

Kareem Alshowaiter

Dr. Bryant scott

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Literacy Narrative Essay

1) FINAL DRAFT

Battles and Books

I hate reading. At least that was what I told myself when my mom forced me to sit on our bouncy old green couch to read *Dr. Seuss*. Little did I know at that time that reading would become my pillar in education. My mother kept trying to get me to read and speak English, but I would rather just play video games and speak Arabic like all my cousins and friends do. Right around second grade, in 2015, my father bought me my first console, driving a deeper wedge between myself and reading.

My mother wasn't deterred, though, offering me something she knew I could not decline: "If you read the first *Harry Potter* book, I'll take you to the store to buy some new games". Of course, being the greedy little kid I was, I gladly accepted. And so, in the summer of 2015, I started my reading journey. In the beginning, I struggled with getting through the chapters because I did not properly know how to read, which often frustrated me to the point that I would rather do anything else.

I did not even get halfway through the first book before disaster struck. War broke out in Yemen, schools closed, buildings were destroyed, and people scattered. The smell of gunpowder filled the streets, and sonic booms shook the skies. We had to flee to my grandparents' house because our home was next to a military location that was about to be bombed. We spent a couple of months there, crowded and scared with the rest of our family. That was when I found my safe haven amid all the chaos.

With the war came a shortage of electricity in the house, so to pass the time, my mother took me to my grandfather's library to teach me how to properly read. My grandfather's library was a small, dusty room containing every type of book you could think of. From magazines and history books to novels and comics. The more time I spent in the library, the more of a stronghold it became.

Since I was still struggling to read *Harry Potter*, we decided to start with something light. The first book we started was called *Diaries of a Wimpy Kid*. After that, I read *How to Train Your Dragon* all by myself, improving my reading skills step by step. My mother and I spent many nights in that library reading under candlelight, the smell of books and the gentleness of her voice gave me a sense of comfort that overpowered the sounds of chaos on the outside. I was finally ready to start *Harry Potter* again, just around the beginning of my third year of school,

When I got to the cold , rainy morning assembly of Haddah Valley School on the first day, I was the only person standing in the third-grade line. Out of the 30 people in my class, only I and one other student remained, many having fled the country, and a few who, unfortunately, did not make it. I felt lonely, so I devoted my time to my books, spending my time in what I started to call *Hogwarts' library (the magical school Harry attends in the books)*. I started

comparing my story to that of *Harry Potter*. *Harry's* first year at school was a little bit lonely, so I started relating to him. The war was like *Voldemort (the main villain in the books)*, who took everything I loved from me, my home, and my friends, much like how *Voldemort* took *Harry's* parents from him. I finished the first two books within that year.

The next year, many people enrolled in the school, and I started making many friends. I compared many of my classmates and teachers to characters in the book. The principal was like *Albus Dumbledore (The grandmaster of Hogwarts)*, and Mohammed Alhaidary reminded me of *Draco (a classmate who makes fun of Harry and always tries to get him in trouble)*.

By the time I was in ninth grade, I had already finished all seven Harry Potter books (one for each school year *Harry* was in *Hogwarts*). Ninth grade was one of the most important academic years in Yemen, because the final test was standardized, and that distinguished the good students from the bad ones. During this period, I felt like *Hermione (Harry's friend who loves studying and reading books)* studying for the *O.W.Ls (a collection of exams in the books called the "Ordinary Wizarding Levels")*, and that made the process much more enjoyable.

Slowly but surely, I felt that life was getting better; the grasp that *Voldemort* had on me started to loosen. *Mohammed "Draco"* suddenly became *Ron (Harry's best friend)*, and we started helping each other with studying. The day before the final Islamic studies exam, Mohammed and I spent the entire day studying and quizzing each other, and when the results came in, I was pleasantly surprised by the 100% we both got on the paper.

Just when I thought I was finally free from *Voldemort*, he came back in the form of the 2020 pandemic. I was in my father's home city, IBB, staying at my cousin's house when He struck, taking the life of my precious aunt. My aunt always wanted my cousins and me to have a

good education so we could have the opportunity to study outside of Yemen, so the least I could do to get back at *Voldemort* is to honor her wishes and study as hard as I could to make her dream come true.

My freshman year of high school, I met the teachers who would shape me to become the person I am today. My physics teacher, who reminded me of *Professor Lupin (Harry's favorite mentor)*, became the reason I decided to study engineering. He brought a television to the class one day and made us watch *Transformers*, which made me fall in love with Mechanical Engineering. I hoped to be able to make technology like that one day. He also assigned a lot of projects for us to do. I still remember my first project, a plastic car made from an empty water bottle, a stick, and some rubber bands. The car was designed in a way that twisting the rubber bands would propel it. I even painted it red and blue to resemble *Optimus Prime* from the *Transformers* movie. My chemistry teacher, on the other hand, reminded me of *Professor Snape (the strict, confusing Professor)*. She is the reason I stayed far away from chemical engineering when I was considering which major to choose.

Throughout my high school career, I focused on my studies to honor my aunt's dying wish and to repay my mother for everything she did for me. Now, after graduating with the highest GPA in my school's history and armed with the lessons I learned from fantasy and the resilience instilled in me by my family, I can proudly say that I have defeated *Voldemort* and that I love reading. I envision my efforts in the future to become a catalyst for change in my country, utilizing the knowledge I gained from literature and engineering to rebuild and inspire others.