

Kathy Hansen's Learning Experiences

Question 1: Describe in 4-5 sentences a memory you recall from when you were learning something in elementary or middle school.

I was in third grade. I don't recall what the writing assignment was, but the story I wrote for the assignment was called, "Our Funny Dinner," about a series of mishaps that occurred one evening over a meal with my parents and sisters. Subsequently, this story was published in the school newspaper. This piece of learning was significant because I have always identified it as the moment I decided to become a writer (combined with the realization that my father was a writer).

I am assuming the topic taught was "language arts," and my teacher was Mrs. Wendell. I was learning it because learning to write is something generally required in grade school. I would say this learning was experiential; I learned to do it by doing it. The fact that I got some attention for it became a turning point in my young life.

Question 2: Describe in 4-5 sentences a memory you recall from when you were learning something in high school or college.

I took 4 years of Latin in high school. Why was I learning it? Because my father told me I had to take Latin. We made a deal that I would take it for two years, and then I would switch to a modern language like French.

It turned out, however, that my high school's Latin teacher was the best teacher I encountered before or since. David Rhody, just 9 years older than I was, brought this dead language to life with enthralling lectures about Roman history. He emphasized the connection between Latin and English – that 60 percent of English comes from Latin -- and he assigned us to maintain derivative notebooks so we could discover for ourselves all the English words that come from Latin. I learned through Mr. Rhody's lectures, translation assignments, and papers (Mr. Rhody was also a stickler for English writing mechanics.)

I learned history, culture, and how to read, write, and translate Latin.

Question 3: Describe in 4-5 sentences a memory you recall from when you were learning in a professional for formal (non-school) setting (first job, current career, etc.).

This is such a tiny sliver of learning, but it has been so memorable to me, and I've carried it with me ever since.

I worked at a printing company early in my career. I was the customer-facing person who took the printing orders and wrote down all the specifications. These details are important in printing – things like taking down the dimensions in the correct order so the customer gets, for example, 5 x 7 scratch pads instead of 7 x 5. My boss, Robert Maney, was a wonderful man – kind, thoughtful, a real mentor, even a father figure. On the few occasions I made a mistake in taking down an order, resulting in a print job rejected by the customer, Robert would simply deliver the botched printing job to a shelf of my office for me to use for "scratch paper." He would not berate me; instead he would just provide a gentle but constant reminder of what happens when you don't pay enough attention to details. The learning was not just about getting the details but also what good management looks like.