

My Inspirational Hero

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Joseph Campbell, a famous American writer, once said, "A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself". There is one person in my life that matches this description. Just like the superheroes that we see on TV, my first grade teacher - Mrs. Heather Cumine - can fly, fight crime, and will always triumph.

Six years later, I still look back on the teacher that changed my life forever. Mrs. Cumine had the ability to cause our imaginations to fly away. Our little classroom was home to mice, silk worms, a hummingbird, and a variety of other animals. She brought all her lectures to life with her magnificent smile and radiant personality. I still remember that cold autumn day, when I looked up at into the eyes of my wonderful teacher and resolved that someday, I would be a teacher just like her.

Mrs. Cumine was an animal lover. She would explain metamorphosis to us by bringing in live silk worms from the school gardens. We would watch the silk worms spin silk into cocoons and take turns feeding them mulberry leaves. After watching the curious moths that emerged from the cocoons, our class was always eager to learn more about animals. Later in the year, Mrs. Cumine caught a hummingbird that was flying near the flowers. We learned an important lesson that day - to always leave living things in their natural habitat. Together, we released the moths and the hummingbird back into the gardens.

The kind of crime my superhero fought was illiteracy. Mrs. Cumine did everything in her power to present us with the best reading material there was to be found. Books like *Cam Jansen* and *The Magic School Bus* immediately became my favorites, and led me to become the avid reader I am today. Every time we read a book, we were to fill out a paper describing it. Each paper was shaped like the body of a caterpillar. These "reading caterpillars" were strung to each other and hung around the room. At the end of the year, I had the longest caterpillar - a total of 16 books. My superhero had triumphed yet again.

It seemed that nothing would ever go wrong - I had the best teacher in the entire school. Then one bright and sunny Tuesday, Mrs. Cumine casually mentioned that she

had been diagnosed with skin cancer. At that time, I didn't realize the dangers of this disease - it was just another illness that would cure itself in the course of a week. However, I soon realized it was more than that. A month after she told us, she started wearing a wig to school. But Mrs. Cumine never allowed the cancer to get in the way of us. She never missed a day of school, and didn't lose her energetic personality. I will always look up to her because she made me realize that one should enjoy life to its fullest.

Mrs. Cumine has influenced my entire life. The summer after first grade, I realized that my true passion was to become a biologist that finds the cure to cancer. I still have this dream, which I hope will come true someday. I am in seventh grade now, but I make sure to send Mrs. Cumine Christmas cards every year. I was truly inspired by her ardent enthusiasm for teaching. I will always be grateful to this marvelous teacher for turning me into an avid reader, an animal lover, and a person who will always make lemonade when life throws lemons at her.