

MY READING AND WRITING JOURNEY

I had never thought of the moment I learnt how to read and write because of how tough it was for me. Growing up, I saw reading as a curse and writing as a chore. My younger self would never believe that 17-year-old Nana Akua could read and write, let alone enjoy it. I constantly questioned whether knowing how to read and write was worth it. **It took work for me.** For me, **reading was like never-ending journey**, I would always think I was close to my destination only to realize I had a long way ahead.

I grew up in a house in which the only dialect was twi. English seemed like a foreign language to me. I only enjoyed going to nursery and kindergarten school because of the fun teaching approach my teachers adopted. We would recite alphabets and numbers in the form of songs, and my teachers would give us little treats if the songs were sung well. **We had lot of nap times, and honestly, playing with my friends during break and after school was what I looked forward to in school.** However, **all this change** when I switched schools. Little did I know all this fun was about to end. I changed schools because my former school only ended at kindergarten, so my parents had to look for another institution to continue my education.

I expected to see the **usual things I was used to, but to my surprise**, everything here was so different; the teachers, the students and even the language they spoke. Regarding the fact that friends were the reason I wanted to go to school, the people in this school made me want to leave. I could not communicate with them since I was not fluent in English. This made me realize that continuing to see English as a foreign language could jeopardize my chances of succeeding in this school. I cried my heart out to my parents, who found a teacher for me. I still couldn't grasp anything, and my teacher was verbally abusive. She would call me all sorts of names and discourage me. **"What is the point of the teaching you"** yelled my teacher whenever I

got a question wrong. For this reason, I could not learn correctly, leading to my constant failure regarding examination. I reported her to my parents, and she eventually got sacked from the school.

I was still failing in examination until primary three, when I got my act together and tried to lay hold of the fundamentals of English. This was when my grades got better. I finally felt like I belonged in the school. Essays and grammar were the only issues. The grammar and essay parts of the examination will always bring me down. Everything changed when my mum introduced me to this friend of hers. She studied English at the university and decided to teach me. Until now, I still cannot comprehend the technique she used to teach me. She helped me make a drastic change in my essays and grammar to the extent that it was essay and grammar that I got more marks in. At this point in my life in school, everything seemed normal.

When I got to primary 4, my inquisitive self would constantly meddle in the business of others to see what they were up to. That's when I realized that some people read books written by Peggy Oppong. My curious self will always get jealous seeing people read books by her because I never got the chance to get hold of one, oblivious to the fact that my mum had a collection of Peggy Oppong books in our library. Eight-year-old me run to my mum's room, pulling her to the library. My mum, in confusion and annoyance, asked, "Na nana d3n na 3k)so?" which means in English, "Nana, what is going on?". I told her I saw people reading Peggy Oppong's books in my class and wanted to read them. This put a smile on my mums face so she sat me down and said, "I am thrilled you want to read her storybooks. She is my favourite author and an inspiration to me. I did not have the chance to start reading at a younger age like you, so take any little chance you get, and you will never regret it." She told me I could take a book but warned me to always return it before picking up a new one. The way my mum was so interested

about Peggy Oppong gave me the mindset to read books only written by Peggy Oppong, and indeed, that is what I did. Any book that Peggy Oppong did not write looked disgusting in my eyes. I finished reading every book of hers, and since then, I have stopped reading.

My mum realized that I had stopped reading and constantly reminded me that I would regret it if I did not continue. My mum would buy me storybooks, but I would never read them. My younger self will not heed her advice. The stage in which I was not reading was ongoing till I got to Senior High School. This was when mum's advice hit me. I was disappointed in myself for not heeding her advice. I started to get back to reading, but no book appeared to be interesting to me. I would look through the school library but never find anything interesting.

This was when I discovered poetry. I never really knew poetry, only what my English teacher taught me. I always deemed it boring until I got to experience the beauty of poetry for myself. Poetry is unlike any fictional book that may seem exciting, and you will forget later. It was like someone's emotions on paper, a writing piece you can relate to and never forget. Since then, you will never find me any book that is not any form of poetry. My reading mindset changed at that moment, and my reading journey, even though rough, still made me conceive of myself in the circumstances and broadened my life view. I loved reading poetry, and that was when my love for writing sprang up.

When it came to writing, I found the art mesmerizing, but it was so hard for me to do. I would try to be creative with my writing, to write stories and even songs, but it always needed more technique. I thought you need a degree to write a book; little did I know these famous authors wrote stories about things they were fascinated about in their bedroom with a lantern as their light source. This made me realize that you define your writing.

Writing is something I consider challenging. Anything that has to do with writing felt like a burden on me. The only form of writing I have been able to do was journal only if it is even considered a form of writing. I found peace in putting my feelings on paper than voicing it out to someone. The way I journaled was like the poems I have read. I do relate poems to my journals. Poems are like people's thoughts and feelings on paper with a few catching phrases that rhyme and keep you wandering, and even though my journal pieces may not rhyme, they do keep you wandering.

There is more to know about writing that I must figure out. I don't think a reading and writing journey can be ended. There is always a lot to learn about it, and I am ready to learn.



My mum's friend who taught me my essay and grammar (appendix 1)



My journal (appendix 2)