

Reading or writing was never really my strong suit. Don't get me wrong, I don't completely hate or despise reading or writing, I just don't enjoy it as much as other subjects and hobbies like math, science, sports, and games. At a certain point in my life, I loved to read. If I could tell you what my first book was or the book that sparked my interest in reading, I would tell you, but I don't remember. However, I do remember reading books to my mom. In first grade, I would rent books from the library and go to my parents' bedroom, reading whatever books I rented. It would primarily be picture books, like works from Dr. Seuss, Anna Dewdney, or Roald Dahl. During the summer of 2011, my parents enrolled me in the Summer Reading Olympics, where students would record their time reading throughout the summer. That summer, I got the gold medal for reading over twenty-five hours, which at the time, was a massive accomplishment for me. I was so proud of my reading skills, bragging about my medal to all my friends. But unfortunately, this is as good as it gets.

In second grade, one of my favorite books I loved to read to my parents, *Llama Llama Red Pajama*, had the line "llama drama." Whenever I was acting dramatic, sad, angry, or showing any kind of negative emotion, my parents would say something along the lines of, "Stop acting like a llama. Aww, llama drama." Not only this, but they would say it in a voice as if I was a baby, which annoyed me. Eventually, it bled into my siblings, and I couldn't really do anything against them because if I spoke back to them, they would say "llama drama" to me. Maybe I was being dramatic during that time. Perhaps they weren't saying it in a baby voice. However, there was one thing I knew for sure at that time: I hate reading now. I hated the phrase "llama drama." I hated that book. I hated reading to my parents. And because of all my hatred, my family called me the "Llama Drama."

It didn't help that my English test scores reflected what happened when I stopped reading. Seeing that my writing and reading were below average than my friends was rather demoralizing. English is my first language and the only language I know, so it didn't make sense why I wasn't excelling. Was all of that reading I did during the summer not help? I noticed that my math score was above all my friends, so I disregarded improving my English and honed my math skills. During my fifth grade, my class took a Lexile test, and I scored roughly six hundred. My teacher asked me if I could understand the book I was reading, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, as the Lexile level was three hundred more than my level, which I believe was utter nonsense as it had pictures. It felt like everything and everyone was telling me I suck at reading.

At least there is a silver lining to my story. It took me till the start of my first year of high school to get back to reading for fun. I was and still am really into anime, so I decided to read manga, which are Japanese graphic comics. However, I didn't read that much manga, nor did I read any books in my free time besides the school-required ones. Dating to the present, I've been reading webcomics and a web novel. And with that, this concludes my reading experience. I believe it was mostly my fault for my past experiences with reading. Friends, family, test scores, anything can influence what a person does in life, but at the end of the day, it's up to the individual to intake that information and make their own decisions.