

*Please take a moment, or several, to consider the role of learning, in or out of class, in your own life. Then, write an essay (of at least 200 words) sharing your thoughts with us.*

Staring at the screen hours after hours, I still couldn't find any way to put into words my thoughts on the essay topic-"learning". I was desperate.

The final resolution was setting off in search of the almighty Mr. Knowledge. Finding him was easy, as I meet him 365 days a year! He never bores me since he changes his first name and appearance every single day. For example when he is a polished, handsome young man with smart clothes, he is Mr. Academic Knowledge. Or when he is called Mr. Reality Knowledge, he could be really threatening yet interesting with a ragged tailcoat and a hat covered most of his face.

To my surprise, today he simply wears a plain white shirt and pants. Mischievously he winks at me:

- I know why you want to see me, little one.

I sigh tiredly:

- Yeah, you are Mr. Knowledge, after all.

- I am afraid I am of no help.

- Well, certainly I am the only one who understands the role of learning in my life. But everything is so jumbled in my mind right now. I just thought you could help me to sort them out. You are the reason I learn, you know.

- Really?, he sounds amused

- Well, I must confess that at first I did not learn because of you. In elementary school, I never once wondered why I had to go to school, since it was fun and easy. Junior high was a different matter. I hated the thought that we learned just to be “contest contenders” for the school, a leading name in all academic competitions. Back then you, as Mr. Good-for-nothing-but-contests Knowledge, were a tiring burden, putting on excessively formal clothes and a whining face. Thus I came up with a more persuasive cause: money. A good education would guarantee a lucrative job. Funny, huh?

Mr. Knowledge laughs hysterically:

- That is actually the most common reason of all. It is just funny that you used to have it too. And mind you, those unfriendly clothes were what YOU dressed me in. I was not myself in those!

I grin apologetically:

- I know, I know. But you see, I still liked you as Mr. Miscellaneous Knowledge when I met you in Japanese classes or violin lessons after school. It is so nice to approach you without grades or prizes in mind. Or when you come through my hobbies of reading books and watching films. I love it when I read a book purely because I want to meet you.

- Still, you did not really fall in love with me until I took on the name Mr. English

Knowledge.

- How dare you say “that” word so easily!

- Haha, don’t blush, it’s true isn’t it? I still remember your 9th grade, when you got into the English team and started to learn English in depth. You could sit for hours doing English exercises or stay up late to finish some short-story book. You were happy as a child playing with his favorite toy.

- Yeah...luckily since then I regained the joy in learning because of you. I have so much fun discovering your various identities, and turning some of those into my intimate friends (they are, above all, different sides of the only you). Loving you is the proof that I am alive and healthy-the ability to want and love something is a privilege of a human full of life. But...you know...sometimes I fear that my life is so short that I will never get to know all of you, and never understand the real you. Then my effort will be totally useless.

With a gentle smile, he pats me on the head:

- Hey silly little one, you know the story of the boy and the shellfish, right? The boy throws the shellfish back to the sea, although there are countless shellfish stuck in the sand. One thing, however insignificant it is, is always better than nothing. You still have years to love me, and each day does count. I will always be your lifetime friend.

- Even if one day I get fed up with you?

- Trust me, my dear, you can’t get fed up with something you’ll never have enough of.

At this he winks mischievously, again.