
What I Learned In My English Class During This Semester

When I started classes for English Collegiate Reading, I thought I was going to spend the semester in that class reading unnecessary and boring books that have nothing to do with my life because that's what I did in most of my English classes when I was in high school so I didn't think it would be much different here at all. For example, in high school the teachers would pick a book for the class, we read, discuss, and write papers after we finish reading the book; meanwhile, the book will have nothing to do with my life, and I couldn't relate to it at all. However, I quickly found out that there was so much more to it when we started the first book in this course. If you ask me in short what I have learned in this class, I will simply claim that I learned how to learn. Life lessons, big ideas of reading, and history are the best things I learned from this class through the books we read. I have a better understanding of how various ways of inducing information can affect the impact it will have on your understanding.

History has been thought and understood differently by various individuals. While some have comprehended it as the study of past events, others have characterized it as a record of human activities that have happened in the past. History does not constitute everything that occurred in the past; just those past events that have influenced our present-day lives. Reading these books in this course educated me on history. I learned about how life was in the 1950s, racial segregation, issues African Americans faced and how there had to work twice as a white person to get to where they want to be. I also learned about World War II and the Great Depression. I had no idea about who Randy Weaver was, but after reading *Educated*, I found out that Randy Weaver and his family withstood an 11-day siege after a shootout with federal agents attempting to charge him with firearms violations. Weaver's wife, his 14-year-old son, and a deputy U.S. Marshall were killed. I also learned about Emmet Till; the author Denver, in *Same Kind of Different As Me*, compared a situation he encountered to the Emmet Till situation. He said, "Mississippi too, I reckon, since a couple of years later, folks started telling the story about a young colored fella named Emmet Till who got beat till you couldn't tell who he was no more." (3). Of course, I know most of these things, but reading these books helped me get the chance to look them up and refresh my mind on what happened, who the president at that time was, and a lot more interesting things.

This course educated me with big ideas of reading; a lot about how to prepare and be successful in the real world. In general, my thoughts on education's role and purpose in the real world have not so much changed. Despite paying expensive tuition and everything, I still believe that it is important to go to college and be educated on how to prepare for surviving in the real world, because in my opinion, learning how to get ready for the real world is important for students to be successful. And this class makes me read all kinds of real-life books to help me get ready. In the Big Ideas of the Reading handout, it states that "Not all students realize it, but college is supposed to create educated people. To become an educated person, a person needs to read well." (1). Educated people have a bigger world. Furthermore, I learned in class that "readers lead richer lives, more lives, than those who do not read." (Danalyn Miller). This makes me feel better because it encourages me to read more to become a better person. I also learned that words that we use in English often come from other places and some of these languages are French, Spanish, and Italian language. I learned a lot of vocabulary from these books we read; I am looking forward to having a fairly good comprehension. I know how to own

my own words; to own a word, you should know its meaning, its pronunciation, and spelling. I learned more about the conversation. I learned how it helps us to revise our understanding. I discovered you can learn 70% of something just by talking to someone about it. I learned that voice is what makes your writing uniquely yours. I also learned how to be a critical thinker. Critical thinkers raise vital questions in problems, gathers and access relevant information, think open-mindedly, and communicate effectively with others in figuring out information. Nonetheless, I learned how to work with others because, in real life, most of the things you are supposed to know how to do are teamwork; how to work with others.

Life is what we learn and make of it. All the authors of the books we read in this course taught me valuable life lessons, which I hope will help me overcome some of the difficult situations I will face in the real world. People learn lessons every day. They can either learn them the easy way, which is taking advice and actually following it; or they can learn them the hard way, which is them having to face the real problem and then learning some lessons from it; I will say this is the best way because you get to experience it yourself and know how it feels like to go through something like that. I learned a lot about hard work and determination from these four books. They all depicted hard work and determination. In *Who owns The Ice House*, Clifton, who was the author struggled to get to where he wanted to be. He had all these kind of jobs that wasn't satisfying. For example, when he had to be a dishwasher in a small room and there weren't even any windows; the only way air passed through that room was when the dishes were brought to him. He got treated unfairly due to the time he was in-- segregation. He took his uncle who's called Uncle Cleve's advice and got through all these things. Uncle Cleve advised him to be humble and focus on the good things: keep his mindset positive. Uncle Cleve said, "Boy, we in the south. I know you know that an' it kin be hard to deal with some of the stuff, but you kin do it. When the white customer comes, you just be polite. No matter what they say, you hold yourself. If it ain't good, then it ain't about you" (45). Clifton knew who he was "on a white man's land" and knowing how the people of his color were being treated, he did everything possible not to get into any problem with any white man, either old or young. He was thought by uncle Cleve to react quietly to any negative comments from any white person and learned to respect everyone. I think I took a lot of this advice that his Uncle gave him because knowing how to react to certain things tells a lot about who a person is. Clifton worked hard and never gave up; he continued to reach for great things and never settled at the dish-washing place because he knew there was something better out there for him. In the second book, *PARKLAND*, the MFOL kids were not happy about Gun policies in this country because of how their friends were dying due to school shootings. They wanted to make a change; therefore, they formed a movement that protested on Gun control. They worked hard to the message out to the world. Even if they didn't get the change they wanted, at least their voices were heard. This inspired me a lot to make changes to whatever I don't like in my life because all these kids in the book were around my age and were still able to do something to help change the world especially one of the kids who is called, David. I learned a lot from how he had and how he was willing to devote himself to fight the long term for his community. Dave Cullen, author of *PARKLAND* said, " He had plenty of fight in him long term. He knew he was in a marathon, but kept sprinting anyway." (141). He dedicated his life willing to make changes and never gave up.

I had a great time learning interesting things, and most importantly, we learned so much more than we ever could have done from reading real-world books. The opportunity to do that showed me that there are so many ways that one can learn that are both fun and educational.