

Tatyana College Essay - Class of 2014

I can feel its crisp pages sliding across my fingers; the aroma of untold stories, mysteries and broken secrets fill me from head to toe. Goosebumps run along my arms. My heart pounds. With the breath of the first words, I am once again a literary subletter, a visiting scholar—thrown into an unknown world that becomes my own.

*I am John mourning the loss of humanity in my Brave New World.*

*I am Snowball worried over the future of the farm and the animals.*

*I am Charlie learning to accept who I am.*

*I am Tom Robinson accused of a crime that I did not commit.*

*I am Heathcliff in painful solitude.*

I am a reader and I will always be a reader. My first voyage into the literary world, beyond the children's books that framed my childhood, occurred in fifth grade. My teacher presented us with several books to choose from for our first book club, including *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli, *No Talking* by Andrew Clements, and *The Secret Garden* by Frances Burnett.

Unlike the other selections, I had yet to enter the world of *The Secret Garden*. As my book club members and I sat around the table for our first group meeting, sticky from summer's lingering humidity, it quickly became apparent that my fellow group members were irritated by the idea of having to read this book or any book at all. When I asked them why, they responded with a simple but painful, "We don't care." To them *The Secret Garden* was an old and boring story. But, I knew that the characters were real, as alive as we could make them. I asked the teacher if there was any way she could make the book more captivating for the rest of my group, but she stared at me blankly and replied, "That's not part of my job, just read the book." I was appalled that the person who was meant to teach me did not care. She made me feel insignificant. I had assumed teachers were meant to inspire and excite their students, to make them want to learn.

I decided to take matters into my own hands. The next day I told my book club group that to make the reading more enjoyable and entertaining, we should try dressing up as the characters from the book to bring the characters to life. We debated and they agreed. Seeing my classmates' excitement grow, I had the feeling that this was something I might be good at—a moment I would enjoy to recreate again and again.

My passion for literature has only matured in the years since that frustrating, yet ultimately life-changing, fifth-grade book club meeting. It is both a result of my love for reading and the experience of having to inspire others to step into the world of literature that I hope to one day become an English teacher. When that day comes, I hope to motivate my students to become

readers—to not only understand the characters and stories, but to *become* the characters, to enter their worlds. I want my students to know what it is like to be truly lost in a book, to finish a book and then thirst for another adventure or romance. I want my students to come out of a reading experience, as I so often do, inspired to live a full life—a life hopefully worthy of fiction.