

## Why English? Reesa Hobbs Shares



Reesa Hobbs came back to school at the age of 40 hoping to obtain a degree and get a job. She wanted to teach kids, especially teenagers, who are beginning to figure out who they are and what they care about. “They are looking around their world, pulling from their experiences and others, and finding connections. I’m a big believer that smart people learn from those around them, in all different contexts. English is such a fun way to tap into those ideas,” Reesa shares. “What better way to learn from the consequences of actions than by diving into literature to learn? Literature is so encompassing. We have so many mediums to learn from. This is an area that I have continually found challenging and engaging.”

Once a part of the program at USU, Reesa said sticking with English has been easy. From reading about different people and ideas to analyzing texts that uncover the why behind human nature, she describes the work in the English Department as fun and exciting. “One of the great things about English is that there isn’t one right answer,” Reesa says. “Everyone’s lived experience is individual, which makes for so many different ways to interpret and see the world. I love the discussions with my peers and hearing multiple different viewpoints.”

For Reesa, the English Department at USU is unique because of its commitment to belonging. In a world where many places are exclusionary, she has found that isn’t the case in the program. “They find ways for people of all different backgrounds and demographics to belong in the world, specifically because they exist and have value as a human. You see this reflected by the professors, the students, and the things that are taught and studied,” comments Reesa.

One of Reesa’s favorite memories from her time in the department was in an Introduction to Shakespeare class taught by Principal Lecturer Lezlie Christensen-Branum. The class had a diverse range of majors, and the assignments were designed to increase comprehension of Shakespeare as well as to creatively engage with literature. “My favorite assignment in the class was a sparking project,” she reflects. “We were asked to ‘ignite the interest of both the presenter and the audience in some aspect related to Shakespeare and provide a personal connection with and interpretation of the scripts.’ The projects that came out of that assignment can only be described as epic. One group created a modern-day playlist for Richard the III that was pure genius.”

As a non-traditional student, Reesa came to USU nervous about engaging in discussions in class and how she would come across to others. “My phase of life and those of the other students is drastically different in a lot of ways,” she explains. “But in each class, specifically in the English Department, the students have pulled me in, made me feel welcome, given me a sense of belonging, and let me know that my perspective is not only needed but valued. The students have modeled to me the learning environment that I hope to create in my future classroom.”