

Top Ten Stories of My Life

“As Long As You Love Me.” Max Martin. Rec: Backstreet Boys, *Backstreet Boys*. Zomba Recording Corporation, 1997.

This was the first song that I ever consciously related to. Now I will hear a song and think, ‘Hey, some of those lyrics sound a lot like me.’ Sometimes I’ll even create a mental music video. In this song, the particular phrase I had related to is “seems like we’re meant to be.” In the 4th grade (and in the present as well), for me, having a crush on someone was a big thing. Let’s just say I fall in love easily. So there I was one day in English class, somebody’s Backstreet Boys CD playing on the stereo, and this one line was sung; the first in a truckload of songs that I relate to my own life and experiences. After that I began to wonder why other people were writing my life into songs without even realizing it. Why wasn’t I writing my life into song lyrics? I mean, why them and not me? Thus began my everlasting spell of songwriting.

Avi. *Beyond The Western Sea*. New York, NY: Laurel-Leaf, 1980.

In sixth grade, I was assigned a project over this story. As I analyzed it, I realized how well written it was. The author used such vivid description and imagery. Her writing took me to another world that left me spinning in a new reality. This book inspired me to write. I wanted to take people to another place, another world and take myself along for the journey, too. I wanted to create beings, things from your wildest dreams, and make them come to life. I wanted to be a writer.

Creech, Sharon. *Bloomability*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc, 1998.

This book marked the beginning of my ‘Get out there and live your life!’ attitude. I’ve picked it up from one of the characters, Guthrie, and how he taught Dinnie to take advantage of each day and make it the best. The most commonly used phrase in that book was when Guthrie would exclaim, “It’s such the best!” This also makes me wonder why we’re wasting our time at school when we could be skydiving or saving a rainforest.

DeVulneria, Frances. “Red Gloves.” As told to the author.

After unsuccessfully trying to give me advice on soccer, my mom sat down and casually began to tell a story about when she was my age. As she told me this story, she made ridiculously exaggerated hand motions and her eyebrows flew up and down to project a comical drama. The vigor with which she told the story, as well as the actual story, let me see a different, younger side of her I had never thought to dig up. We relate more easily now, because I trust that she understands my problems from her own experiences, and I know that we’re not so different.

***Goodfellas*. Dir: Martin Scorsese. Paramount, 1991.**

Goodfellas really taught me about the sheer power of filmmaking. Only a director like Scorsese could open a movie with a horrifying murder, and then use the entire rest of the film to make the audience sympathetic to the killer. Scorsese’s protagonist is a kid who earns respect by associating with gangsters. If a movie can be made to make one sympathize with such a monstrous character, imagine how filmmaking could express a positive message. This film makes me want to be like Scorsese in style, but like me in content.

Lewis, C.S. *The Magician’s Nephew*. New York, NY: Harper Trophy, 1955.

I remember the stormy nights when my parents would cuddle up and read me this story. They would tell a tale of adventure, courage, evil and beauty. I sat there listening to the vivid book, and my head filled with such overwhelming imagination. This story brings back fond memories of those nights and my little sister and I playing out the scenes from the story. My grandmother read this story to my mother and I too wish to read this to my children.

Seuss, Dr.. *The Lorax*. New York City: Random House, 1971.

I came to this Dr. Seuss book a bit on the late side. I suppose I must have been at least 12 years old when I first encountered it. Because of that, I was able to understand the real-world applications of the themes of *The Lorax*. I realized that when those Truffula trees are destroyed and the poor brown Barbaloots are forced to leave their natural habitats in search of new food and land that Dr. Seuss wanted his readers to see the same things happening in their own world. He wanted them to take action like the Lorax had done—and like the young boy on the final page plans to do. He wanted them to take that last Truffula seed and do something before it’s too late. *The Lorax* made me realize that I could—and should—be a part of planting our own seeds and saving our own Barbaloots. Ever since then, I’ve tried my hardest to live according to the “Lorax” code.

Spinelli, Jerry. *StarGirl*. New York, NY: Knopf, 2000.

I have always been both a black sheep and a follower, but a unique follower. *Stargirl* changed the way I look at life, the way I look at myself. *Stargirl* inspired me to believe in myself, to become a shepherd, instead of a sheep. It also inspired me to focus more on other people, instead of just myself. The book made me realize that being unique and different is good.

