

A High School Graduate Looks Back

By Eva Gaetano, CCS '24 and KTL staffer

Last weekend marked my high school graduation—a bittersweet moment as I said farewell to friends I've known since kindergarten, yet also embraced the beginning of a new chapter at college. Reflecting on this milestone, I couldn't help but think of the teachers who have shaped me, as well as the books that have profoundly influenced my growth. Books have been my companions, offering new perspectives, sparking ideas, and enriching my understanding of the world. They've been there for me during English assignments and quiet moments as well, and I know they'll continue to be a source of comfort and inspiration as I move forward.

Because of Mr. Terupt by Rob Buyea:

Because of Mr. Terupt was a book I first read in 5th grade and it had impacted me because of the message behind it. In elementary school I was an avid reader, I would read anything at any time but when I read this book, I began to understand reading for purpose. My mom and I would talk about the books I read and after I finished this book I highly recommended it to her, so much so that she introduced it to her coworkers when I began 6th grade. That was the first book we read in English class. Rob Buyea ended up coming to Clinton Middle School that same year because all the teachers advocated for this book so much. I felt so proud of my recommendation and that a book I started reading was loved by others as well. Although this book has simple ideas, 7 kids from the same class having different backgrounds finding similarities and becoming friends, I feel like this book gave me a wider perspective on how people have different backgrounds and how that affects who they are. It was also just a pleasant book to read as Mr. Terupt teaches the kids life-long lessons and how to be friends.

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park:

I read *A Long Walk to Water* before it was required in 7th grade. I had the unique experience of being my mom's student in 7th grade when we read this book together which made it even more memorable. Linda Sue Park tells the story of the two perspectives of Nya set in 2008 and Salva set in 1985. While they are both told at different times, they are both 11 years old and live in Sudan where their story takes place. Nya has the task of walking hours away to fetch water for her family every day and Salva's story is about his experience as a refugee trying to find a home for him and his family. This story impacted me as I'd never thought about other communities in the world in that way before. It gave me perspective and allowed me to recognize the world around me.

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

Tuesday with Morrie was a required book in 11th grade and it is a true story of Mitch Albom and the impact his college professor Morrie Schwartz had on him. Albom reconnected with his professor after realizing he was about to die, so their friendship rekindled meeting every Tuesday so Morrie could give him one last class on how to live. There were so many lessons to take from this book but the one that impacted me the most was when Morrie said to learn how to give out love and let it come on. The assignment that came along with this book was to think about the person who is our Morrie- someone who gave us guidance when we were struggling.

This allowed me to think deeply about the people in my life who have given me advice and how to truly thank them.

I'm so grateful for all the opportunities and ideas I was introduced to because of my teachers and I could've talked about so many books and experiences that have influenced me. Like, reading *Esperanza Rising* in 5th grade, creating a movie after reading *Catcher of the Rye* sophomore year, and, the conversations we had senior year after reading *Night*. I'm so glad and thankful I've been able to create so many memories by reading and hope to create many more in the future.