Our practice/model essay #1

In Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”, his views on education become clear by the terms in which he describes darkness and light. According to Plato, education comes with seeing the greater view of the world and understanding it through reason and actual experience. Although Plato’s idea of education makes a lot of sense to me, unfortunately, most educators have a very different view of what education means.

Traditional schooling does not offer students opportunities to experience learning firsthand. Most schools take place in stuffy rooms with rows of desks, where students are often not allowed to talk, much less get out of their seats. For many students, this teaches them to hate learning and think that it is something that is boring and only happens while sitting in a hard chair. This is like the prisoners in Plato’s metaphorical cave, “How could they if they had been prevented from moving their heads all of their lives.” Many students are restricted by traditional education and it is as though they are prevented from seeing and experiencing the real of the world. When I was younger, I didn’t learn anything in school. The only thing I really learned was how to cheat, how to be quiet and how to sleep with my eyes open. The real learning happened outside of the classroom. When my parents took me to San Francisco or I worked at the library. These were the experiences where I felt as though I truly learned.

If more educators had Plato’s view of education, the world would be populated by much smarter, sensitive, reflective thinkers. Many schools produce students who have little interest in the world outside out their limited knowledge. Had they experienced more in the world (either by travel, volunteering and other hands-on opportunities) they would have a wider view and thus more sensitivity. “RELEVANT QUOTE and COMMENTARY” When I was in college, I went to study abroad. I lived in another country for a year and learned more in that year about myself, the world and interacting with the world than I learned in my entire college career. If all American students had to go somewhere else and learn how other people live, we might have fewer international conflicts and misunderstandings. At least, I would hope.

Although firsthand experience is ideal, there are other ways of gaining knowledge and understanding. For example, In Malcom X’s “Learning to Read”, he is incarcerated therefore does not have the opportunity to experience the world. He is confined to a cage mentally, but uses books to explore the world outside of his cell. “As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.” Malcom X’s “cave” was the outside world where he was so limited in his experience and knowledge. Ironically, for him, going to jail was what enabled him to “see” the world in a different way through reading books. When Malcom X was out of prison, these new “vistas” were there for him to see, whereas before he had no idea they existed.

Education is a complicated thing. I largely agree with Plato’s view of education but I do see that in some cases, it is not always practical. For example if someone is in jail (like Malcom X) or does not have the ability to experience all of the things they want to learn about. In this case, books and study are a good substitute.

THESIS IDEAS:

Plato’s view of education is that it is most valuable when gained through actual experience.

With knowledge, those of us who are imprisoned by ignorance can go to understanding.