**My Most Memorable Teacher**  
**By Meagan V. Pike**

During my junior year of high school, Mrs. Marilyn Hooker was my AP English teacher. She was one of those teachers whose reputation as being “difficult” preceded her. Her reputation was accurate, but in the course of our junior year, my classmates and I discovered that she was not just a “hard” teacher. Mrs. Hooker had an impact on us during our high school career that would carry far beyond the classroom, pushing us to be better learners and better people throughout our lives.

One part of this was inspiring us as academics. Mrs. Hooker had a passion for the subject of English, but moreover she had a passion for compelling us to succeed. In her class, she set lofty expectations of us, expectations that she knew we could rise to meet, even if we did not think so of ourselves. She constantly asked us to think critically about our world and the words we read, and she showed us the importance of wielding words with power and influence. Each of us has been able to reflect and be thankful for her showing us how to pursue excellence in her classroom so that we could apply it in achieving our own goals. Not all of us left her classroom with a newfound love for books and writing – though many did, and one of my classmates, formerly a non-reader, continues to devour books throughout his college years – but we all learned the value of hard work in any pursuit.

The lessons learned from Mrs. Hooker meant so much to us because we all knew that she loved us fiercely. She was the teacher who we knew would be there for us, would fight for us, would give us the tough love when needed, would listen to our dreams, and would tell us that it would not be easy, but we could reach them. I still cannot fathom how one woman could care so deeply about so many students, but she did.

Mrs. Hooker’s love for her students is what has inspired me in my pursuit of a teaching career. I have known that I wanted to be a teacher since I was in kindergarten, but Mrs. Hooker made me realize what kind of teacher I wanted to be and what kind of person I wanted to become. It was a common occurrence to be sitting in her class and have one of her former students come in to say hi, to see how she was doing, and to tell her where life was taking him or her. These students came from all walks of life: minorities, different economic levels, some were in college, some were pursuing a career, some were aspiring
actors and writers who had gone to Hollywood, and some had stayed in Jacksonville, Texas to run a farm or rear a family. She had loved each of them, and each of them had something for which to thank her.

Seeing this made me realize that teaching English should not be merely about loving English, but most importantly about loving students. I want my classroom to be like hers: a place where students are cared about and empowered to pursue any type of dream. I want to be a teacher who will fight for my students, who will tell them that they have worth and that their dreams and goals have value, and that it will not be easy, but success is possible with hard work. This sounds like idealism, except that I have been a part of such a classroom and have seen the extent of its influence.

Mrs. Hooker passed away in October 2012. It has been the struggle for me and my classmates, and her students before us, to put her impact on our lives into words, because for each of us her influence was so unique and far-reaching. My graduating class will not get to go revisit her classroom and thank her for getting us through school and to where we are today. What we will do is live out our lives knowing that she taught us more than we expected – she taught us to live passionately, to love others, and to be good people, the best people we could be to make this world a better place. These are the lessons we know we can never forget.