy allowed me to further that extensive research. Understanding how everyone in my life influences my tastes and interests is a very important and interesting angle to look at, especially the specific examples and time periods. I never would have thought five years ago that my mom choosing an audio book to listen to would impact me the way that it has. I never would have thought that my English teacher forcing a book upon me would make me consider my morals as a person. I never would have thought that my friends introducing me to a song would completely change my daily routine and who I am compared to others. The exploration that literacy has provided me with is truly awe-inspiring and makes me excited for all the new features I will learn about myself, others around me, and the entire world. Literacy truly is to me an exploration of any idea possible, across any form of media.

Instructor: Kara Rush (MA GTA)

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