Memories of Reading and Writing

1. Roughly around middle school or (early high school) 2016 when I was 14, I had a passion for reading fantasy books. I was enrolled at Simpson Middle School at the time and had to read several books that were personally not my style. At home, I would go back and read books like “Lord of The Rings”, “Percy Jackson”, and "Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy” because they were more fantasy-driven than many English books I read in class. In addition, all three of these books had movies tied to them which gave me a basis for my imagination. Back then I used to really like books that connected with movies. Some of these books I liked so much that I re-read them after watching the movies. Specifically, “Lord of The Rings” got this treatment. I remember vividly the dark, glossy, sticky cave of Shelob. The nasty, warm, and crude buildings underground for the Orc army. The quiet forests and raging river after the dwarves escaped the Elf Kingdom. I can remember the Giant dragon Smaug being tricked into a gold statue and cast in pure molten gold. I can remember the tattered look of Sauron and the raging eye of Sauron’s tower. Memorable characters like Legolas, Aragorn, Gollum, Frodo, Sam, Gimli, Gandalf, and Bilbo stuck with me even after the books and movies. These books gave much content to imagine as well as highly dynamic scene shifts throughout the book. One moment you are in a forest, another inside a mountain, in a lake village being destroyed by fire, a forest with wooden prison cells, a tower atop a mountain, a giant wall, and caves full of all sorts of monsters. This sort of storytelling where a lot of different fantasy elements are brought together allowed me the freedom to make the book as fun as I would like.

1. Last years in high school were tough because I took a lot of AP courses. At Loudoun County High School around 2020 when I was about 18, I had a class taught by a PHD professor for AP Chemistry. In this class, we were accelerated in what workload we needed to accomplish. A lot of the work was done in textbooks. As AP students we had to write full documents for lab including very detailed reports that followed a very specific structure, write outlines that would help us in the lectures taken from chapters in the book, and the knowledge expected to memorize in class prompted good study methods. This class accelerated my skills in both writing and reading because of the tasks at hand. Textbooks would go over some confusing material like orbital shells, spectroscopy, polyatomic ions, chemical catalysts, equation balancing, percent yield and efficiency, etc. Writing outlines helped me to break down the material into its simple components and challenged me to try to “teach” the material to the outline material. Outlines also helped my writing structure and gave me a systematic and efficient approach to textbook materials. To this day I still use a systematic approach in other classes: Question, Formula, Variables, Givens, Find, Dimensional Analysis, Calculation, Interpretation, and Findings. Writing reports helped me format more exclusively understood data done in experiments and convert it to words that an unspecialized reader would be able to understand. This also helped my writing become more clear and concise, even if what is going on in my head is quite complicated, as a practice for writing with an audience in mind.
2. In the first couple years of College I was involved in a CS class as part of my Major, Mechanical Engineering. In the fall of 2021 at George Mason University (My college before I transferred in 2023) I was in an Intro to programming class. I started coding in late middle school when I used to program extremely simple things on my TI-84 calculator for fun. Since the TI-84 is a self-contained documentation unit in its own language it was easy for me to read about what functions do inside the calculator interface. This gave me a head start in the programming field which gave me the flexibility to take advantage of the class at GMU. With prior experience in Clojure, Python, Basic, and Java I was able to focus more on my format of code rather than the fundamental basics. I programmed myself an interactive notes program that is full of self-documentation to help practice how I would explain my programs to others. This greatly improved my code’s readability and helped me refer to it in the future. This boost allowed me to work more on code efficiency, readability, and ease of bug management which aren’t exactly taught in class. With this knowledge, I was able to help companies I worked with use my code and have other workers pick up on where I had left off. The CS class at GMU gave me the space to both practice how to document better by documenting the code I review in class, and also really improved my coding skills as an employee I can apply to the field of CS under Mechanical Engineering. Several classes at Virginia Tech use the skills I developed in my intro class which have made the classes here easier to manage.