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Personal Literacy Narrative

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The book from my childhood that most impacted me was *Horton Hears a Who* by Dr. Seuss. I remember reading this book every night before bed with my mother from the time I was five until nine years old. She would allow me to read this book to her each night, even though she had heard it a hundred million times, because it was her favorite part of the day after a long day of work.

My favorite part of the book is when Horton begins telling the Whos of Whoville to make their voices heard loud and clear for all the non-believers to hear:

Mr. Mayor! Mr. Mayor! Horton called. Mr. Mayor! You've got to prove now that you really are there! So, call a big meeting. Get everyone out. Make every Who holler! Make every Who shout! Make every Who scream! If you don't, every Who is going to end up in a beeze-nut stew! And down on the dust speck, the little scared mayor quick called a big meeting in Who-Ville Town Square. And his people cried loudly. They cried out in fear: "We are here! We are here! We are here! We are here! (Seuss 12)

This part really stuck out to me because it showed the true meaning behind the story: "a person is a person no matter how small," a relevant message for society today.

The book really made me want to read more because it gave me an opportunity to further advance my knowledge on subjects I had very little knowledge about. Now eighteen, I make it my goal to read each night on something I do not know a lot about in order to expand my knowledge on that subject. This book has never won an award, but in 1984 Dr. Seuss won the Pulitzer award for writing this book along with 44 others that continue to be best sellers even after his death on September 24, 1991. Also, *Horton Hears a Who* was turned into a movie on March 3rd, 2008 which brought in 297.1 million dollars within the first six months. These aids help me remember the book because they bring back a positive childhood memory in the form of a motion picture, which I have seen multiple times.

Along with revisiting my favorite childhood book, my experience at Big Shanty Elementary School holds a very special spot in my heart because I was able to take an hour and a half of a student's day and interact with him or her. After arriving at Big Shanty, we were escorted by two third-grade students to their classroom, where my partner Jared Staples and I read our books, *Green Eggs and Ham* and *Horton Hears a Who*, to a classroom full of students mesmerized by the presence of student-athletes from a local university. This moment was special to me because I was able to read my favorite childhood book and engage with students who envisioned us as gods among people. After a short period of question-asking, we were invited to eat lunch with the students. It was truly a pleasure to see the huge smiles and wide eyes of the students asking Jared and I if they could sit with us because they were so eager to tell us about themselves and how their days were going. To my amazement, I found that many of the students wanted to become engineers just like their fathers who were engineers around Georgia.

After we spent time talking to several of the students, it was time for them to go back to class and continue their exhausting day. As Jared and I were exiting the building, many of the students whose lives we had impacted asked us if we could come back and read to them because they did not want us to leave. This was special to me because it confirmed I had left a positive impact on their young lives. My time at Big Shanty is something I will never forget, and I am thankful to have been able to impact such a large percent of students with my presence, while also reading and talking to them about leadership in life and how having a positive attitude can open a variety of doors for them.

If I could say more to all the kids I read and talked to at Big Shanty, one point I would discuss would be to never stop reading, because at such a young age reading promotes growth

within the brain and fosters academic development. Another would be that reading can be fun! Reading can earn them rewards in their own house, at school, and in life. I remember as a student in elementary school we had to do monthly reading logs to track how much reading we did during the month, and I would always come out on top of my class because I loved to read. In turn, I was rewarded with free books to take home from the library, candy from the teacher, or an ice cream party with all the other students that were at the top of their classes. It was something to strive for, and at the same time it expanded my knowledge. I see similarities between the young students and my young self. They are very outgoing and not nervous or afraid to make friends with people they don't know. They are excited to learn about different subjects in school each day, and they care about others first rather than themselves.

My time at Big Shanty was an experience I will never forget, from all of the life-changing opportunities presented to me to the many kids' hearts I impacted. So many kids looked up to Jared and I that day. It reminded me of the time when college athletes read to me in elementary school, changing my outlook on life. Reading our books to the children at Big Shanty is an experience that I hope to capture again someday; it felt so surreal to be with all of those children lined up on that carpet, and the opportunity to have such an impact on their young minds was so special for me. I hope the kids I talked to at Big Shanty follow their dreams and possibly read to their old elementary school one day.

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