

The WRITE Choice

By Justina McCandless

(Based on a true story)

“And they are free to choose” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Justina sat extra tall in her seat. She placed her new pencils at the top of her desk. Today was the first day of school. She’d met her classmates and drawn a fun picture. So far, so good.

Then Mrs. Werner said, “Time to work on writing!” Mrs. Werner handed out papers to the class. “You have 30 minutes to work on this. Then we’ll go to recess.”

Justina gulped. *Oh no. Writing already?* she thought.

Last year Justina had a hard time with reading and writing. All of her friends seemed to like it. It wasn’t so hard for them. What if this year was like last year all over again?

Justina picked up her pencil. She looked at her paper. Her stomach sank. All the other students were already writing. Except for her.

She wanted to talk to Mrs. Werner. Would she be mad that Justina was having trouble? Even if she was, that still sounded better than writing.

Justina walked to her teacher’s desk. “Mrs. Werner? This is harder than what I did last year. I don’t think I can do it.”

Mrs. Werner didn’t look upset. She smiled at Justina. “Do what you can. You might be surprised at what you can do! You can’t always choose what you’re good at. But you can always choose how hard you try.”

Justina walked back to her desk. She thought about what Mrs. Werner said. *I can choose to try.* That was like

what she learned in Primary. Her class read a scripture that said we are “free to choose.”

Could school be different this year? Justina wondered. Maybe she could *choose* to make it different! Justina picked up her pencil. She looked at her paper. She took a deep breath. *OK. I’m going to try,* she thought.

The recess bell rang. Justina wasn’t finished yet. But she was more than halfway done! She raised her hand. “Can I stay and keep working? I’m so close to being done!”

Mrs. Werner smiled and nodded.

Justina finally handed in her paper. Her hand ached a little bit. Even her brain hurt! But she was smiling. She had never worked so hard on writing before.

The next day the class worked on reading. Mrs. Werner asked everyone to read for 20 minutes. Justina tried again. She opened her book and sounded out the words.

Justina started making new choices every day. She chose to read. She chose to write. Maybe reading and writing weren’t so bad!

She even chose to go to the library. She checked out books. Last year she would have never done that. Soon she was reading all the time. It was actually fun! And the more she read, the better she got at writing.

And soon, reading and writing became some of her favorite things to do! ♦

The author lives in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany.



Hi, I’m Justina from the story! After I learned to love writing, I just kept on doing it. I wrote in high school. Then I went to college to learn more about writing. Now I’m a writer! I get to write stories, like this one about my challenges as a kid. I’ve written for magazines, websites, and newspapers.

ILLUSTRATION BY SIMINI BLOCKER