
My Passion To Studying Literature

Like most people, my first experience of literature began with those four small words that despite their cliché so perfectly epitomise childhood imagination; once upon a time. Though in my case, they epitomised only stress and difficulty. Having been diagnosed with dyslexia at an early age, the first chapter of my literary life was a very reluctant one and it was years until I finally read once upon a time in black and white amongst the anthropomorphised animals of Kipling's 'The Jungle Book' or the strong rhymes of Donaldson's 'The Gruffalo'.

Looking back, that chapter will always be my favourite; dyslexia forced me to focus on every letter, word and phrase individually, provoking an attentive reading style that delivers endless gratification in the detailed discovery of each new text I read. Take the Beatnik writers, for example. Though life so far has been and continues to be less narcotic and hedonistic than the sheer mania of Jack Kerouac's spontaneous prose novel 'On The Road', I was drawn to the amorous frenzy and dizzy wanderlust of his allegorical characters. I found myself addicted to Kerouac's breathless, intimate style, questioning his hypocritical misogyny at once and yet later relating to his description of the broken frustration with the pace of the world in the character Carlo Marx, whose real-life counterpart Allen Ginsberg's provocative work 'Howl' has become my favourite poem. I felt distant from that small but complicated and impactful literary subculture that existed more than fifty years ago, five-thousand miles away and yet with each new text I read, that distance would shrink and I was fascinated by what I could see coming into perspective about the competing aspects of their movement, the spiritual and economic, the progressive and regressive. I would go on to read Kerouac's early poetry in his collection 'Atop an Underwood' along with a few of Ginsberg's other works to feed my addiction to the Beatniks, whose subversion of prim cultural autocracy and radical rebranding of the American Dream remains uniquely compelling to me.

So much so, that when I came to enter and win an essay competition run by my local university on the question of what the American dream meant in 2017, I considered the Beatniks to be fundamental in reshaping that meaning for the modern context. Another literary movement, closer to home, that I relate intimately to the Beatniks were the Romantics, and the essential William Blake. His scolding rebukes of the oppressively illiberal church and state, as well as the sour impact of the industrial revolution tightly wound in his ironically complex volumes of lyrical poetry, the twee 'Songs of Innocence' and the hostile 'Songs of Experience' meant to read like nursery rhymes, reminded me deeply of Kerouac and Ginsberg's rally against materialism. I adored Blake so much that I joined the Blake society, and when asked to design and deliver a lecture to Year 11 GCSE students on a given topic, I chose to speak about William Blake and Romanticism, exploring everything from the enlightenment, to the French and industrial

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revolutions, to the Big Six, to Blake's other artistic pursuits. Reading is something that, by-rights, I should not enjoy, but that only makes it all the more gratifying when I pore over a difficult text.

The sole measure I can take that is more satisfying than reading cover-to-cover from the deep dark wood, to the highways of America, to the cobbled streets of London, is applying and sharing what I've read. Whether that's researching and undertaking an EPQ, as Class President of my college, debating issues and ideas, as chief editor of the Sirius Law Review producing my own publication, or simply writing an essay - I find that there is nothing more captivating than exploring and engaging with literature in all its detail and exploits.

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