



Literacy Volunteers of America

Essex & Passaic Counties

www.lvaep.org

90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003 | (973) 566-6200 -- 195 Gregory Avenue, Passaic, NJ 07055 | (973) 470-0039

New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning Adult Learner Writing Contest 2017

Second Place – Non-Fiction

Biography:

Seung Hui Kim, a former teacher in Korea, left her country due to her husband's job relocation. Erin, as she is known to her friends, is an advanced Basic Literacy student and says she still gets nervous when she speaks English, although her competency would make a native English speaker envious. Erin said, "This is why I love to write instead." She also stated, "I am grateful for this peaceful break, away from the hectic life in Korea. Most of all, I am grateful for the opportunities here, given to me to be an English learner, a thinker, a reader and writer again."

Title: How I Became a Library Enthusiast
Student Author: Seung Hui Kim
Tutor: Charles Bateman

My eyes fell on the book receipt that I received at the checkout counter. "You just saved \$20.00 by using your library. You have saved \$355.00 since you began using the library." The saving amount must have been the total price for the books I had checked out for the last four months. Since I moved to New Jersey from Korea in August 2017, I believe one of the best things I had ever done was to get a library card. It's not just about the money I can save by using the library. It means something much bigger and deeper than that.

I had an opportunity to read a great deal of books especially when I was young. My parents were very frugal but were big spenders in a way; they didn't buy me lots of clothes or give me much allowance. However, they bought me lots of books. Unfortunately, in Korea, where I grew up in the 1980's, public libraries were not very common. I began to realize that my parents must have spent quite a bit of money on books. Thanks to them, I read almost every day. Reading was as natural as eating and breathing for me. After years of reading, I found myself more knowledgeable about the world around me than the average person of my age. I feel lucky that I had the opportunity to read so many books when I was young.



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Books can change the course of your life dramatically. Recently I heard one of the most inspiring stories related to the power of reading. It is a story of my English tutor at Bloomfield library, Mr. Bateman.

When he was a boy, he went to the library every weekend. He loved going there but he was often upset by the thought, 'Can I ever read all of these books? There are too many.' He just have been overwhelmed by the amount of books. Realizing the fact that reading all the books there was impossible, he came up with an alternative; 'How about reading all the titles of the books instead?'

While carrying out the plan, one day the book, *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov caught his eyes. 'I, Robot? This is an interesting title.' He started to read the book because the title sounded so strange to him. The book was pretty challenging for him because of the all the unfamiliar vocabulary words including the scientific terminology. He made a list of words he didn't understand and looked up the meaning of every word on the list. It took almost six months for him to finish the book. Finally, once he finished the book, he wasn't the same boy anymore; his text books seemed too easy and school became boring.

So, he started to read more books from the library after that. Guess what? Finally he became one of a few students who proceeded to a college education. He majored in English literature in college and graduate school. I believe this story is a proof of the power of reading.

Unfortunately, reading is not always easy. When I became a high school student, I had the dark age of reading in my life. I didn't enjoy reading anymore. Most of the time, I read books which were helpful for the school exams only. I didn't have the luxury of reading for pleasure. When I started working, I didn't read much, either. I felt like I was too tired and had no time to read.

When I came to America, I got the second chance in my life to enjoy reading. Now I can easily access all the books on a variety of topics in the library. I can decide what to read and when to read. I have all the time I can spend on reading since I don't work anymore. I go to the library pretty regularly and I have realized how much I enjoy reading; while reading good stories, I feel like the king in the *The Arabian Nights*. I can't wait for the next tale from Scheherazade, the next chapter of the book.

I am often asked how I spend my time in America by people who are also adult English learners like me. I have suggested they visit the library, since it is one of my favorite places to go, and make the best use of the open resource. I love seeing the colorful book covers on the shelves waiting to be picked up. It makes me feel like a girl in a candy shop, trying to decide what to get. Each book has a great story and there is



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always something I can learn. Also, I am attracted by the irony of the atmosphere in the library. It seems calm and quiet, but I know people are actually being active in their minds with reading and doing their research.

Can a book make an impact on our lives? I think so. I believe an inspiring book triggers another reading and another one after it, like the book *I, Robot* did. An inspiring book is where the magic of reading starts. I am looking forward to experiencing more miracles that books will bring to me. Definitely, the library is a good place to start the journey.

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