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### Literacy Narrative

Excitement, eagerness and confidence are three words to describe how I felt while waiting for the judges to announce the winners of the speech competition. Humiliation, pain and rejection are three words that describe how I felt when I learned that I placed last out of every competitor.

As a child, I was in love with the of rush of adrenaline that ran through my veins while speaking in front of large crowds. In the sixth grade, my parents decided to enroll me into a speech competition, which was a blessing and a curse. It was a mixture of the thing that I loved the most, public speaking, but also involved the thing that I hated the most, writing. The way the competition worked was each age group was given a specific book and a set of questions regarding information in the book. The competitor had to read, answer the questions, and then compose a speech about the answers. You're evaluated base on your presentation and content of the speech by the judges.

I dreaded the thought of having to write my own speech, but I was drawn in by the idea of being able to present it in front of so many people. I read the book and wrote the speech, however I was more excited about the presenting aspect, but lacked the motivation to perfect

the piece of writing. I just threw words on a paper and instead, prepped myself for how I was going to present. The body language, eye contact, and voice projection was all that I was focused on. I wrote my speech in less than a full day, but I spent 3 weeks practicing the presentation.

When it came to the day of the competition, I was beyond excited to show everybody my talent in public speaking. I did have a few butterflies in my stomach while waiting to be called to the stage; after all, it was my first presentation. One by one, I watched the other kids in the competition present. All I was focused on was their speech performance: Were they looking at the judges or staring down at their paper? Were they using their bodies to speak to the crowd? Were they speaking in a monotone manner? Then, it was my turn; I went up to the podium and presented with pure confidence and nailed it, just as I had imagined.

Two hours passed and finally, the judges were ready to announce the winners. All of the competitors gathered around, nervous about where they placed. On the other hand, I was confident that I placed in the top 3 at least. The judges began to call out the winners. 3<sup>rd</sup> place, not me. 2<sup>nd</sup> place, not me. At this point, all I could think of is how I was going walk to the front and accept my trophy when they called my name for 1<sup>st</sup>, but to my disbelief, it wasn't me. I sat with tears rolling down my cheeks. My parents tried to cheer me up but I was hurt; how could my brilliant public speaking skills not have been recognized? I thought that I had to be at least 4<sup>th</sup>, so I forced my dad to ask his acquaintance, who was one of the judges, where I ranked. I had never felt so rejected until I realized that I placed last in a competition that I was beyond

confident in. The judge went out of his way to tell me that I did amazing, but he emphasized that my content lacked an easy flow, good structure, and originality. I wasn't very great at taking criticism. I didn't want to ever compete in a speech competition again. My dad tried to calm me down and tell me that I'll do better next time. How can I do better next time if this was my best? I was over it, I hated writing anyways.

I told my dad that I wouldn't participate in another competition unless he wrote the speech for me which I present. My father is all about honesty and doing the right thing, so of course he rejected the idea. Instead, he told me that if I participated in the next competition and placed in the top 3, he would give me 100 dollars. I was definitely on board with this idea, though this did mean that prepping for my presentation wouldn't be enough this time around; I'd have to write a well-constructed speech as well.

As the next year came around, we were given our books and questions to begin preparing our speech for the competition. I thoroughly answered every question and made sure that they were well written answers. The hardest part was combining all of the answers together to form an easy flowing speech. I sat in front of my computer for the longest time, struggling with how to begin; I have always had such a difficult time beginning my writing. I sat there trying to find a start for hours with no progress. In order to make any progress, I reverted to my old way of writing, throwing all the answers into the word document with no transitions and a terrible flow. After I compiled this piece, I asked my father to edit it for me. I then corrected my mistakes and wrote my speech again and this time I took it to my 7<sup>th</sup> grade English

teacher. Her edits were extremely helpful, she not only gave me tons of advice, but her criticism was so clear. I rewrote my speech after getting help from her and was so proud of the speech at hand. I was so excited; it was the best thing I've ever written. I wanted to do more, see how I could perfect it even more, so I took it to my teacher again. After fixing my essay for the third time, I felt so proud of myself and addicted to the idea of fixing it again. I gave my speech to my brother, my mom, and my dad to look over. I repeatedly wrote my speech again and again until finally I realized that my speech was flawless. All I had to focus on now was perfecting the presentation, which was a piece of cake.

Competition day was finally here, I was beyond excited and confident yet again. This time around, I not only had an amazing speech, but I also practiced very hard for my presentation. Right before my speech is when I began to feel sick to my stomach. I approached the podium and gave it my absolute best. Seeing my dad's face in the crowd with the biggest smile on his face reassured me that I was doing great. During this competition, I was proud to say that I did get second place, along with the 100 dollars that I was promised.

This experience has been a huge part of the success in my writing. The 100 dollars was an effective incentive, however I learned a very important technique that would help me with my writing forever. Through seeing the progress that can be made through editing, there would never be another paper which I did not edit less than twice. I believe that this experience taught me that the first draft is never the last, but it also has encouraged me to make every

paper I write perfect. I've learned that in order to write a paper that you're proud of, you have to keep editing until you can't edit anymore.