Jake Hinson

History 100

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My First Thanksgiving (Two Perfect Pages)

The adolescence years of a child can hugely affect them later in their lives. Luckily I have been blessed with a very caring and structured childhood. Who do I have to thank for that? Well obviously my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and any other family member that was involved in the shaping of who I am today. But I think the most influential part of a child’s growth can be their teachers. I have had great teachers throughout the years, as well as some not so good teachers. These people throughout the years have left an impact in my life that I will never forget. One in particular was my first grade teacher, Ms Baker. Ms Baker was different than any other teacher I have ever had. She was 100% Native American and this had a direct impact on the way she would teach many topics, especially when we learned of the first Thanksgiving.

It was a special day in class. All the first grade teachers had spent the time to set up a classroom full of snacks, crock pots filled with delicious food, and different activities for all us students. While the teachers and a few mothers of the students put the finishing touches to the food, all of us students were spending our time making paper crochet Indian head bands and pilgrim hats. We loved it. Getting to dress up in class and as “cowboys and Indians” (which is how we imagined it) was better than recess to us. Once the food was done the teachers began to talk of the importance of Thanksgiving and why we celebrate it as a nation. After the explanation was over, we were finally able to eat. There was turkey, cranberry sauce, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and corn. The food was amazing!

After we were all finished my teacher, Ms Baker, had us all gather around her at the front of the classroom. She was an older lady from what I remember so she couldn’t speak very loud. She began to explain how her people, the Native Americans, look at this holiday. I remember that it seemed much different than how the other teachers had explained this holiday. The way she had explained it to us is that this is remembered as the day that the Native Americans attempted to bring peace between the pilgrims and the Indians. She talked of how the pilgrims would have died in this cruel country without the farming techniques that the Native Americans taught them. She made the Indians out to be a very kind people. But as she ended her speech, she began to bring up the nasty things that the Americans have done to the Native people. How the Native Americans were robbed of their lands and their way of life. We all were confused after hearing this. We thought that this holiday were for saying thanks.

I believe that Ms Baker had good intentions when telling her story, but I don’t agree with how she approached the topic. I believe that she was trying to show us how lucky we are to have the lives that we do. This day has been forever burned into my memory. This might be the reason why she took the approach that she did, who knows. But I think that it is so interesting to see just how influencial a child is at such a young age, and how a simple story can affect a child’s outlook on a topic for the rest of their lives.