Math Explorations

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The first page of the chapter "High School Geometry: Instrument of the Devil", is very interesting and descriptive. I enjoyed how Lockhart opens up the chapter with such a strong statement. He introduces Geometry as venomous, destructing and as a source of conflict. Lockhart explains that Geometry is "…poisoning the students' enjoyment of this fascinating and beautiful subject, and permanently disabling them from thinking about math in a natural and intuitive way." (67). I was able to connect with Lockhart when he spoke about the poisoning process of the students learning pointless definitions, propositions and notations. I could never understand why we needed to know definitions. I would memorize the definitions, but never truly understood what they meant. I feel that if the teacher had thoroughly explained the term, there would be no need for memorization of a definition. The visualization he uses is fascinating when he says, "Other math courses may hide the beautiful bird, or put it in a cage, but in geometry class it is openly and cruelly tortured." (68).

Lockhart's humor throughout this chapter had me laughing the whole time. I enjoy math and can connect with him. He uses math humor when he talks about the line segments on page 70. He says sarcastically, "You see, now we get to call them AB and CD. And god forbid you should omit the little bars on top…" I found this very humorous because I did the same mistake and my teacher had to explain the significance of the little bars. He makes it seem as if math is something you have to conform to and that if it is not the "math way", it is not the right way. He then becomes more serious on page 78 and says, "The art of proof has been replaced by a rigid step-by-step pattern of uninspired formal deductions. The textbook presents a set of definitions, theorems, and proofs, the teacher copies them onto the blackboard, and the students copy them into their notebooks." This is exactly how not only math class went in high school, but any other

class. It was just always note taking and we could never focus on what the teacher was saying because we feared we would write all the notes down. I feel as though all we did was mimic what we learned in class and never truly experimented with what we were learning. If you asked me, what is the area of a rectangle with the sides 4 and 5, I would respond with 20 because 4 x 5 is 20. I still today do not know why that is besides the fact that the area of a rectangle is length x width. In math, including Geometry, we were never explained why the formulas are, but were just told the equations to find area, volume, circumference ect. I think this is why people say, "oh I just don't like math" or "I don't understand it". Of course you are not going to like it if you do not know what you are learning or understand it. I like to say I enjoy math, but part of me thinks now that it is because I understand the formulas better. I do not think I could actually explain something without using formulas.

Lockhart says, "With a set curriculum to follow, a teacher cannot lead."(82). I can clearly see that you both enjoy teaching with a minimum curriculum. It allows you to open the students' eyes and see what they have been missing. My eyes have been open and I can truly see what my previous math classes have done for me. They have provided me with repetitive methods to solve problems. When I solved problems, no thought or effort was really put into them. It was just a matter of plugging the numbers provided into an equation. I enjoy this class most days. The only time I hate this class is when I cannot solve something. I am stubborn and hate to ask for help. I will keep failing and failing until I understand the math problem. The class is very fun and every day I walk into class and thinking, "what we are going to learn today?" I never know what class is going to be like and am always surprised when we start something new. I look forward to the rest of the year in this class and wish to pursue math in a new way that doesn't involve memorizing formulas, but exploring math and its beauty.