

Literacy Narrative:

An Unorthodox Music Addiction

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Music is filled with words, yet words cannot define it. Music is filled with sounds, yet nothing sounds just like it. Samuel Butler once said, "Every man's work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself." He quotes the similarities of people to their work but what does this mean to me? As someone who strives for success in music, its quotes like this that put me into a new perspective. What does music mean to me? Where did my music interest stem from? For as long as I can recall, music has vastly affected my daily life. Music was once a hobby I never talked about, but has now become part of my personality and dramatically changed me over time.

Let's go back to the beginning. I was born into a divided family with a father who had a short-lived 2000's rock legacy. This legacy was arguably passed down to me through genetics. Growing up he was always spending hours writing new material or finding a way to improve his lyrics.

I would ask, "Can I hear one of your songs?"

My father would reply, "Aren't you a tad too young to be interested in your old man's job?" And began playing a tune from which he was working on.

Of course, I grew up seeing this and wanted to be just like him. By the time I was in 1st grade I wrote my first few lyrics for a song of my own and performed it to him. Doing this made me realize I didn't like the edginess and tenseness the rock genre offered. Although I didn't have the same taste for rock and roll as my father, being surrounded by the sound was enough to gain my interest. However, my father wasn't my only parent in love with the sounds of music.

When I wasn't with my father, I was in a household where music was less practiced but more expected as an everyday routine. Every Sunday morning my mom would blast *TLC* or

groovy, late 80's songs that left me and my brother convinced that our mom was getting old. I can still hear *Michael Jackson's* 'Billie Jean' echoing around the house every time I think about those early Sunday mornings. As I grew, my mom's tastes in music began rubbing off on me more and more. In 4th grade, while other kids were listening to 'We Are Young' by *Fun.*, I had just discovered 'Purple Rain' by *Prince*. Even Halloween, while my friends dressed as ninjas and doctors I went as singer/songwriter 'George Michaels', which confused everyone except older audiences. By the time 5th grade rolled around, a class project left me responsible for putting together a poster and finding my favorite song or a song that better described me. The expression on the kids' faces when the teacher turned on *Tiny Dancer* by 'Elton John' was indescribable. They were most-likely expecting a genre or sound they were more familiar with a poppy and chaotic EDM song or *Black Eyed Peas* which was popular at the time. As I continued to flourish, I never stopped writing music of my own. My change of taste only made my work more versatile and I began to study the new music I accustomed to.

The first song I studied acted as the start of the domino effect for the rest. In 6th grade, my mother left her *1990 Walkman* on the kitchen counter. This was just enough for the rugged sound of Nas' 'New York State of Mind' to cascade from the headphones and into the room I was in, gripping my attention. My new explicit discovery for this grimy 90's rap music was a generation before me, yet was more projecting than music that surrounded my generation. At first, I hated it, but it was new.

New was just enough for me to ask my mom, "Why would anyone want to listen to this? I feel like he's reading a book to me."

"Maybe you're too young to understand," my mom replied.

I always hated being treated like a little kid. That alone was just enough to motivate me to find what made this piece of writing so intriguing. It was like the song held my brain hostage, I couldn't find what made the song stand out to me. I sat patiently at the kitchen table, this grimy, edgy tune repeated in my headphones for the next hour while I tried to understand what made it stand out. It played back to back, similar to what someone would do with their new favorite song, not to study a song they didn't like. What kind of person did that? The song's hard-hitting bass and snare almost intimidating, which sent chills down my body. Every word that was sent offbeat, then back on the beat again was almost overwhelming. The more I listened, the more I began to appreciate the lyrical advancement and new sound it offered. More words per minute than other genres I listened to, and more detail with every line. As I wrote my music, I began to notice I was using similar flow patterns, details, and words I heard in many artists' various styles. I realized this had all blossomed from that one song.

As I got older, that wouldn't be the last piece of music I studied. From there studying music became more than just a hobby. I started listening to more music ever since my life has introduced so many genres. By the time I entered the 10th grade I began recording, mixing, and mastering the music I was writing and have even paid to perform at a few small venues in my town. I still study music daily, I observe legendary wordsmith musicians that everyone is familiar with and musicians who never really met stardom. I like to wear my musical influences on my sleeve with every piece of music I write and perform which helps me improve. Now that my music has turned into my lifestyle, I feel obligated to pursue my passion for writing and examining music every chance given to me.

Music has had an extensive impact on my life. My addiction to music has expanded my word choice, affected every piece of my writing, every conversation, and more. My childhood has connected me with the different genres of music and will forever change my perspective on it. I know with my lifestyle, music will continue its impact on me for the rest of my life.