



When I started tutoring I expected to tutor a child who could already read and my job would be to help them improve their reading. However, John was unable to read at all and was working on learning about 5 letters.

During our first two meetings I tried to work with those 5 letters but I could see he wasn't interested and begged to go back to class after 15 minutes. At our third meeting I asked him what interested him and he said at once "Batman!" The next session I brought along

several library books with Batman stories suitable for his age level. His eyes lit up and we spent the whole hour reading through the book with lots of stops to discuss it together. That started our weekly ritual. I would bring books on super heroes, and would try to get him to write out short words from the books, but I also wanted to encourage his imagination and he had plenty. I spoke to the special education teacher about him, and she listed a long list of his disabilities - low IQ, emotional, cognitive, you name it. However, I didn't see John like that at all. He was a very friendly, lively boy and seemed very bright in all sorts of ways. I guessed that he didn't have much enrichment at home, and half way through the year he told me he had been taken away from his mother and put into foster care. So he had a lot to deal with at such a tender age.

We began to spend time coloring, cutting out patterns, drawing, and once I borrowed a book on making paper airplanes. I couldn't understand the instructions so found an easier one (for me) where he did most of the folding and successfully made a super airplane. I also bought a small construction set (similar to Lego) and he put it together in minutes, so I didn't see him as backward. By this time, he didn't want to stop at the end of the hour, so I felt I was on the right track just by mentoring him, giving him lots of encouragement, and praising him when deserved. However, I felt somewhat guilty that I wasn't sticking exclusively to teaching him to read, but didn't think I could succeed where other more professional people (he was getting lots of help from them) were failing.

I hope to mentor him again for this coming year - he asked me if I would, so I will try to come up with some new activities to keep his attention and hopefully teach him as well.