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LIT 506 *Writing Lives*

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Literacy MSSED Program: Curriculum & Instruction, SOE.

Assignment:

Original Piece of Writing: **Compose** an original piece of writing from the heart map you created to be revised, edited and published and shared as a celebration of learning on our final class meeting.

Autobiography

“From Me to You”

I have had one best friend for the entire length of my life. Friends have come, and they have gone. Friends have added to my life, and some have taken away. Some remained true while others left me at the slightest hint of conflict. Some friends just disappeared into the abyss, and some won’t stop calling about their issues and troubles. My mom has always told me that, “If you have one true friend that lasts the tests of life, you will have something that most do not have. True friendship is a rare thing.” The teenage girl that I was could not hear those words with proper reflection. Instead, I stored the wisdom for another time. When necessity pulled at me, I retrieved my stored wisdom and let the words envelop me. My mom has filled my life with words that only a true best friend could give.

“Do you know that you’re beautiful?” I didn’t know the answer to that question. It sticks in my memory like one of those life-changing events, although, it was just a question. I think it was the first time I thought that it may be true, and I let the thought linger for a few more moments. My reflection in a close-by mirror revealed a freshly washed face and a towel that rested like a beehive on top of my head. There wasn’t anything special about my brown eyes or the contour of my face, but for her, there was the miracle of beauty that can be seen through any guise I may display. I learned that this is what I desired in someone who beholds my beauty.

“He loves you. Some people just have empty baskets,” she sighed as she rubbed my back in an attempt to wipe out the pain. My father had torn me into little emotional pieces once again. Maybe this time he called me *no good* or maybe he just threw something my way in a raging fury. Whatever the cause, the results were the same—a mumbling, sobbing, sniffling mess. She explained that everyone is born with a basket for love. Some have their baskets filled as they grow up with loving parents, friends, and family who pour into them. Then there are others that let people reach in their basket and take what little love is in there. And still, there are some that walk around with their baskets empty—with no one to fill it. This day I held onto the wisdom my mother gave. I gripped it with white knuckles, and I have never let it go. She took the burden off of my slumping shoulders. My dad had an empty basket. I cried for him more that day then I had cried for my own hurt feelings.

“You’re a princess,” she glowed with pride as I opened the dressing room door. The layered lace on my dress rested just above my knees, and iridescent satin cloaked it like cool whip on a sundae. I felt like a princess. I twirled in the mirror and imagined my dress shining in the overhead lights hovering over the prom dancefloor. The dress was emerald green with black lace. I would have chosen the red satin hanging on another rack on the opposite side of the store, but red satin would not create the same radiance on my mom’s face. I had wanted this day to come for so long, and standing there with my mom, I was the most precious thing in the world. I was very aware that my day was her day. My joy was her joy. No dress could equal that.

“I tried. Sometimes you just have to let go,” my mother said with her eyes as much as with her voice. She never said one derogatory utterance about my father, but I had lived with him for 16 years. I woke up that morning, my sixteenth birthday, to find my gift on the counter with a card tucked underneath. “Happy Sweet Sixteen Birthday” was scrolled across the front of the envelope. That night, my family was in two uneven pieces with my brother and mother sitting next to me. We had abandoned the story of Harold and Joan forever, and not because we didn’t want the story to continue with all the promise it had at its birth, but because, as I had come to learn, my mom could not make my father be the man he had promised to be. I pondered those moments, sitting there on my sweet sixteenth birthday. I will never be able to force someone to love me, to want to be a part of my life, to travel the same roads I walk upon…and I never should try to do so.

“Are you sure?,” she whispered in my ear as she buttoned the back of my dress. I had cut out magazine pictures and organized table arrangements for almost a year, and today was the day all that I envisioned would come to pass. The flower girl started spreading petals all over the changing room, my bouquet arrived 5 times too big, my make-up bag was lost, and I looked like sleep had not been visiting me for quite some time. My mom released the pressure valve and allowed me to ponder the moment. This was my decision. The caterers and photographers did not matter. The people gathered up the stairs did not matter. No one else’s hopes for my life mattered. It was a moment of reflection offered to me. Was this something to hold onto or something to let go? She stood there and reminded me that whatever I decide in my life, she was there. I was worth the cost.

“Now you will know what love is,” she choked out through her utter sense of awe. My daughter was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. Her head was perfectly round, and her face was flawless. I could not understand how this little treasure was going to be mine forever; she was too precious of a gift. It was an instant love that caused me to replay my life’s celebrations and despairs of which none could compare. My mom was right. I had loved my husband, my dog, my house, my favorite dress, but this love came from the deepest parts of me. It was the lens in which I now looked through to everything else in my life. Having Bethany did not diminish my love for others. No, having her expanded my heart. I had perspective. I knew that I would lay down all that I had and all that I was for this little five pound love. I knew what love was.

Words can tear us down into remnants of ourselves, or they can create within us a strong tower of wisdom and strength. Words do not have to come in pretty frilly packages or be strung together for miles. They simply should be few and from the best parts of who we are. Now I am the mom with the words that wrap around my children like a blanket. I tell them that true friendship is rare, but not impossible. I tell them that they are beautiful—my princess and princes. I let them succeed, and I let them fail. I fill their baskets until they brim over and splash onto their hurts and disappointments. I tell them it is okay to love and okay to let go. And in it all, I see my mom. I tell my children that grandma filled me up with so much wisdom and love, I have to give it away to them. “This is from me to you,” I tell them. Someday they will understand.