

Fresh Essays from Writing I Thoughts Fall 2021



Introduction

First-Year Writing is a pivotal experience for Lasell students. Throughout Writing I and Writing II, students learn to assess their skills, face new challenges, and expand their abilities. By writing in a variety of genres, students come to understand how to best shape their writing for different audiences and different purposes.

All students enrolled in Writing I in the fall of 2021 were invited to submit their favorite works to be considered for publication in this issue of Fresh Thoughts. We were overwhelmed by the quality and quantity of submissions and had to make challenging decisions about which essays to publish. We strive to include essays representing a variety of topics written in a variety of genres, and we present these pieces as a representation of the work done in our classes.

While this is first and foremost a celebration of students and their writing, we would also like to thank our faculty who worked closely with student writers throughout the semester. Faculty teaching First-Year Writing this year included Greg Cass, Alexander Cronis, Derek Knapp, Sara Bartlett Large, Kip Langello, Deborah Mael, Michelle Niestepski, Annie Ou, and Cathleen Twomey.

In addition, this volume would not be possible without the art direction and production design of Professor Stephen Fischer, and the typographic illustrations created in Professor Vladimir Zimakov's Typography I course. We thank you for your contributions to this collection.



Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Professor Diane M. Donatio who passed away unexpectedly during the summer of 2005. Professor Donatio, Diane to all who knew her, taught Writing and Communication courses at Lasell College, for eleven years. She was an exceptionally talented teacher who dedicated herself to student success. Students loved her classes and were constantly trying to get into them even when they were full.

Although Diane loved teaching all of her courses, she particularly enjoyed Writing I and Writing II. She relished working with first-year students and constantly pushed her students to do their best. Because of Diane's belief and support, her students worked hard and felt proud of the essays they wrote and how their writing improved over the course of a semester.

Because of the generosity of Diane's family and friends, we are able to give awards to outstanding essays from Writing I. Selecting the award winners is always a difficult task. As one faculty member said, "If Diane were here, she would have wanted to give every student an award because she would have found something great in every essay." We certainly know that Diane would have loved to read every essay in this book, and we hope that you enjoy it as much as she would have.

Table of Contents

FIRST PLACE

Sasha Davis “Reclaiming My Curls”4

SECOND PLACE

Hyacinth Tauriac “My Cow Friend”6

THIRD PRIZE

Maya LaClaire “The Email That Changed Me”9

HONORABLE MENTION

Ariana Varnum “What I Treasure Most” 11

Mikayla Bokis.....13

Shannon Borbee16

Lindsey Carroll18

Meghan Dolley.....20

Kylie Francis.....22

Marino Kozaka.....24

Christina Lafortune27

Cameron McDonough29

Hazel Nichol.....31

Elliot Potostsky.....33

Alyson Richard.....34

Jayden Robinson37

Kamren Sicard38

Taylor Thompson42

Courtney Tello44

Meghan Theall.....46

Emily VanHouten47

Aaliyah Wyman50



a girl who was tired of wearing the same bun every single day, I discovered the “art” of straightening. At least that’s what I thought it was at the time. One night I had expressed to my mom how badly I wanted to get my hair done. I had never straightened it before, so I wasn’t skilled enough to try it myself. The conversation led to my mom arguing with me, explaining to me how my curl pattern would be completely ruined. She repeatedly told me no until I explained to her that I would only do it once. That argument sadly led her to give in. Looking back, I wished I would have just accepted her first response.

Growing up, it was incredibly difficult to find a stylist that knew how to correctly tame my hair. So when my mom was referred to someone who specialized in straightening curls, we immediately took the chance. Walking into a hair salon not knowing what your hair will look like when you walk out is a nervous feeling. I sat down in the stylist’s chair who went by the name of Natalie. Natalie was an incredibly kindhearted, caring person from the moment I met her. She truly made me feel like I could trust her with my hair as my mom explained that I wanted it to be straightened. Then began the two-and-a-half-hour process. Natalie first spent time washing and deep conditioning my hair thoroughly. She then parted it and began to blow it out using a paddle brush. When the blow drying was done, she parted my hair again, this time going over each section with a flat iron to seal in the heat. As Natalie spun the chair around to reveal the final result, I instantly fell in love with the way that it looked, with the way that I looked. I felt confident with hair that I could flip to the side of my shoulder. Hair that looked sleek and flat.

The next day at school, I felt like for once I had been noticed.

“Sasha, your hair looks amazing”

“I honestly like your hair better straight than curly” was all I heard from my classmates. As someone who used to only seek approval from others, these comments made me feel good about myself. These comments are what fueled my obsession with straightening my hair constantly. I spent loads of money a few times a month just to feel “pretty” for one to two weeks and then back to putting my hair in a bun until I could get it straightened again. Seeking out approval from others based on my hair style is what made me hate my natural curls even more. I spent two years cycling through straightening my hair, putting it up, and sometimes gaining the confidence to wear it out only to put it up the moment I stepped into school.

By the time freshman year of high school rolled around, my hair had fallen pretty much dead. After officially being done with wasting money on straightening for it only to

look nice for a week, I realized that I wanted to devote more time into caring for my curls. From there, every night I fell asleep to YouTube videos of my favorite curly haired influencers discussing their transformations and how they were able to grow their hair healthily. I spent my free periods in school researching products that were good for curly hair and stylists that were known for specializing in curls. After hours of doing so, I came across a curly haired stylist not too far from my town. She had been labeled as an official Deva Curl certified stylist after months of training with the company. While explaining to my mom that I wanted to take the time to care for my hair, I made an appointment with the curly haired stylist who went by the name of Jackie.

I dreamed of what my curls could look like if I consistently took the time to be gentle with them. Which is why when my appointment came around I was ready to sit down in the chair and listen to everything that Jackie had to say. Throughout my appointment, Jackie had been incredibly informative on how to take care of my hair on my own. After a pretty big chop was done on my curls, Jackie allowed me to take videos and notes of the routine. She had made it very clear that the journey would not be an easy or a quick one, but that it was definitely one worth taking. Although my hair hadn’t yet been at its full potential, I still walked out of that appointment feeling more confident than I had in a really long time. From there I only spent time allowing healthy products into my hair, avoiding heat, and wearing it out as much as possible even if it appeared poofy. The process wasn’t exactly as easy as it sounds. There were times when I wanted to give up and pick up a straightener again but I was left with the constant reminder that it’s important to love yourself naturally before you try and cover up the things that make you, you.

As time went on, my curls slowly began to grow again. Appointments with Jackie every few months helped to fuel that growth and once again I was known as the mixed girl with the curly fro, this time I enjoyed that title. My experiences with my hair and identity issues helped contribute to the person that I am today. Which is why any time I pass by a little brown girl with curly q’s I always stop to tell them that their hair is beautiful and that they should embrace their naturality. Sure, it might not make the most difference in the world, but I wish the younger me had heard the same. My beautiful locks of dark spiraled curls are what makes me who I am and I’ve grown to realize that I’m okay with standing out.

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gate and rested my chin on my hands, exhaling in defeat.

The herd dispersed across the pasture, quietly grazing. A small flock of chickens bounced in and out of their coop. Insects buzzed in the grass. Birds chirped and soared across the landscape, retreating to their nests before dusk settled. I admired the bright streak of canary yellow spread across the horizon. The last moments of sunshine peeked through the pine treetops. Fluffy masses of clouds looked as though they were full of fire, scattered with burning shades of orange and red. Violet and magenta wisps of cirrus clouds blew across the dimming blue backdrop. A brisk breeze brushed against my skin and gently blew through my light layers of clothes. I took a slow breath, drawing out the inhale through my nose and filling my lungs before steadily releasing it back out. The air was crisp and refreshing. My limbs soothed, and my mind relaxed. I had forgotten how satisfying a deep breath felt.

I settled quietly for ten minutes, taking in my surroundings. All of these intricate vignettes of life and movement gracefully and effortlessly intersected. It was grounding and harmonious to exist with it all at once. With the stress of school and the struggle of my depleting mental wellness, it had been so long since I existed in the world outside of the jumbles in my head. I couldn't remember the last time I stood in nature to look, listen, and appreciate what swirled around me. Swept up in the anxieties of the future and the weighty pressures of youth, I had lost what it meant to just be.

I watched an unaccompanied cloud dissipate into invisible vapor, clearing the sky. Half of the cattle trickled towards the cowshed. The others collected by a tree rooted in the back corner of the pasture. All but one of the chickens had returned to the coop. The lone straggler had found its way to the gravel, planting its shanks beside my car. "Bawk! Bawk!" it clucked blaringly as if to notify me of my overstayed welcome and escort me to my ride. It was time for the sun to fall and the farm to sleep.

After that first visit, I dropped by as often as I could. To think, to cry, to listen, to breathe, and to be. I could break away and unplug while fulfilling immersing in life. The farm became a place of peace. My overanxious worries and ruminated thoughts would slip from my mind to be picked up and carried off by the wind.

It took about a half dozen visits before any of the cows got curious. I had tried all kinds of clicks, clacks, and whistles, but I don't think there was anything I could've done to entice them over. I think they just needed to feel that they would be safe.

I had been admiring a pair of birds bouncing throughout the branches of a sloping birch tree when I heard a rumbly grunt. I faced forward to see a dark brown cow standing a few feet away from where I leaned against the fence. She had big, round, black doe eyes set far apart on the opposite sides of her head with long, flared eyelashes that batted down charmingly. A thick tuft of hair sat on her forehead.

Like her coat, her textured muzzle was a rich umber, but a pinkish-brown stain marked the tip of her nose. Her big, fuzzy ears twitched like they were tickled by the breeze. She sniffed as she stepped forward and further into the low brightness emitting from the back door light. Under the warm white, her coat shone a reddish-hickory hue. Her short snorts grew louder as she moved towards me. I held my breath and kept my body still. Soon there was only the fence and half a foot between us.

She towered over me, standing at least six feet tall. Wide-eyed, I gulped in awe of her grand majesty. We blinked and blankly stared at each other, both unsure of what to do next. I prolonged a hearty inhale and exhale before slowly extending my hand out in front of her. Nerves shook my fingers in the cold. She stretched her neck towards my hand. Her wet nostrils wiggled and tickled my fingertips as she repeatedly sniffed, assessing this strange person who stood here all the time. After about thirty seconds, her long ashy black tongue flopped out of her mouth and licked the back of my hand. It felt rough against my skin, like a damp piece of sandpaper. Her tongue flipped back onto her snotty muzzle, before slapping down on my palm. I laughed in amazement. I was too giddy to be grossed out by the drool moving from my hand to the cuff of my shirt sleeve.

Normally, an unfamiliar experience like this one would've prompted me to retreat. Stress, trauma, and depression had closed me off and shuttered me in. Sinking into the world on my phone and enveloping myself in the digital lives of others demanded nothing of me but my attention and clicks. But as social media became my escape, it also made me feel insecure, inadequate, and worthless. Hypnotized by the blue light, I had gotten caught in the endless, addictive scroll and instant, empty gratification. I was desperate to find healing in the same place that brought me harm. But here, on the farm, there was no one to tell me that I wasn't enough. There were no corners to hide and cower in. This was real life, fresh air, and tangible tranquility in the scrapes of a cow tongue.

It was a vulnerable moment of trust. Trying not to startle her, I steadily placed my hand on the fuzzy scruff between her eyes that sloped down towards her nose. I gently stroked the thick patch of soft chestnut hair as she began to lap her tongue around my forearm, dampening my sleeve. My heart pounded and thumped so hard that it could've ripped right out of my chest. Exhilaration coursed through my body, racing around from my feet to my head. But I didn't feel fear. My mind was calm and present. I was comforted by the silky feeling of her hair between my fingers.

I wanted to get closer. I swung my head side to side, looking out for any potential tattlers and assessing the level of risk as if I hadn't already trespassed more than too many times. I stealthily stepped a few feet towards the gate of the corral pen. I gripped both hands around the cool steel of the cattle guard and placed my foot on the rail. I scoped out the

scene with a couple more head turns. “Should I really do this?” I sighed.

I lifted myself over the guard and dismounted onto the mushy grass. My heartbeat increased as my new friend sauntered towards me. It wasn’t until she was right in front of me that I could truly take in her might. Her body was wide and large. Her legs looked almost comically short and narrow in proportion to her big and tall build. I reached out my hand, and she licked my palm contently, seeming comfortable in my presence. Mindful not to make any sudden movements, I cautiously stepped to her side and began brushing her short, coarse coat. Her tongue passed over my shoulder as I rested my head against her neck.

She felt warm against my temple, her hair pricked my

skin, and she faintly smelled of muddy grass. My hand moved with the expansion and contraction of her stomach as she respired in and out. Listening to her rumbly, steady huffs, I balanced my breathing with hers. My heart rate evened, and I settled in the serene moment. I looked up at the robust forest that met the horizon. Orange clouds drifted off as the sun faded down the sapphire sky. Birds flew by, singing their evening tune. I closed my eyes and drew in the soothing air, lovingly leaning against my sweet cow friend. I surrendered my worries and myself to the peace of nature, and it had so tenderly embraced me in.

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many others take but get lucky. It should not be a game of luck people play to get home safely. However, it is a game played by more than one would imagine. Every 51 minutes in America, someone is killed in a drunk driving accident (“11 Facts,” n.d.). That equates to 27 people a day; 27 people a day who play the game of luck and lose.

When I found out who it was I was haunted. I knew it was his birthday, but I never texted him and told him, “Happy Birthday.” The pit in my stomach began to rise when the word got around who it was. When the pit in your stomach begins to rise it gives you a feeling of being nauseated. You feel the constant need to throw up. I remember going to bed that night. The last thing I looked at before I put my phone down was a snap on Cole’s Snapchat story. It was around one in the morning and it read, “Thank you all for the birthday wishes, love you all.” To this day, I still feel like that exact picture lives in my head. It sits in the back of my mind, just a plain black screen with those words written on it. That was the last time many people, including myself, will ever hear from Cole.

A few hours passed by while students still attended class. We logged in and all sat in silence. By this time everyone knew, the aura was dark. Then, all of a sudden, our phones go off again. This time, it was a text written by a fellow classmate letting us know the class will be going to our school with flowers to create a memorial on the front lawn dedicated to Cole. I was hesitant at first. I did not want to stand in the cold rain with all my classmates, staring at a large picture of a friend we just lost, silently crying and trying to hide my tears as they rolled into my masks. Turns out when I got there, it was good that it was raining. The rain hit my face and mixed in with my tears so no one could tell that I was crying. It was a cold, empty feeling as we all stood there around the pile of flowers and a picture. It felt unreal in the moment; we were all in shock. This was the first time we had all come together as a full class since the middle of junior year. I saw people I had not seen in months standing beside each other, comforting one another, as if we had all been friends for the past year.

When most of my class got there, we did not know what to do. We stood there for an hour in the cold, pouring rain. It was so quiet that the only sound you heard was the rain tapping on the plastic wrapper of the store-bought flowers. Groups were huddled up and hugging, both to stay warm and for the support of each other. While we stood there as a class, more people began to show up. Cole’s friends and family silently joined us. His father walked over with his brother. It was haunting to watch a family put a fake smile on their faces in front of a group of teenagers after they had just lost a son, a brother. A car pulled up behind us and we all turned around simultaneously. It was Cole’s mother. She did not get out of the car, she just slowed down and passed

by. She gave a slight wave to us all and drove off. In that moment, I felt something I had never felt before. I watched a heart broken mother, full of regret for letting her son go out that night, politely wave out of pure appreciation for us being there. My heart hit the bottom of my stomach as she slowly drove off.

Days passed and I watched as people quickly moved on. Our teachers never brought it up to us and we all acted as if it never happened. Everyone sat around at school every day hiding their emotions. His name was never mentioned in any of my classes or by any of my teachers again. Until Graduation night.

On Graduation night we all went out to celebrate. People had plans and, within those plans, people chose safety. In that moment, that night specifically, I could tell I was not the only person who had a personal impact from the passing of a classmate. I was not alone. It was getting late and most people, including one certain classmate, partied much harder than the rest. This classmate wanted to leave and go home. When he got into his car and started to leave, I watched a group of people run over to his car and stand in front of it. This classmate in particular was very close with Cole. They were very good friends and spent a lot of time together. The group of people standing in front of his car just looked at him and said Cole’s name. At that moment he turned off his car and got out. I remember the concerned look on all their faces. It was the first time Cole’s name was mentioned as a group. You could see in everyone’s eyes that it felt weird to hear his name again. That night we were able to save a friend, if only we were able to do that a few months before.

When something terrible like this happens, the way you live your life changes. I began to overuse the phrase “I love you.” I did not want to risk losing someone else I knew unexpectedly and not letting them know how I felt. Because of this terrible accident, I always have a plan when going out with friends. Now I choose safety first, because I know how the heartbreak felt. I now know that I want to stay safe, not only for myself but also for others. I would not consider myself one of Cole’s close friends, but I still felt the impact of his tragic death. The way I felt for months after was nothing compared to the way people who were very close to him must have felt. I never want someone who is close to me to feel that way. The darkness of the months that carried on after this were haunting. So haunting that I would never want to be put in the position for it to ever be repeated, nor be the reason someone I know has to experience this haunting feeling.

Maya LaClaire is a Fashion Media and Marketing student. She is from Sunderland, MA and did an exchange program in the Netherlands.



HONORABLE MENTION

What I Treasure Most

Ariana Varnum

My most treasured item is a small brown gift box, which I keep safely tucked under my bed. If I were to lose that box, I would be devastated beyond repair. I know it's silly to cling so desperately to these tangible memories, but everything-- down to the box itself-- has a special place in my heart. It holds so much, both metaphorically and literally.

I used the box to give my boyfriend, Matt, a gift for his sixteenth birthday. Later that year, he gave it back to me on my birthday, knowing I'd appreciate the callback. Inside the box, there was a letter, a jade plant, and a pint of my favorite ice cream: Ben and Jerry's Dairy-Free Cherry Garcia. They all seem like simple things, but they were so perfect.

He knows me well enough to give me something thoughtful and personal, but not something so big it makes me uncomfortable. Matt always strikes that balance perfectly. Now, the ice cream is long gone, the plant died a month ago (I cried about this for at least an hour), and the letter, among other things, occupies this small brown box that's littered with our handwriting.

It has a pair of silly heart glasses that we took from the photo booth at the Valentine's day dance, where I realized that I loved him. I think we were both unsure about whether or not this was a date at the time, but I consider it our first date. I think he does too; we're pretty in sync now. To paraphrase *Fairly Odd Parents*, we're two halves of a whole idiot.

So we were at the Valentine's day dance, nervously fidgeting and making small talk, despite the fact that the music was far too loud to do this successfully. Then I saw

them: two pairs of tacky, red, heart-shaped sunglasses. My anxiety was quickly replaced with chaotic enthusiasm. I insisted we wear them. He laughed and complied with my ridiculous demand.

After a teacher pressured us to take what has to be the cutest and most uncomfortable looking photo-booth photo

in history, Don't Stop Believin', the last song of the night, started playing. My whole face lit up. I grabbed his hand and ran back to the table where we were sitting before. I jumped up onto a chair, still wearing the sunglasses, and I loudly (and badly) sung along.

It was late at night. I was deliriously tired and absolutely obnoxious. But when I glanced down at Matt, he was looking up at me, smiling. It was the kind of smile that made me feel like I was admired unconditionally. I had never felt that way before. He just quietly sat there, looking at me like I was a piece of art. After the song was finished and the dance was over, we walked outside, hand in hand, facing the icy winter

wind, sporting matching sunglasses and goofy grins as we walked into the glistening monochrome of the night.

The sunglasses have another memory attached to them. The snow had now melted, replaced by the smell of wet dirt and the beginnings of greenery. I don't remember why, but Matt and I had gotten in an argument earlier that day. He asked me what he could do to try to make it better. I asked him if we could sneak out to see each other that night. I didn't give him many details. I just told him to wear something nice, and to bring snacks and candles. I was planning a midnight picnic.

We agreed to bike towards each other's houses and meet halfway. We met up, complimented each other's unusually



Illustration by Kaitlyn Johnson

fancy attire, and decided to go to the library. We set up our assortment of snacks, lit the birthday candles he found, and I handed him a letter I had written him. Matt smiled at me and pulled out two more things from his backpack: a letter for me and the heart sunglasses. He put them on, I laughed, and we ate our picnic under the stars.

I remember saying that I wanted to stargaze, so we walked down to a bridge where we could see the stars better. He was playing music off to the side of the bridge while I stood directly in the middle of the road. I didn't have any particular reason to do this. I just liked that I could. Ever the worrier, Matt told me to stay by the side with him. I pouted, pointing out that there weren't any cars, it was the middle of the night, and it's fun. He sighed and came to join me. Actually, he came to stop me, but I've mastered the art of puppy dog eyes. He was still in the sunglasses, which reminded me that we never got to dance on our first date. Shortly after the date, we got comfortable with each other almost instantly. Because I was much more confident around him, I asked him if we could dance now, since we never got the chance before. He nodded. We slow danced under the stars in the middle of the road.

We laid down on the cool pavement and talked for a while. Until I saw headlights. I grabbed his hand and ran with him to the side of the road. I remember laughing, then turning to check on him and seeing him pale, shaking, and completely amazed by my reaction. It felt like a scene from a movie. I think that's my favorite memory.

The box also has every letter he's ever written to me. Each letter is endlessly sweet. It's as if he only has kind things to say about me. Sometimes, on rough days, I need to be reminded of the version of me he sees. When I feel bad about myself, there are always those letters to tell me why I shouldn't.

Life can be really hard. Sometimes, it feels like my world is crumbling at my feet and I'm left completely alone while the sun is eclipsed, and without warning, I'm left alone in the dark. When I feel that way, those memories and letters lift my spirits and, in a way, give me some much-needed company. I can see his uniquely messy handwriting, the pen scribbles where he made mistakes, his doodles in the margins, his stream-of-conscious style of writing, and all of these tiny, one-of-a-kind, beautiful imperfections that make him... well, him.

In a way, it feels like a part of Matt is with me, even though I'm almost two hundred miles away. These little pieces of him were always important to me, but now that I'm in college, they mean so much more. I'm alone now. Almost. I still have these little fragments of him.

My favorite letter in the box is one he wrote me after I told him I was still kind of sad about how I had never received a gold star as a child. It's a silly thing to be disappointed about as a seventeen-year-old, but Matt didn't think so. He thought it was completely valid.

I've always liked how he started the letter. "Lovely Ari,". Doesn't that sound so pretty? The letter was full of compliments. On the back of the letter, he left a note. "Ps- You deserve a million gold stars :)". On the back of the paper, in the margins, and all over the envelope, he drew little stars in yellow pen. He also made me an origami gold star with even more nice things to say written on it.

It's thanks to little things like this that I haven't had a complete breakdown since coming to school. Honestly, this box of memories and letters is what encouraged me to go in the first place. At first, I wasn't sure if I had really earned it or if I was good enough. Matt was the one who got through to me and convinced me to chase my dreams. He was always so proud of me and he always believed in me, even when nobody else did.

The box can only offer so much company though. The distance has been difficult. We still love each other and we still spend the vast majority of our waking hours texting each other, so at least that hasn't changed. But the distance is just too hard. We decided it would be less painful if we weren't officially "dating" anymore. Honestly, we basically still are. But it's a little easier to miss Matt than "my boyfriend, Matt".

We've always been in sync, even when we've been apart for a while. Regardless of how long it's been, when I see him and feel his lips on mine, it's as if no time has passed. We grow and change together. Matt and I may be apart now-- which is hard, don't get me wrong-- but honestly, I'm not worried about it. Somehow, I always seem to end up in his arms, feeling like we're the only two people on earth.

Ariana Varnum is double-majoring in Legal Studies and Criminal Justice. She is from Northern Vermont and in her sophomore year of high school, she checked out (and read) more books from the school library than 99.7% of the student body.

How Student Council has Formed Who I am Today

Mikayla Bokis

My hands sweat as I open the door to my mother's car. My shoulder length dark hair is curled, and my face is lightly padded with makeup in order to hide the red face I have from embarrassment. My heart is pounding and butterflies float in my stomach. It is my first day at a new school as a young and naive freshman who knew all of one person at this school. As I arrived at the building, the fear began to take a toll on my body. As I stood outside looking at the school, I notice the size of it. The school itself is not big and although it consists of grades 7-12, there were still under 300 students overall. "I can do this," I tell myself to try to gain back the confidence. Reality hits as I remember that I am a freshman which means there will be upperclassman. Negative questions begin to take over the positive thoughts in my head. "What if no one likes me? What if I don't make any friends?" There's a rush of adrenaline as I walk inside and enter the office. People staring, wondering who I am, and asking Maddie, the one friend I had, questions about me. As I walk to my first class, the nerves in my body begin to scream. I am intimidated by the empty faces surrounding me. The first class went well. I sat in silence while listening to the teacher talk about the fresh start of the new semester. It was the second half of the school year, and everyone was ready for a new beginning, including myself.

As the lunch bell rang, I became panic-stricken. "Who would I sit with? Maddie had a different lunch than me. She was all I had in this world." I tell myself as I make my way down to the cafeteria. "One step at a time." While entering, I notice several posters hung up with different events happening. "A snowball dance?" I begin to question things but before I could continue to stare, I hear a voice from behind asking me to join them at their table. A moment of relief ran over my body, I finally had a chance. I meandered over to the table with about eight people sitting around it and located the one empty seat available. As I take a seat, my heart begins to settle, and I feel okay. "What is this snowball dance?" I ask the girl to my left. A grin slowly begins to form on her face. I fear I asked a stupid question and wonder why I even bothered. "The snowball dance is like a homecoming but in the winter. The student council runs it!

It is a lot of fun you should totally go. We will all be there!" I begin to process what was just said to me. A homecoming in the winter sounds perfect to me. I need that bit of excitement in order to thrive at this school and be myself. Then I think back to the time she mentioned the student council. "What is student council?" The same girl that once answered my question is looking down concentrating hard on her homework that is due after lunch. A girl from across the table answers back. "Student council is a student run organization that allows students to put on events, spread positivity and ensure everyone feels welcomed." A moment of blank enters my head. Then I start to think about how perfect this opportunity would be for me. Not only would I make new friends at this new school, but I could ensure that other new students can feel welcomed when joining.

"So how can I join?" Suddenly, I hear loud footsteps stomping on the ground behind me. As I look behind, there's a scrawny, blonde kid standing right beside me. "Sorry, didn't mean to startle you. I heard someone say they wanted to join the student council, so I ran over here. My name is Nick, and I am the current president of the organization. What's your name?" I begin to laugh in a weird sort of way. "My name is Mikayla, and I am definitely interested. How can I join?" He looks at me like a deer in headlights before speaking a word. Finally, he adds, "You can find the forms in room 213. That is our advisor's room, and her name is Ms. Malone. Not only is she our advisor but she also teaches middle school science. She is amazing." A sort of smile begins to appear on my face. What was once crooked has turned into a real smile. I couldn't believe how easy it was. Not only did I make new friends, but I might have just done something that will benefit myself and the new school I am attending.

The final bell rings and I briskly walk to the other side of the building to locate the room. I ensure this is the correct room multiple times before entering, in order to make sure I don't look like an idiot. As I walk in, I notice a bunch of people standing around the desk like some sort of convention was going on. More fear begins to take over my body as I linger over to the desk surrounded by people. I stand

there waiting for her to notice me because my mind sure as hell was not going to allow me to speak first. "Hello, how are you?" Ms. Malone says to me as I make direct eye contact with her while staring blankly. She sits there with shoulder length hair the color of the skin of a sweet potato, hazel eyes, and a Dunkin' iced coffee stationed in her hand which is sweating from sitting out all day. "Hi, I am Mikayla. I am a new student here and was wondering if I could get a form to join the student council?" As I wait for a response, my hands begin to fidget. "Of course! The forms are located on the lab table in the back of the room. Feel free to grab one." A sense of relief grabbed hold of my body as I made my way to the back of the room and then out of the school. Not only did I survive my first day, but I also joined a club, and realized something about myself. Throughout the remainder of the year, I became more and more engaged on the council. I started to meet new friends throughout the school and gain relationships with my teachers. I also begin to get closer with Malone.

As I enter sophomore year, I am an active member of the student council and have turned over a new leaf. Meeting after meeting I learn something new, while we plan events and ensure positivity around the school. I have several friends and I feel okay. Nick is one of my best friends now. He has become a huge role model for me and has shown me the true meaning of student council. I am happy, I believe. "In March of every year there is a statewide conference held for student council members in Hyannis. We basically go, spend 2 days in a hotel while attending workshops and learning how to become a student leader. We have a limited number of seats available, so it is a first come first serve basis." The words coming out of Nick's mouth shock me. A sort of excitement passes over me, and I am feeling hopeful. I want to go so bad; I need to go. As the meeting comes to an end, I sprint to the front of the room and grab the form I need. While filling it out, several questions were asked about not only who I am as a person but why I wanted to go. "Why did I want to go? Why was this conference so important to me?" I ask myself but soon realize the answer was that I didn't really know. All I knew was I needed this for myself. I was still learning who I was as a person, and I had a gut feeling that this was going to help. Months later, I receive an email and excitement begins to form. I get to go to Hyannis! I get to join a different side of student council. I knew this was what I needed, and I could not wait.

Exhilaration begins to form in my body as we arrive to the hotel. As we walk inside, I hear the roaring sound of laughter, clapping, and music. There are a variety of members from other student councils loafing about the lobby, some cheering for us as we enter the building. As the first night comes to an end, we all gather around as a council with Ms. Malone. My heart is full of happiness,

while Malone tells us what this weekend is all about. "It is about learning, not only how to be a better leader but how to be your true self. You're going to be uncomfortable and nervous but that is what it is all about. Remember to step out of your comfort zone and enjoy yourselves. Take notes and become the leaders I know you all are." The words she spoke that night were all I needed to hear. I did exactly what she said to do throughout the weekend. As the short time in Hyannis passed by fast, I stepped out of my comfort zone while participating in several workshops and making multiple new friends. One thing I noticed over the weekend is the joy everyone expresses. Life is so different here. Everyone is constantly laughing, singing and talking to different people every day. While the weekend went by, I noticed my new connection with Jenna, a member on our council. I remembered seeing her walk around the school with her long brown hair flowing down to her waistline and her tall stance of 5'7 which isn't tall to most but is to me. The whole time I have been attending North Brookfield High, I have never said a word to her but during Hyannis we began a strong friendship.

Sorrow begins to enter as we exit the hotel, carrying our bags to the van. This weekend was by far the best weekend I have had in a long time, but sadness has taken over my soul as it has come to an end. It was exactly what I needed while learning who I am as a person. At this very moment, I knew that student council was what was meant for me and that it was my favorite part of life. It was what was going to make me, me. As the rest of sophomore passes, I realize I want to become a part of the executive board in order to add more as a member. In my Junior year I became the treasurer of the executive board. I got to sit in the front of the room with the remainder of the members and tell everyone how much money was left in our account. I spent my whole junior year with Jenna by my side on the eboard as PR and Nick as president. As my junior year came to an end, I knew I wanted to continue on the executive board as I entered my senior year.

"Wow. Three and a half years went by faster than I could ever imagine. Thank you all so much for the best high school experience a girl could ask for. You will all continue to make me proud and will do such amazing things with this council. Congratulations to the new president, Jenna." I cry as I read my farewell speech to the council. As I step down as president, I realize not only how hard this year truly was but how much harder it is to give up this position. There's a pit in my stomach knowing I must leave, but I know the council is in good hands with my best friend Jenna. I am going to miss this place so much, but I know I have a bright future ahead of me. These last three and a half years taught me how to be a leader, a good person and taught me who I was. I could not be more thankful for all I have learned. Without student council, I would not be the

person I am today. “Thank you for all you have done for the council and for me. We will miss you so much but know you will go far.” Malone cries as she speaks to me. Both of us, tears flowing, hug. She was the reason I got into it. She was the reason I did what I did with this council. She was the biggest part of the lesson I learned in high school. I learned that I am a leader, a helper, and I have several strengths. After these past few years, I

finally know who I am, and I couldn’t be happier. There are still things I must learn, but I have all the tools I need to continue.

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My Journey with Epilepsy: How One Day Changed My Life

Shannon Borbee

When I had my first seizure, I was in seventh grade. I was unconscious when the seizure happened. So, I am thankful for all of my classmates and teachers that stepped up to make sure that I got to the hospital safely. If my peers had not spoken up to get the teacher's attention, we do not know what would have happened. Since they did not only speak up but they screamed and shouted it allowed me to get the help I needed quicker than if everyone stayed silent. Once all the teachers and students were aware, they sprang into action. Meanwhile students helped to clear any objects that might do more damage to my head away from where my body was. They also managed to put one of their own sweatshirts underneath my head. The teachers focused on directing traffic and getting all students who were not helping to leave the classroom, and they also sent two of my fellow peers racing down the hallway to tell the nurse so that she could contact my parents and 911. All of the students and teachers were terrified; nobody knew what was happening. I started to come to a tiny bit while still in the classroom, but I had paramedics hovering over me telling me to lie still. After that, I went unconscious again. When I woke up in the hospital, I still had no idea what was going on. All I knew was that seven hours had passed, and I did not have anything that I left the house with that morning. I looked at my parents whose eyes were filled with concern, but I did not have any answers for them, only questions. The one thing I knew for sure though was that I was extremely afraid to see my classmates again on Monday.

When I went back to school on Monday I felt like an outcast. As I walked the halls, you could hear whispering, and I could feel people staring at me. People who I had known all my life, who had been my friends now looked at me as though I was contagious. However, there were a few of my classmates who when they saw me, their faces showed pure relief and excitement. When I went to class they all caught me up on what I had missed at school, as well as what had happened the day of my seizure. None of them treated me any differently, and that helped me to realize that even though some might have been faking it I did have true friends in this school.

The same week that I had gone back to school I had my

first appointment with the neurologist. As a twelve-year-old I did not know what to make of this nor did I know what to expect. I sat anxiously in the waiting room with my parents, but at the same time I was intrigued because the doctor's office I was going to was in an old house so I wanted to go explore. Meeting with this neurologist was extremely nerve wracking; he told me that I have epilepsy and that terrified me because I had no clue what that was. Even though my brain was telling me to sprint out of that room I stayed put and I listened to everything that he had to tell me and my parents. I found out that I was going to have to get an MRI done, routine blood tests and EEG's which tested my brain waves and how long the seizures were lasting. After the tests I had to start taking medication; the neurologist put me on a drug called Lamictal to try and help control the seizures.

One winter day after I had started taking the medication, I was playing pickle-ball in gym class when I noticed a rash on my arm. When I asked my science teacher, she told me to go to the nurse. Apparently, I was having an allergic reaction to the medication. This meant I had to come off of all medication for two days, which led to me having another seizure after school one day when I was home alone and laying on my couch. I did not realize it at the time, but my parents figured it out so my mom came home from work right away. When she got home my mom explained to me that I had sent the text about me reaching home twice. Which led to me realizing that there was a gap in my memory. However, if it weren't for the text that I had sent my mom never would have known and been able to come help me. This was a pivotal event that then led to me switching to a neurologist at Boston Medical Center.

The choice to switch neurologists was completely my own. I felt no progress was being made and we needed a second opinion and my parents supported me. Throughout this entire journey my parents have supported me, and they helped me to make any difficult decisions. Even though they were not making the decisions, both of my parents came to all of my appointments so they could understand how to best support me. Before all of this happened none of us knew what epilepsy was. Meaning all of us were

learning about how to make sure I had a normal life while also maintaining my health. Due to the constant doctor's appointments and the fact that my seizure occurred in front of my grade my confidence was completely depleted. I stopped talking during class because I no longer trusted my own mind.

Not trusting myself led to me struggling in school. However, I could not admit to myself that I needed help from others with my schoolwork. I felt useless and as though I would have to rely on my parents for everything. For a while I was right; I did not only have to rely on my family but also on my teachers. It took me a long time to learn to trust again because I could not let go of my feelings about that day. Once I moved on I started to see myself succeeding more. This was mainly due to the support of my parents. Throughout this whole journey, and especially in the beginning my parents were my main support system. They were always encouraging me to keep trying, and they showed me that even though my physical health may be different now nothing else has to change.

How they showed me that my life had not changed was fun for me because it was my parents getting me back involved with my sports. For me, as a child, sports were a huge stress reliever, as well as how I was able to meet some of the people I am still friends with today. As I started back up I was going into basketball season. I was concerned because due to my epilepsy I did not know how this would affect me as a player. However, I soon found out that it did not affect how I played my sports at all. This made me even more excited for both soccer and lacrosse in the spring. Although, after my seizure occurred I did have to be more aware of where my head was, and I had to focus on avoiding hard surfaces throughout my school day and when playing my sports.

Playing sports made me nervous, but my neurologist felt the opposite. She would always just check in with me at our appointments to make sure that I had not had a concussion since the last time we met. The reason she asked me questions like this was because with the help of her team, they were trying to figure out what was causing my seizures to occur. I felt more comfortable around her because whenever we met she was super friendly, and she wanted to know how my life was going. Also, because she listened to how I felt about not only having to get tests done, but also how I felt about certain medications. There was a specific medication that could affect whether or not I would be able to have children someday. Whenever the neurologist mentioned that medication I felt uncomfortable, even though I knew it would help to stop any seizure activity that was occurring. Mainly because I knew I wanted to have a chance at possibly having a family someday, and I was not going to let a disorder take that away from me. Despite all of the emotions that these appointments caused, I still had to keep my

life as normal as possible. Although, I did not know what normal was for me anymore.

As I grew up and I kept having to go through the same tests, it started to become annoying. I was ready to give up and just live my life with how far we had gotten. If it were not for my parents, and their belief in me that I was strong enough to prove everyone wrong; then my situation might have turned out a lot worse than the current situation that I am in. It was hard; especially in high school when I was seeing everyone get their licenses' and I could not even start the process until I was cleared by my neurologist. I also was not sure of what was going to happen when I started looking at colleges. Would I be able to handle everything on my own?

I started to get those answers when I was in one of my classes and our teacher wanted us to have constant discussions as well as participation. However, I was still in my shell of shyness and did not want to speak. The teacher did not believe that I had no input or opinions so he kept pushing me. He encouraged me because of how skilled he knew I was in the subject, and eventually I started sharing my opinion. I stopped caring if my answer was one hundred percent right and I just started talking. While this may have been in class; it also led to me being more open about talking to my fellow classmates who I never really got to know. As time went on I became more and more social and I enjoyed talking with others and hearing about their struggles in life. This was mainly because I could relate to having struggled with something as a teenager, and how deeply it could affect your mental state. All of these events and people have played a large role in making me the strong and confident young woman that I am today. I know that those events made me this person, but it is still an ongoing journey as I am still looking to gain complete control of my seizures.

Every question that has come up over the past six years I have faced it head on. I have proven to myself that obstacles are presented to us for a reason. If it were not for my seizure occurring in seventh grade, I never would have found out what a strong young woman I truly am. I have learned that even if things take longer that is okay. Throughout my entire journey so far I have kept proving myself wrong; I was able to get my license as well as reach college. Not only have I gotten to college, but I am managing my schoolwork along with my health without any assistance. Being in college should seem like the biggest event for me to reflect on, but I always reflect back to a moment in my senior year when I knew my confidence was starting to come back.

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The Birth of a Social Activist

Lindsey Carroll

It occurred at a crossroads in American conscientiousness—somewhere between the time when George Floyd’s right to breathe was withheld and before Breonna Taylor took 6 bullets to her torso. It was a time when Colin Kaepernick’s knee started a revolution, and when half the country seemed more offended by those who were protesting injustice than by the actual injustice. The wall promised by Trump was turning out to be the metal barriers erected throughout many of our cities—separating protesters from counter protesters. Divisions and suspicions seemed to emanate from every sidewalk. The steamy summer of 2017 felt like a nation ready to explode.

And then there was the gathering of neo-Nazis and right-wing nationalists in Charlottesville. It was time to speak up and be heard. And Boston’s Free Speech Rally in August would be the place for me to scream, “Enough!”

My heart pounded like a racing horse through my chest as I wiped my sweat-soaked hands down the sides of my cut-off jean shorts. I didn’t know what to expect, but I did know that I had an opportunity to make a difference. Taxis, SUV’s, and Ubers whizzed past on the streets of downtown Boston while the hustle and bustle of the city remained constant. Although unaware if things were going to get violent, I looked up to my father who smiled down at me, giving off a sense of reassurance. I was here because of him, and it made me proud to be a part of something bigger than what I had known at that time.

For as long as I could remember, my father was always my rock. The person I could always turn to when, for lack of better words, shit got real. He made sure to raise my brother and I as people who were never afraid to speak up for what was morally right, and for that I guess I owe him for my strong-willed beliefs. I remember one fall afternoon, as the leaves were just beginning to get that golden orange tint and as the air began to get that chilly bite to it, my dad took me for a walk around our neighborhood. I’m not sure what exactly prompted it, but he told me a story of how in his high school days, a track coach of his was receiving scrutiny for the way he was running the team, receiving complaints that he was “too demanding.” Some athletes and parents complained to the board and attempted to get the

position taken away from him. My father, believing that he was well deserving of his job, took it upon himself to make an appointment with the principal so he could speak on his coach’s behalf. Although nervous to speak to someone with so much authority, he went forth with it anyway, taking action for what he felt was right. Luckily, his principal listened to everything he had to say, and even confided in him that what he had said changed his mind and gave him a new perspective.

“Principal Gere assured me that he truly appreciated me coming into his office and taking time out of my schedule to meet with him”, my father communicated, “he was actually supposed to make a decision by the end of the day, and he revealed to me that my coming in to have a conversation had allowed him to understand the situation in a whole different light.” My dad explained how afterwards he shook his hand, gave him a slight nod, and smiled. In doing so, he made my father feel like his voice could, and should, be heard. From then on, his coach was able to keep his job for many years after the fact, and my dad learned a lesson that he held dear for the rest of his life.

“Never be afraid to speak up, Linds” he prompted, “I mean that, too. Even if you feel like nothin’ will come of it, don’t ever back down from something you truly feel is right.” Those words stayed with me throughout my childhood, and further into my young adult life. Although a seemingly simple piece of advice, I couldn’t help but gain a sense of ambition. From that moment on, I always went out of my way to serve justice even in the most inconsequential situations. So when my father told me about Boston’s Free Speech Rally to protest against white supremacists who sought to defy the system of equality our nation has fought hard to construct, I knew I had to be in attendance.

“No Trump! No KKK! No Facist USA!” As we approached Boston Commons, the chants of hundreds of people grew louder and louder. Everywhere I looked people were holding colorful signs labeled “Hate Has No Home Here,” and “White Silence is Violence!” Individuals of all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds were coming together to make a difference. And to me, that was f*cking incredible. Wow, I thought to myself. I couldn’t believe the turn out

of the protest, as it wasn't predicted to get very big. But watching all of these people full of love, standing up for their black brothers and sisters gave me a sense of gratitude and warmth that I don't think I'll ever forget.

What I didn't realize at the time was that this was only the beginning of a personal journey on the road to changing history. Within four short years, these same individuals were again marching arm and arm, in big cities such as Hartford, Connecticut to preach the same message. Black. Lives. Matter. The brutal deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, caused by a corrupt system that failed to serve justice to these innocent people time and time again, inspired me to once more take a stand. It was an awakening of consciousness in America, and I couldn't be prouder that I was a part of this change in history. The excitement coursed throughout my body as I sat crisscrossed in my quaint kitchen, painting and creating signs the night before the protest in my very own state capital. My father and my Uncle Nick had promised to take me, and I was thrilled to be accompanied by two men who I viewed as strong activists.

However, I was shocked that some of my closest friends did little to nothing to contribute to the growing social injustice issues that we, as a society, were facing every day. Not only were they not taking action, but they refused to even recognize that there was even a bigger problem to begin with. One particular moment that was especially upsetting was when I called my close friend, Lillian, before our town's protest.

"Hey girl! What time are you planning on getting to the

school for the BLM march? Do you need a ride?" I excitedly asked her over FaceTime.

"Oh, that's today?"

"Ummm... yeah? I'm bringing the rest of the girls, I just assumed you were going to go with us."

"Meh, I don't think I'm gonna go. I mean, it's not like it's going to change anything or make any difference. It's just Cromwell, I bet no one is even going to show up," Lillian dismissed. Shocked, and frankly a little caught off guard, I said my goodbyes and hung up the phone. I couldn't understand why someone I really respected and held dear to my heart couldn't see the importance of participating in such a major movement that will forever be a part of our nation's history. Even though we came from a really small town, I didn't think it mattered where we protested, as long as our voices were being heard.

Although heartbreaking, it made me gain a new sense of appreciation for the way I was raised and the way I will forever continue to do my part in helping serve justice. Whether it's seeking out a person of authority to provide a different perspective on a situation, or march with my black brothers and sisters to defend them against systematic racism, I will forever be proud of how my father raised me, and never pass up an opportunity to stand up to injustice.

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Body Image and Social Media

Meg Dolley

Over the past few decades, social media has developed and grown to be a part of our everyday lives. When looking at modern society, most people have access to this virtual community, linking them to millions of people in a matter of seconds. Although these platforms have expedited many things in the world of communication, the benefits are accompanied by drawbacks. One issue that has spiked significantly due to the presence of these platforms has been body image issues. While social media does have benefits in means of facilitating communication among those who use it, the constant exposure to the picturesque nature of other accounts can welcome unwanted thoughts of comparison into the minds of social media users. Users see other people's posts and begin to compare them to their own lives and in most cases, this is in a manner of appearance. This especially seems to become a bigger issue when the societal norms for beauty and body ideals become the celebrities and influencers who filter and alter their pictures to make themselves look a certain way. This causes a good number of users to have unrealistic expectations. They create new insecurities, which can sometimes lead them to choose unhealthy coping mechanisms such as eating disorders or body dysmorphia (Crouse, 2021).

When relaying the information of a topic, an author's style choices in catering to their desired audience can help their readers better understand the material and why they specifically should care. Through the style of writing the author uses, levels of language complexity can indicate the age range or maturity level of the intended audience. The writing style is also essential to gain credibility amongst readers as it can be a telltale of the trustworthiness of an author. Through structure, style, and design, a reader can explore the author's perspective and discover their intended audience. In this report, the rhetorical strategies of a magazine article, newspaper article, and academic article will be compared concerning how they impact audience perspective and effectiveness.

The negative effect of social media on body image is emphasized through the cautionary tone that is adopted in the newspaper article called "For Teenage Girls, Instagram Is a Cesspool" written by Lindsay Crouse for The New

York Times (Crouse, 2021). In her article, she provides a perspective specifically about the impact of Instagram on teenage girls' views of body image. According to Crouse (2021), "For girls now, things have changed. They're largely worse. Social media platforms such as Instagram feel like algorithmic free-for-alls, full of images of people who have altered how they look, whether by using online filters or in real life, with dieting, surgery or both." Through this statement, the author provides a warning by establishing the current and pressing issue. She states that issues relating to social media now are worsening which means it is something that needs to be worked on to prevent it from going any further. She also provides examples of the issues that are currently being dealt with, so readers are informed of specific examples of unfavorable factors that cause body image issues.

Similar to the newspaper article, the magazine article uses style as a way to express a certain tone to the readers to better reach the intended audience. In the magazine article, "Greater social media use tied to a higher risk of eating and body image concerns" from Mental Health Weekly Digest, the authors write simply for a fairly universal audience. As a weekly digest, it intends to provide an interesting article every week to its subscribers. Depending on the corporation, the articles may lean towards more of an entertainment goal rather than education. With this goal in mind, the writers need to create an article that is short enough to maintain interest within the reader and they also must write with low complexity level language as their audience may vary in reading comprehension levels. This simplicity can be seen in the opening sentence of the article: "Logging on to social media sites frequently throughout the week or spending hours trolling various social feeds during the day is linked to a greater risk of young adults developing eating and body image concerns" (Mental Health Weekly Digest, 2016). In this opening, the purpose of the article is written very plainly to hook the reader to the content, and it is written in very understandable words. This sentence cues readers to understand what the article is about and that it will be comprehensible.

In addition to the common audience appeal through style

in the sources, the magazine article additionally focuses on credibility to gain the trust of the audience, so they are more likely to believe the displayed information. This appeals to the concept of style choice to achieve audience appeal. In the Mental Health Weekly Digest article, credibility is established through the evidence used throughout. Throughout the article, the author provides multiple medical perspectives on the topic, and it is all cited. Without the citations of the medical professionals that were interviewed to gain the evidence information, there is no way to trust what the author is saying. The article is written by a news reporter therefore any medical information provided that seems to come from them will not seem reliable as they have no science background. On the contrary, by following the quote or piece of information with a citation such as “said lead author Jaime E. Sidani, Ph.D., M.P.H., assistant director of Pitt’s Center for Research on Media, Technology and Health” (Mental Health Weekly Digest, 2016), the information immediately becomes more reliable in the readers’ eyes. The citation lists his education level, work experience, and career position, which gives readers a reason to trust his statement as he has some background relating to it.

In contrast to the previous sources, the academic article is presented to an audience more informed on the topic, so it is written in a less simplified way. A formal style of presentation is used in a scholarly article called “Gender, body size and social relations in American high schools” from an academic journal called *Social Forces* published by the Oxford University Press. This scholarly article focused on a social experiment that tested the idea that there seems to be a common occurrence of people with similar body types being in the same friend groups and similar social statuses in American high schools. In the article, this was explained through a comparison to the same-race effect which is the concept that people tend to surround themselves with those alike to them, in this case, race (Frank et al., 2008). To effectively present this information, the author adopted a formal voice through sophisticated language that can be seen in the following passage: “To test the possibility that spurious factors drove the observed associations between individual BMI and friendship formation, we re-estimated the models already presented with controls for athletic status (already included in the prior models) as well as academic achievement and emotional distress” (Frank et al., 2008). In this passage, the complexity of the word choice is evident with words such as “spurious” and “observed associations.” The author could have easily chosen to use the words “false” or “seen connections” but instead they decided to take the formal approach as it makes them come across more educated, ultimately making them seem more credible.

In the academic journal, the formality and audience

are expressed differently than the previous sources with its structure being a main factor. The layout of the *Social Forces* article is structured in a way that presents a large amount of information in a condensed yet effective manner. As this is an academic article and it is describing an experiment, there is a lot of information that needs to be included concisely. This means that there is no flowery language and it is just the information blankly stated. Due to a giant load of information included, it has to be organized in a way that is easy to read as well as easy to find certain topics. In this article, the information is grouped into moderately short paragraphs, categorized by topic, and separated by a topic heading. For example, one section of the article is titled, “The Role of Body Size in High School Social Networks.” Under this section is an explanation of the problems in adolescents that are brought forth by the presence of body size stigmas as well as how they view body image. This section is made up of five concise paragraphs consisting of four to five sentences that include only the background information relevant to the study (Frank et al., 2008). By adopting this style of organization, the information becomes easy to scan and find what it requires from the document.

When looking at articles or any other sort of information provided in the future it is suggested that one looks at the rhetorical factors of the writing to fully understand what, how, and why that information is being presented in a certain way. In the instances of these three chosen articles, it is essential to consider the rhetorical aspects of the writing, find the audience that fits the material as well as whether the information can even be trusted in the first place. The rhetoric helped relay the message of the downfalls of social media relating to body image issues by portraying the information in effective ways that reach the readers while maintaining the purpose. By looking at writing through this new perspective, it will increase the comprehension of article material and aid in the understanding of how certain strategies affect perception.

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The Last Resort

Kylie Francis

Was it really worth it? Getting in trouble for standing up to myself like this? Maybe not, but seventh grade me thought, “Hell yes.” For once in my life I felt stronger, more confident. A mischievous little smirk formed upon my face through the tears as I sat in the vice principal’s office waiting for my fate to be sealed. The office was the crevice of a canyon, tight, dark and constructed. Hunched over, the vice principal sat in his fancy leather office chair, eyes glued to files of multiple students who had gotten in trouble before me. The blue collared shirt he wore made him appear like he could camouflage with the walls of his office.

I had a wave of guilt wash over me, but the tsunami of satisfaction outgrew it. Even though my actions had cost me an after-school detention, I finally stood up for myself. That sucker had it coming, and his face was so priceless it would be hanging in a museum if someone turned it into an expressive portrait.

Throughout the beginning of the year, I rode the bus to and from school. Everything seemed normal at the time, from the uncomfortable clustered seats, to the rattling and squeaking of bolts in the steel beast. The order in which we sat was the social hierarchy of the middle school: Fifth graders up front, sixth in the middle, and finally seventh graders towards the back. The kings and queens of the yellow chariot.

I enjoyed the bus then, but one day, it became my least favorite method of transportation. A couple classmates started making jokes and talking bad about a few others, and I was one of their topics. I couldn’t quite remember what they said, but it ticked me off and I whipped my head around to shoot them a nasty look. Like a weak video game character to it’s bigger foe, no damage. They stared and burst out laughing.

“Boys.” I muttered under my breath. After all, they were just being immature and teasing... Right?

Nope. It only got worse. As days passed, they started making fun of me, throwing paper balls, and saying such words that I have never heard before. I’m glad I don’t remember most of those hurtful things, because they’d have left mental scars that would be difficult to fix. I told my bus driver, my teacher, and so many other trusted figures in

school. Each of them did little to help, but it wasn’t enough. Finally, I entrusted the help of our “beloved” vice principal. He said he would take care of it, and told me to keep my distance from those boys. I followed his advice, but came to find out he barely lifted a finger. The boys were furious that I told on them and continued to harass me.

Their words hurt me. I went home almost every day feeling like it was the worst year of my life. The last day of spring, I waited to be attacked on the bus, and of course it happened. One of the boys dropped a fatal insult to me; it had to do with my family. In that very moment, something snapped. My blood boiled, the sound of erupting laughter from other bystanders and the pop music on the radio was silenced in my mind. For a split second, the girl that I once knew to be afraid and vulnerable had vanished, and was replaced by a “leveled up” video game hero. Without hesitation, I struck him.

After a minute, I regained my original self, stunned at that inner rage I had unleashed. Not a single peep was made from anyone. My hand was stung with tingles from the impact, and the boy whom I high-fived in the face was bright red. Embarrassment, shock and regret was written all over him. One final flicker of the hero emerged, and with that, I finished my fight with two words. I felt amazing, but I also felt guilt. He didn’t have to report me to the vice principal; I did it myself.

The office door opened like it was going to fall off. Creaking on the hinges, loose doorknobs and fingerprint infested glass pane. Curiously, I turned to see my father in the frame, wearing his police uniform with his sporty sunglasses perched on his head. To me, he was another version of Dwayne Johnson, just slightly smaller and more friendly looking. A whiff of cologne filled the space. Old Spice, the only kind of men’s cologne that I tolerated. Other than that, I didn’t really like a lot of them. I expected a face of frustration, but instead he was smiling. He wasn’t mad, it seemed more like he was... proud. I couldn’t put the pieces together. I slapped a boy in the face. Why did he look like he wanted to congratulate me? Normally, a kid would get in serious trouble for this kind of stunt.

“Come in Mr. Francis, have a seat,” The vice principal

said. His face was unfazed. I could've sworn he never changed his facial expression no matter what emotion hit him. I kind of pictured him as a bronze statue sitting in a garden since his face always seemed the same.

My dad sat down. There was a brief moment of silence before the vice principal spoke:

"Thank you for coming in today Mr. Francis, I take it you have received my message regarding your daughter's spiteful actions to another student on the bus this morning."

"What exactly happened?" My dad asked.

"Well," The vice principal started, then looked directly at me. "Kylie here told me that she hit a boy on the bus for insulting her and told him to... 'F*ck off.'"

I didn't know what that word meant at the time when I was 13; I only used it because I've heard it from other kids in that context and thought it would be appropriate. My dad looked at me. I thought for sure I was going to be grounded for life. I was shocked when he placed his hand on my shoulder, then turned to the principal.

"You were aware that those boys on the bus were saying inappropriate things and verbally harassing her, right?" my dad asked.

"Yes, but she physically assaulted one of them, which is unacceptable." The vice-principal replied.

"Although she shouldn't have hit first, I am standing behind her actions. They wouldn't stop bothering her, so she put a stop to it."

I noticed the vice principal looked intimidated by my dad. He raised his eyebrows with surprise. My dad, The Rock 2.0, had rattled him out of his unbreakable serious expression.

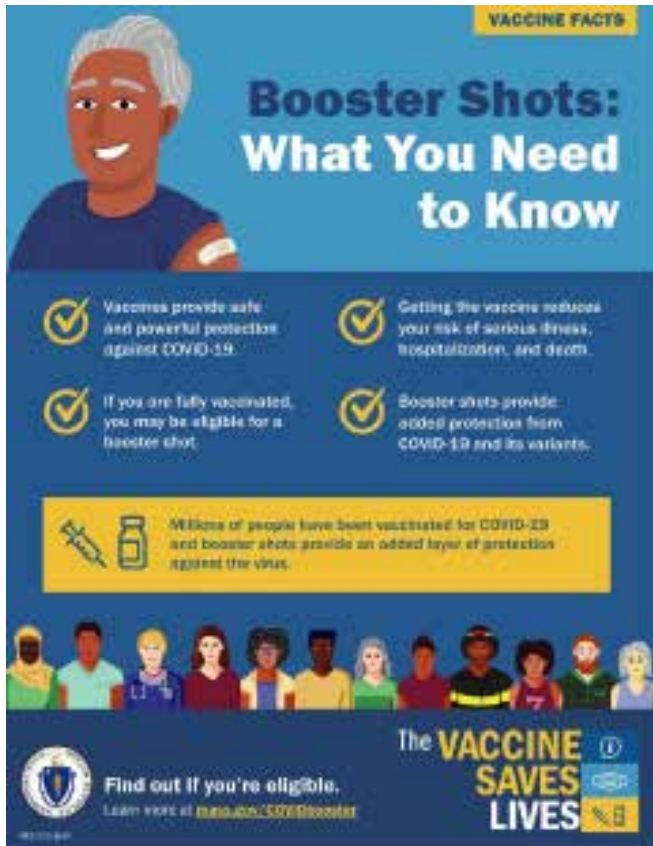
Gripping the edges of the chair I was sitting in, I was trying to piece together what just occurred in this very tight space of an office. "Did my dad just..." I pondered, "Take my side?" I had a hard time believing it at first, but it all makes sense. I told my parents multiple occasions where those boys had bullied me, and they have reported it more than once. The school didn't seem to care all that much, or just got tired of all the drama. That was the best thing ever. Confidence and relief had filled my veins with beaming energy. My tears had dried and yet another smile formed on my small face.

Looking back, it probably wasn't the smartest thing to hit someone first out of anger, but I did what I had to do and I still side with that decision. By standing up to the boys on the bus, I've built a better version of myself. I still get hurt by painful words, only now they don't hit me hard enough to bring me down as much as that year did. I realize now that without my inner badass, I would not be as strong and resilient as I am today.

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Rhetorical Analysis: To Save Citizens' Lives From COVID-19

Marino Kozaka



Left(A)



Right(B)

(B English translation)

“There is another solution to COVID-19 that has been added.”

Please Get to Know COVID-19 Vaccines Better

Avoid “3mitsu” (closed space, crowded place, close-contact settings), use masks, and wash hands thoroughly.

The COVID vaccine, a new step against this virus that has now become a norm, has been added.

It is important to consider both the effectiveness in preventing infection and the risk of adverse reactions. After that, the individual can make the choice whether to be vaccinated or not. We are trying our best to give you information so that you can make an informed decision about your vaccination. For more information about CCOVID-19, please visit the website of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare COVID Vaccine/ Search QR Code

Your agreement is necessary for you to take the vaccine. The choice to take. The choice not to take. Each person’s decision. It’s an individual decision, both of which are not wrong.

For People, Life, and the Future

Logo: The red and blue silhouettes of people / Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

COVID-19 is the name of a threatening virus that has quickly attacked people from all around the world since it was detected in 2019. The most effective method of preventing new virus infections is the COVID-19 vaccine. In the U.S. the first vaccine came out in late 2020. Now, anyone over the age of 12 can be vaccinated (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2021). On the other hand, compared to America, the COVID vaccine was released in Japan in 2021 which is a little later (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2021).

The illustrations above are advertisements for vaccines. Poster (A) on the left is from America and poster (B) on the right is from Japan. Through poster (A), we can learn that the Massachusetts government is trying to encourage people in the state to get booster shots. The Japanese government ad (B) is more focused on public education about the vaccine. By including different races in the design, it is clear that this poster is intended for all people in America.

In the Japanese example, the sentence “Vaccination reduces the risk of serious illness, hospitalization, and death” will help you realize why vaccination is effective for you. However, this sentence does not necessarily resonate with all Japanese people. In Japan, a lot of suspicions and concerns have been raised about the COVID vaccine. There have been cases of deaths and anaphylactic reactions due to side effects of the vaccines. Since this news was reported across Japan, there has been a rise in the number of people who think that if you take the vaccine, you could die from the side effects. In addition to that, Japanese people are famous worldwide for their relatively long average life expectancy. Japanese people feel proud of their country’s high-tech medical care, so there is very little sense of crisis that getting sick is necessarily directly related to death. Besides that, if you show your insurance card when you go to the hospital, you only must pay a small amount due to the medical insurance discount. Thus, as a result, people feel more comfortable about going to the hospital than Americans do.

Poster (A) could be seen by thousands of people in Massachusetts. By posting the advertisement, the government of Massachusetts is trying to spread the word about a safe way to reduce cases of COVID through a booster shot. They are trying to get people interested in the COVID vaccine and to encourage them to get booster shots. The ad uses a variety of techniques to catch people’s attention and encourage them to get immunized. The first technique is ethos, which refers to the credibility of the message. People may first see the circular logo on the far left. This is the state seal of Massachusetts. It is commonly used by government organizations because it is familiar to state residents. Additionally, the link to the mass.gov website just to the right of the logo helps to show that it is trustworthy. Also, by stating that “Millions of people have been vaccinated,”

the person viewing the ads will be more likely to feel more comfortable with the fact that many people were already vaccinated. The state is encouraging and reassuring people that many people have already received the vaccine and that it is safe.

Next is pathos, which means an emotional impact on people. The impact of the words “The Vaccine Saves Lives” will move people’s hearts. When people see this message, they may think of how many citizens have already died from COVID as reported in the news and think, “I don’t want to die.” There are many colors and illustrations used in this advertisement. Its white and light blue/turquoise color combination is very clean and is meant to emphasize its safety. White reminds people of cleanliness, and the blue tones help people feel calm. These colors are often used in the medical field for the same reasons. If you look at the people in the cartoon, you will notice the use of images of elderly people, doctors, and firefighters. This may remind us of our grandparents or the important people who save our lives. The image of elderly people makes us want to save their lives. The bandaid on the person at the top of the poster suggests that he has been vaccinated. People at the top and bottom of the ad are smiling, which gives a very positive impression of booster shots.

The last rhetorical device used in the Massachusetts ad is logos, which means a method that uses logic to get people’s attention. This ad gives four “vaccine facts.” The sentence “If you are fully vaccinated, you may be eligible for booster shots” is a possible fact that you should consider seriously before taking booster shots. However, the question still remains: Are these facts in the ad truly effective facts? Looking at “Vaccine provides safety and powerful protection against COVID-19”, we can finally confirm that it is true because the creator of this advertisement is the Massachusetts government. If the poster is from an unfamiliar organization, no one would believe the words “safety and powerful” to be true. In order to make effective use of logos here, they should use more specific data. Therefore, sometimes logos depends on ethos.

Poster (B) is targeted at all 126 million people in Japan. This is an advertisement that can be viewed by all people, whether they are knowledgeable about COVID or not, and whether they are interested in taking the vaccine or not. The first example of logos you will see is the government logo. This logo is used by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare on a daily basis, so it is often seen on the street. The red and blue silhouettes of people in the government logo will make viewers feel closer to the ad. The background of the ad is white. Other colors such as gray and emerald green give it a very clean feeling and make you think of sanitary and safe places as if you were in a hospital.

There are several examples of how pathos is used. First, the QR code is on the bottom of the ad. When it is scanned,

it leads to a government webpage. The government's official website is probably the most deeply trusted site of the Japanese people. The ad says "It's your decision. Neither of us is wrong." What this statement means is that vaccines should be accepted at the individual's discretion. This message conveys to the audience that the message is not an advertisement. It is intended to build trust and reduce pressure to take the vaccines. In addition, giving people the freedom of choice makes them feel respected and makes them more likely to get further information about vaccines. Therefore, this also has an element of pathos.

Another example of pathos is the pictures that surround the blue puzzle piece, which help to associate "Stay Home," "Keep Distance," "Masks," and "Sanitizing and Disinfecting" with "solutions" that we can incorporate into our daily lives in the COVID era. The image of the puzzle indicates that we are all pieces of a larger community and society. In the poster, there is someone who is trying to add one more piece to the puzzle. That piece has the words "COVID Vaccination" written on it along with an illustration of an injection. This is definitely conveying the message that a new piece of the solution, the COVID vaccine, has been added to the 'everyday.'

Finally, there is logos. The ad has a QR code that, when scanned, takes you to the top of a page with information about COVID-19. By scrolling through that page, you can view a variety of statistics and articles, including the latest information on COVID. The facts from that page help people who need additional data to make up their minds.

There are three elements that are commonly used in advertisements: ethos, pathos, and logos. Now, let's compare and analyze these two advertisements in terms of each element. First, let's compare the ethos. Both ads include the government name and logo. This makes it immediately clear that it is an official government advertisement and can be trusted. The United States's ad has more information, but it is overwhelmingly focused on the effectiveness of the vaccine. There is a bit of bias in this advertisement because it contains only positive facts about the value of booster shots. In comparing pathos, both posters use smiling faces

to appeal to the viewers. Poster (A) uses a strategy of emotional engagement by including cartoon images of people in various occupations. Poster (B) uses a simpler look with the image of a puzzle to remind people that they are a part of the community of Japanese society. Therefore, ad (B) contains more pathos. In the ad (A) it is difficult to decipher logos. Although four facts have been stated, the ad does not have evidence, which means there is possibly some bias. On the other hand, (B) has a QR code where you can go to an information page by yourself to do your own research on the website and find all kinds of facts about vaccines and viruses. The content is simple and not intrusive. Therefore, it can be said that (B) is also more effective with regard to logos because it provides unbiased facts. Overall, (A) tries to rely on the government's name to gain trust and then use 'facts' effectively, but the information can appear biased, and some people may not trust it. While respecting people's choices, (B) is more persuasive because it is trying to show the effectiveness of vaccination and build trust. Since COVID-19 is such a serious topic that relates to people's lives, people need to understand both positive and negative "facts" correctly to gain more trust. It is obvious how much the governments wish for their citizens' health and safety by looking at both the U.S. and Japanese articles.

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Drown-ing [droun'ing] verb

Christina Lafortune

I don't have a lot of memories. It's something about the way my brain tries to compartmentalize, but most things about who I was before a certain age are covered in a film not unlike TV static. Something I do remember though, no matter how long it's been, is my great grandma. Or Granma Islande as she has come to be known.

My earliest memory of her is the day we moved into her tiny apartment. I was sitting in the car, pressed in on both sides by my brothers who couldn't yet write their names. Every so often, I'd have to maneuver so that their heads were resting on my shoulders instead of rolling around like rag dolls. I have no idea how long we were driving for, but the sun had gone down, and my mom yawned in the front seat. The quiet hum of our red minivan navigating high-ways lulled me in and out of sleep.

Eventually the car slowed to a stop and there it was, at the top of the biggest hill I'd ever seen, this series of small brick-and-mortar squares lit only with a porch light flickering desperately for release. Granma was standing on her stoop, wrapped in a quilted blanket that was much too big for her frail body. We all hobbled out of our seats and started the obligatory cheek kisses common in our culture. At that point, she was a stranger to me. She of course knew all about me. My mother would constantly send her photos of me in the mail as Granma couldn't exactly get the hang of a phone. I only learned about her through the small trinkets I found in every room. Old toys, a very strange statue of a cherub by the sea, or the glass case full of perfumes. She had mementos of people I would never know. She was a guide for the lost souls before us. A lantern-bearer in the river Styx. I never could have anticipated that behind those owl-eye glasses was a firecracker of a woman. The first night in the house, she put on some music and danced with us as we unpacked. She grabbed my mother by the hand, her cane abandoned on the side of a chair, and they swayed as if they'd never been apart. The too many candles on the dining table shone in her eyes and reflected back at me the story of our ancestors. Of names long forgotten and love stories Cleopatra could only hope to compete with.

Granma very quickly evolved into my safe space. I remember countless days spent coming home from school and immediately falling asleep on the plastic-covered couch

by the door. I'd wake up, peeling myself from it, with the memory of the folds on my cheek and the smell of mayi moulen ak sòs pwa and too-sweet flowers surrounding me. Even now when I rub my fingers together, I can feel myself running my hands over the clear vinyl, trying to remember just what it was that happened in my dream. I could see myself reflected back in the material, glaring and confused. Maybe that's why the plastic was there. So we could see ourselves and be reminded of our humanity. Our struggles. Our piece of different. I would push myself up, arms shaking (The one thing I maintained is that I am still incredibly weak-armed), and turn around to see the door wide open.

We didn't live in a particularly dangerous neighborhood, but it wasn't exactly safe either. A couple bikes missing here and there, but never anything serious. Granma didn't mind that it was the peak of summer, or that the kids with the paintball guns were out, or that a stray bee would fly in every so often (this is, funnily enough, how I found out I was allergic to bees), her door was open to everyone. Tupperware bowls would fly in and out of the kitchen as she attempted to feed everyone within the row housing. She was unstoppable... until she wasn't.

When Granma Islande went into surgery thinking about her felt like waves, crashing against my skin and pulling me out to sea as the shore disappears from view. While you're under, it's almost peaceful, but as you breach the surface, all the sounds come back. All the feelings. Whether or not you want them. You think to yourself for a split second that you may be drowning. You wonder if you should just let go. I'd always feel terrible after that thought. That if the end would only come, I could feel better. I wouldn't have the wind knocked out of me every time I thought about the what-ifs. And then you're under again. The reality of the situation once again unavoidable.

I hated the smell of the hospital. I didn't always. In fact, there was probably a time where I found it comforting. Visiting hours have a way of doing that to people. Making them hate the "hospital smell". I think it's because we need something to be upset about. It can't be another person; there's no evil villain that came to thwart our plans. It can't be the hospital itself; they're doing everything they can to help. So, it's the smell. There was no part of her there. I

couldn't get past all the wires and tubes to kiss her sunken cheek. Her glasses lay abandoned on the gray nightstand. The flowers were replaced as soon as they showed signs of wilting, so they never really smelled like anything. The only food- the only people there- were hospital issued. At that moment, I would have traded anything for the uncomfortable plastic couch. I smiled to try and keep from crying but the look Granma gave me, like she could hear my heart being pulled to pieces, tore a sob from my throat every so often. She reached her ever-frail hand out, IV's and all, to cup my cheek as I cried. Funny how she was the one in pain and still tried to comfort me.

There were moments when I could feel that static sneaking its way over my eyes and have to repeat to myself what I'd just said- what it was that Granma had laughed at. I had to make active efforts to not lose myself. And there were moments when that didn't work. The majority of the time I don't remember was when we didn't know how the recovery from surgery would go. The doctor had mentioned that she was diabetic and looked at us like we should say our goodbyes while we still could. I treated her like she was already gone. I filed away moments as they happened- there was no reason to remember a ghost after all. It kept happening until I noticed she was doing the same. Ready for the after. Mentally saying her goodbyes and writing her will. Thinking over the stories she hadn't yet told us.

We went to the beach once Granma was out of the hospital because of course we did. I think her exact words once she stepped back into the apartment were that she felt as if she was "allowed to feel things again." I couldn't escape the thoughts there (I symbolize things in real-time. Who would have guessed). Instead of the waves being in my head and pooled in the corner of my eyes, they were in front of me. It was so quiet that day. The only things we could see looked more like pixels than people. You could hear the ocean bubble as it reached for the shore. The

squeaking of the wheelchair was almost comical amongst the novel-worthy scene. Granma was so determined to be there with us that day. It didn't matter that bringing a wheelchair on the sand was very obviously a bad idea, or that she was newly an amputee, it would have taken the weight of the world to stop her.

I can't exactly remember why, but I didn't go in the water the entire time we were there. I'd amble along the shoreline and watch the waves invite my feet, but never once did I go in. Maybe I was scared of being pulled under again. As I walked, I collected the items I encountered in a makeshift pouch on my dress. A pretty stone here, a wayward ring there, broken shells and dead sand dollars. When I noticed my eyes had stopped focusing, I closed them to attempt grounding myself. I heard a seagull cry as it flew overhead and imagined that it was chastising me for taking away it's treasures. Eventually, I dropped myself next to our belongings and buried my hands in the sand. Watching my fingers appear and recede back into nonexistence made the incessant drumming of my heart slow.

I looked over to Granma and she was so incredibly still. Her lips set in a thin line as she regarded my cousins tossing each other into the water. To all the people who were outside looking in, it seemed as if she was upset about something. But anyone who could see behind her eyes knew she was at peace. It was there in the way the corners of her mouth twitched upwards every so often. In the way the crease between her brows softened, the way her eyes flickered as if going through all the moments she's spent with us. That she still had left to spend with us.

I'm sorry to anyone I've ever treated like they had already left me. I'm sorry to all the phantoms, those who are lost. Not here, but not gone.

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Two Nights in Watertown

Cameron McDonough

The ref blew the whistle, and everyone was ready to go. They laid the ball back to their star player, a 20-year-old Brazilian midfielder, who was named all-state the year before. I readied myself since in his last game he had chipped the goalkeeper right off the opening kick. I made sure I wasn't going to be embarrassed in the same way. Sure enough, he lofted a long floating ball towards the net. I tracked the flight of the ball and comfortably scooped it up on the one hop. The routine save helped calm some of my nerves, but I was still worried. It was my first full season playing varsity soccer. Even though I was named the starting goalie after fighting off a 6'6 Serb in preseason, I was still incredibly scared to be facing our biggest rival, Watertown.

As the game went on, they flopped and begged the refs for calls at every opportunity, all while cheap shooting us anytime they could. This was typical of a match-up between us. My freshman year, I watched from the stands as they beat us in the state final. My sophomore year there was a total of 5 red cards in the two games we played against each other, including one for their head coach. Watertown's head coach was a loud, belligerent man, who according to one teacher I had, was only surpassed in red cards by his father who was Watertown's previous head coach. Their first shot on goal would come 10 minutes in, a curler from the left side that I would clutch easily to my chest. As I brought the ball up, I took in a deep breath of the fresh fall air. There was a smell to the air that can only be associated with night soccer games. It's a smell that is indescribable to someone that has never played the game, but unmistakable to someone who has.

Their next shot came 8 minutes later and at the time seemed rather unimportant, but went on to be pivotal on the outcome of the match. It was a shot from 30 yards out through traffic that would skip just in front of me. I knocked the ball upwards before claiming it easily, a slight error, but nothing of consequence at the time. The consequence would come with 5 minutes to go in the game when we committed a foul just outside the corner of the box.

They called time out before the kick, giving me more time to think about what was to come. I set myself on my

line ready to throw myself in the air to pick a ball out of the top corner. That's not what happened though. Instead, they laid the ball off to their best player, who shot it with more spin than I've ever seen put on a soccer ball. The ball just like before skipped right up in front of me, and again popped up in the air, only this time there was someone there to get the rebound. The player headed it back on frame and I was able to lay out and tip it to the side. I felt a sense of relief come over my body. I had always excelled at making up for my own mistakes. My relief, however, was like a last meal before execution, as while I was still on the ground from the second save, an oncoming player came rushing in and tucked the ball into the back of the net. It was a dagger through my heart. We lost the game because of me, there is no other way to look at it. I kept my head down walking to the bus trying to avoid the insults being hurled at me from the opposing fans. The next day I showed up two hours early to practice and had my teammates keep replicating the shot until I couldn't get it wrong. I was determined to put things right.

One year later, I heard the whistle of the referee blow yet again. A lot had changed since the last time I stood in that goal, but our objective remained the same. The COVID-19 pandemic had changed the outlook of high school soccer. Most people spent the previous 6 months watching Netflix. I spent my time a little differently. My focus was solely on soccer, which wasn't any different from before, but the difference now was that I had no other responsibilities. I was going on runs seven days a week. I spent an hour every night lifting weights. I even climbed over barricades to play on the empty fields. I had the police called on me several times for being on the field when I wasn't supposed to be there. As time progressed, more of us felt comfortable going out to the field together. The local officials, however, did not feel comfortable with us going to the field together and turned the nets around and chained them to the fence. Still wanting to play soccer, we took the natural next step of going online and learning how to pick locks. After a few well-placed taps on the lock with a hammer, we had a net again.

Come August we found out the season would be delayed

until September 16th. We started going to the field every night at 5 o'clock. It began with a small group of varsity players, and quickly expanded throughout the high school teams. That then expanded to alumni, fathers, uncles, and whoever else happened to be passing by. We were regularly getting between 20-40 people every evening to play pick up soccer. Not only were each and every one of us getting better, but it's some of the most fun I've had on a soccer field.

We were getting anxious though. As much as we enjoyed playing pick up our focus was on the high school season. We had one of the best teams in program history and were eager to prove to everyone else just how good we were. We finally got the official word. We would have a 10-game season, no playoffs, no heading, no touching opponents, no corner kicks, along with a plethora of other restrictions. It was a slap in the face, but we were prepared to make the season the best it could be.

We were hit hard by the restrictions as we were one of the most talented teams in the league physically. We tied our first 2 games 0-0 after our opponents packed it in and tried not to concede. We knew Watertown would be different though. The day before the game I found their previous game on YouTube and took notes on how they played. The atmosphere was much different than the last time we were there. Instead of playing in front of a full crowd on a Friday night we were playing in front of 50 people on a Saturday morning.

Shortly before kickoff we were gifted some positive news, Watertown would be missing their best player, who was in Brazil for the birth of his son. I felt confident through warm-ups and couldn't wait for the game to start. The game started and things got dangerous quickly, as they got an indirect free kick from 8 yards out. Our defense was quick to react and was able to block the shot. We were able to escape the danger early and take a hold of the game.

We were controlling the chances until just before the end of the first half, when they got a free kick from the

exact same position as the year before. I'm not a religious man, but I felt as though I had received a gift from God. I was audibly laughing to myself in goal. Anyone who was watching me must have thought I was crazy. I knew whatever was coming I was going to save it. It wouldn't have mattered if Leonel Messi lined up over that free kick, I knew I was saving it. I have never been so confident of anything in my life. The shot came in, a right footed curler, just as before. It didn't have as much venom as the one the year before, but was placed. I took a short step as the ball was curling back towards the net. I sprawled to my left and got both hands to it and pushed it to the side. As I got up to ready myself for a potential follow up, the whistle blew for half time.

I went to the bench fully confident we were going to win the game. My confidence started to dwindle, however, as the clock kept ticking and we were unable to find a goal. It was starting to seem as if we were going to meet the same fate as the two games prior. With five minutes to go our luck finally took a turn for the better. Our striker was dragged down just inside the edge of the box. Everyone there thought we surely had a penalty kick. The referee blew his whistle and pointed just outside of the box. We were furious, but we still had a very good opportunity at hand. We lined up two people over the free kick. The first person ran over the ball, faking a shot causing the wall and goalkeeper to bite. The next person then lined it up and buried it in the bottom right corner. We were ecstatic. We kept the pressure on for the final five minutes and came away with the win. It felt so fitting to come back and beat them on a late free kick. I felt a sense of joy and serenity as if all my mistakes on that field had been absolved by that one game.

Cameron McDonough is a sports management major. He is from Melrose, Ma and is a member of the men's soccer team at Lasell.

Hell is Full of Mushrooms

Hazel Nichol

Most change comes quietly. It's not always like a fiery phoenix or a blooming flower. It's usually quiet, like an edge unraveling, a maggot squirming; something to fight against when noticed, something to fear. Change is decay just as often as it is rebirth. Change is mushrooms. Change is crumbling. As a human, I know change. I am change. The spores in my blood take root in soft places, and before I know it, I am bloated and pale with mushrooms. I have to decide not to decay. I have to fight it with what fire I can find, and the fight is never over. Sometimes I want to break apart. I wonder what I look like on the inside, full of spongy foreign growths white like bone or yellow like cartilage. I feel fragile.

I imagine hell is full of mushrooms. No fire, no heat, just the silence of decay, the heaviness of spores in the air. Everything is soft and bloated and breaking open. The air smells sweet and musty. I used to think I belonged there.

When I was a child, I created jungles in my mind. Enormous plants in vibrant greens. Strange crisp fruits. Cool moss. I would wander through it while curled up in bed, half asleep. Soon after I began third grade, I dreamed that God told me I wasn't worthy of having a body. Vines wound through my ribcage, fruits swelled in place of my eyes. I grew roots that tied me to the mossy earth, and a sparrow settled itself where my heart had been. In my dream I was sobbing. When I woke up, I forced myself to cry.

I thought of hell a lot back then. It followed me through middle school and into high school, where life got significantly harder, and into another house, where mushrooms seem to grow year round.

Church took up a lot of my life. If there was one thing I learned from it, it was that I needed to repent. Children should not be loud, especially not on Sundays. That was a sin. Riding bikes on Sunday was also a sin. Picking one's nose was a sin. Fighting with one's siblings was a sin. A girl my age told me she didn't read books on Sunday, because she wanted to have that day be fully dedicated to church. We were eleven, and now I decided reading was a sin, too.

I used to spend most of my time reading. When it happened that I finished one book and didn't have anything new to read, I would wander around the house in a kind of stupor, aching for something new to escape into. I would browse methodically on the weekly library trips my mother took me on. I looked over every title, pulling out books that caught my eye and reading the dust jacket.

My favorite library at the time had a comparatively small children's novel section, but I liked it anyway. I was maybe eight or nine. It was an old building, probably from the 'fifties, and the children's section was part of the original construction. There was a shelf in the children's nonfiction section of Greek mythology that I remember with particular fondness. I had to stand on one of those creaky, upside-down-bucket library stools to reach it. One summer, my mom, my little brother, and I went methodically through their bookshelf of fairy tale picture books. We checked out every single one, twenty or thirty at a time, and Mom read them all to us. When we returned them at the front desk, the librarian would ask what we thought. We helped them weed out a few really poorly written picture books. There were Calvin and Hobbes compilations and Tintin books in the back, and a summer reading program where you could get little toys for hours spent reading. That was a good time in my life.

After coming home from this library one day with an armload of books, my dad plucked out the two children's chapter books I had chosen and set them on top of a high cupboard. "You can read these," he told me, "when I've made sure they're okay." I felt so violated, so unjustly punished. Even after he gave them back to me, days later, his inspection complete, I refused to read them. I've gotten too old to enjoy them now, even if I change my mind.

I loved learning the names of wild plants back then. It was exciting to learn different uses for them, from eating raw or cooked to soothing colds to dyeing cloth. I would dig up dandelion roots, scrub off the dirt, then dry them to add to herbal tea. At that age, whenever I saw a plant I recognized, my mom tells me, I would proudly announce to her exactly what it was called and what it could be used for. I learned to recognize poisonous plants too, but only to avoid them, of course. My book mentioned some useful plants that had deadly lookalikes. Not wanting to make a fatal mistake at that age, I tended to avoid those altogether. I remember hearing that a candle made with nightshade berries, if left burning in someone's room, would kill them by morning. I wondered if that was true.

I saw mushrooms one day. Sixth grade had started one, two months ago. I looked out into the backyard I thought I knew so well and saw the first mushrooms. Big mushrooms. Flat mushrooms. I hadn't noticed them growing. School took up all my time from waking up to falling asleep, and I wondered if they would die soon.

The beginning of middle school was a drastic change for me. I drowned in assignments and projects. The time I used to spend wandering around the backyard, drawing with chalk on the sidewalk, riding my bike down the hill, reading new books, or making little things out of leaves or string or paper, was now devoted to math problems and writing assignments and worksheets. It was so loud in that place that sometimes I would lie in bed at night and feel my ears ringing in the silence. I was completely overwhelmed. Life never really went back, either. I was free during the summers, but then school would start again, and I would be working inside in the fall by the time mushrooms crept back into the yard.

Sometime in middle school, I had another dream. I had died, and was being led through some kind of airport terminal towards heaven. I cried the entire time, convinced there was some kind of mistake. I didn't deserve to go to heaven. I cried when I woke up, too.

There's a mushroom that grows all over in the woods where I live now. After a heavy rainstorm, this ghostly flower rises from the dead-leaf-covered forest floor and gluts itself on loam swollen by the rain. I wonder if it's poisonous. I wonder what it tastes like.

My aunt came to visit one month after my mom kicked my dad out of the house. I talked to her a lot while she was here. She left the Church in the '90s over a surge of gay suicides the Church effectively actively encouraged, but there was no hell-fire burning her up from the inside. She wasn't miserable. She was calm and happy. She knew who she was. She loves her family and they love her. I was afraid and amazed at the time by how her life has purpose and peace without her believing in God or following scores of mostly arbitrary rules. She had no threat of hell or feelings of inadequacy constantly hanging over her and making her choices for her.

I had a lot I was considering at the time, and there's a lot I've considered since, but I knew for sure that I could not heal or grow if I stayed in the Church. To stay would have been to stagnate, to rot from the inside. Deciding to leave Hell behind was the most terrifying thing I have ever done, but I feel stronger than I have in years.

I still have to fight every day against the stillness of the mushrooms that try to take me over, and I still want to rest, sometimes more than anything. Lately I feel as though I have been debriding my psyche, cutting and peeling away rotting tissue, cleaning death from my wounds so they can be stitched and bound and can begin to heal.

I've just recently begun learning names for new plants. There's ragweed, whose small dense flowers I remember collecting as I walked to my elementary school. I'd gather them in my hand until I had a big handful and then spread them across my path like a farmer sowing wheat. There's also ground-ivy, a little purple-leafed herb that's always reminded me of mint. Sometimes I still pick a couple leaves and crush them between my fingers to release the smell. I've learned to

recognize coltsfoot, too, a pale-stemmed, leafless dandelion that sprouts straight from the mud in spring. I noticed a patch of jewelweed growing near my house, a shrubby plant used to soothe poison ivy burns.

School is calmer now, too. I no longer feel trapped. I notice when the mushrooms begin to grow in the fall, I watch them start to sprout. They don't catch me by surprise the way they did when I was eleven and trapped inside all day for the first time in my life. I still read a lot, and it still hurts when I don't have anything to lose myself in, but I doubt that will change anytime soon. At least I can talk about what I've read or watched and not worry that my dad will take it away, or that my mom will have to convince him to leave me alone. I talk about a story, and my mom listens and smiles.

I watch shows on Sundays now. I listen to music about sex and drugs while trying to learn what I like. I don't pray for forgiveness. I don't worry about the length of my shorts or the tightness of my shirt, but about how I feel about myself. I think of my aunt who seems to glow with sunlight and who talks gently about her past and I hope for that for myself. We've spoken virtually since the start of the pandemic, since before she visited. I've gotten to see the busy backyard in her California home where her youngest son, through the zoom screen, showed off his pet chickens and his small swing set and the vegetable garden her husband planted for the family to enjoy.

I think of my mom's vegetable garden, which she planted and tended to without any help from my dad, who didn't care enough to get involved. She's grown tomatoes about every other year since we got our first house with a yard. Every summer, stretching long into the fall, her tomato plants would grow up to tower over the rest of the garden, producing bushels and bushels of tomatoes. There were cherry tomatoes in red and gold and sometimes big grocery store tomatoes. We'd walk over to pick them once every couple days, carrying with us our largest mixing bowl. When I brushed against a tomato stem while picking, it left a yellow stain on my hand that smelled sharp and fresh like cilantro. I learned to make salsa fresca to keep up with the harvest. Mom made lots of caprese salad.

Even after the first few frosts killed the tomato plants, the last tomatoes kept ripening, growing from brown, dead branches. When even those had been picked, Mom removed the trellises and the dead plants sagged down to rest with the layer of salt marsh hay and fermented, split open tomatoes scattered on the cold ground. Fall came again, like it always does, and the mushrooms came with it.

Hazel Nichol, a Fashion Design major, lives in Carlisle with her mom and her brother when she's not at school. Given an hour and a large field, she can find at least a half-dozen four-leaf clovers.

A Moment to Live In

Elliot Potosky

The smell of buttery popcorn and greasy french fries filled the warm July air. I never thought the color blue could look so good on someone. Her head was cradled by the crevices of my shoulder, while my neck served as a soft pillow to support her every move. As if a spell had been casted by the surrounding lights, our minds were enchanted like never before. It was after that quick moment of astonishment that I remembered we were not alone.

“Fiesta Shows” travels to my hometown once a year, leaving only four days to live life on the edge. I did not plan on wasting any time. Once my baseball game finally ended, my friends and I, along with my girlfriend, Abby, rushed to our cars and drove to one of our favorite spots in Sharon, Massachusetts. Normally, we would go to that spot to play basketball, but now those basketball courts were dead and the streets were alive.

Once the sun set, everything changed. It was the first time the company was allowed to travel since the pandemic and people were packed in the venue like canned sardines. Looking at all the illumination was like staring directly at the sun. My mouth watered at the scent of fried dough while my ears rang from all the screaming. Children’s jaws dropped as they watched the mountains of machinery turn on before their very eyes.

After about an hour of shortened breaths, pounding from the heart, silent yells for help, and trying to prevent our stomachs from entering our throats, my friends and I stopped going on the thrill rides. Not to mention, our pockets were getting thin. Suddenly, a soothing yet tingly sensation ran up my spine, like an angel had wrapped its wings around my body.

My head slowly rotated to the left as my eyes shifted downward. Caught completely off guard, my girlfriend’s head now rested on my left shoulder. I let out a little smile, doing my best not to get too overwhelmed in public. Abby was much better at concealing her emotions than I was, as

she barely let out a grin. Nevertheless, the second our eyes met, I knew she was happy. In fact, it was the happiest I had seen her be with me when my friends were around.

Some say that real love can present itself at any point of time. And although I had fallen for Abby months prior to this night, the same goosebumps perked up on my skin, as my heart began to weigh down my chest. Only my closest friends knew how much this girl meant to me. Just feeling her soft hair brush against my skin reminded me that she felt the same way. It was, and still is, so easy to love her.

What lasted for less than a minute felt like hours. Having been so hypnotized by the atmosphere around me, I did not even notice someone had taken our picture. All I remember is staring into the night sky while my lungs inhaled a calming draft inhabited by the sweet scent of Summer. I was truly “living in the moment”. My favorite part about the photo is that Abby and I are happy, but someone looking at it for the first time might not think that because we are not smiling. Pure joy is natural. It should not involve phones, cameras, or social media. Happiness cannot be staged.

Abby always makes it a point to let me know when I am using my phone too much and not paying enough attention to her. It is one of the many reasons why I love her. She has made a huge impact in my life because of her belief in living in the moment. When I am older, it will be nice to have memories on camera, but I do not want to look back and think: Maybe I should have just put my phone down that one time....Maybe I should have just left my phone at home....It is

One of those decisions that once made, cannot be taken back. Time cannot be altered. Abby taught me this.

Elliot Pototsky is a Sports Communication major. He is from Sharon, MA and both his grandmother and great grandmother attended Lasell Junior College, class of 1936 and 1966, respectively.

Harnessing Your Life

Alyson Richard

At seventeen, few people know how the world works or put much thought into the present moment. There is often pressure to stay present and mindful of the now. As fulfilling as staying grounded can be, harnessing energy often fatigues the body and strips away character. To have one's feet planted firmly, eyes focused on what is in front of them, hands sensing the current temperature, mouth savoring what it ingests can be draining when one is lost in past and future rumination. For a while, I was one of these people.

I was drained and fatigued by the constant cycling and recycling of being in the present and being out of my body. I felt like a phantom, phasing through walls and oblivious to the sensations around me. It was as if I was living in an alternate dimension, foreign and unsettling. More than often, my body would go limp. My mouth would falter as words that were once filled with wisdom and eloquence now lacked meaning and heed. My hands and face felt numb as if I spent the whole day playing outside in fresh frosted snow. My head tingled like the sensation of pins and needles after a blood-deprived limb awakening from an extensive nap. I was wandering around aimlessly, not putting substantial thought or purpose into my daily efforts. I was a marionette puppet, with no feeling of control over my body. Someone else was pulling the strings of my life.

Although the loss of control was unpleasant, I never fought to regain full access to my body. This out-of-body experience persisted since sophomore year. The bodiless experience was onset due to years of repressed trauma and emotions. I felt hopeless due to countless months of struggling to be present. There was no inclination or enthusiasm to exert my own conscious energy. My endeavors stayed settled, seemingly collecting dust. Mindfulness was a concept that seemed so far out of reach.

My heart felt like a black abyss with tumbleweeds blowing about every now and again. In juxtaposition, my mind felt like a chaotic rollercoaster that never seemed to end. It was simple to accept these new unfulfilled feelings that succeeded my temple. My body was out of tune like an old guitar with broken strings. I felt hopeless, unfixable, worthless, and like a burden. I desired the old me, the me

that could comprehend the fundamental but exceedingly complex senses. I missed the feeling of connection, love, enthusiasm, and oneness. The feelings within my soul matched that of a mediocre children's art project. It was messy, abstract, complicated, and yet overly simplistic. My body was not a whole being, but rather a network of toddler building blocks and broken crayons.

I missed the passions and joys of life, as I had taken them for granted. The past traumas that burdened my brain brought about the feelings of depression that enveloped my being. I was caressed by the dull, lifeless matter of detachment. For a moment in time, there was comfort in the gloomy misery. A connection was not an option as I soon realized I was in a state of chronic derealization. These thoughts and feelings often seem as though they'll never go away. These thoughts feel as though they can never be fixed. It is easy to catch oneself in a state of cycling and recycling the same routines, bad habits, and thought patterns. Heavy gray waves swirl around the brain in a frenzy. Colorful and bright currents are hard to come by when facing this state of being. However, living in the present moment is achievable. Taking control of the reins of your thoughts is not as hard as it may seem. Ultimately, becoming my own best friend is what ignited the spark inside and allows me to live the life I desire.

On the morning of March 15th, 2020, I was running through the same motions of my daily routine. My legs, tired and achy, walked my being over to the sink in the small, four by five-foot bathroom. I pried my eyes open, catching a glimpse of my discolored skin. The bags under my eyes drooped like that of a corpse. My pale blue eyes were glazed over like tempered glass. My limbs hung lifelessly like the dull hair that grew from my head. I looked pale, ill, and lifeless. I felt like it too. Every movement took so much energy and immense amounts of willpower. The thought of commuting to school churned my stomach.

"Are you almost ready?" my mother forcefully hollered.

"Y-uh-yeah. Ugh-hold on one second. I just have to grab my other shoes. I don't know where they are!"

My voice trembled as I frantically ran around my room, looking high and low for my tattered running shoes. I

needed my shoes for indoor track, even though I disliked competing. I was never the competitive type. I grew up with an older sister that beat me in every sport, every event, every game, every competition. The humiliation that once turned my cheeks rosy and broke the water within my eyes simply turned into quick ignorance of my failures. It never mattered what it was, she was always better. In a sense, I showed gratitude toward my sister. She broke down my confidence from day one, allowing space to only rebuild it. I was never the type of person to challenge someone or enjoy competing, even if it was friendly. However, running was something I thoroughly enjoyed. I wasn't good at it, I was the worst one on the team, but running cleared my head. Aching legs and burned-out brains resulted from the simple yet complex sport. But the thrill of feeling alive from a runner's high is comparable to an addict getting their fix. All the chaos and negative emotions seemed to dim during the few moments of elevated heart rate and sweat dripping down the small of my back.

"Aha! I found them! Okay! I'm ready." I cheerfully shouted. I forcefully grabbed my shoes, throwing them into my rugged four-year-old black backpack. My backpack was the one with one too many keychains that jingled every time I took a step. The ride to school was smooth. There were no delays, no arguments, no hesitations, everything was going well! The school day was typical. Nothing out of the ordinary occurred.

I felt okay today, maybe even alive and in my body. The thought of practice sparked a hidden ounce of excitement within me. Knowing that I would be running today was thrilling. Throughout the day I may have thrown a friendly smile at a few people passing me in the hallway and worked up the confidence to shrug off a rude comment. The hours were normal, and the day was swift until the announcement over the intercom was sounded.

"Attention, due to the increasing cases of the coronavirus, the administration has decided to issue a two-week closure of all district schools. Enjoy your break and take care of yourselves."

Cheerful screams and giddy laughs filled the hallways. This was the beginning of a new era. Those last few words announced by my principal "take care of yourselves" would be the words that changed my life for the better.

With no more routine, no more friends to wave hello to, no more assignments, I was left alone, isolated from myself. It was just me in my small country home. The yellow walls that sheltered my body from the elements never strained my eyes. The soft banana paint with an eggshell finish was a reminder that the anxieties of school and routine no longer existed. The familiarity of home was a haven. It was a sanctuary of peace. It mimicked the same relaxation from the sound of flowing water down a spring. The firetruck red lockers that lined the hallways of the

school were no longer in my line of vision. The constant reminders from class that triggered my negative thought patterns were erased from my memory. The walls of my home never felt small, and my chair never became uncomfortable. The silence, the loneliness, the time to myself, they were pure bliss.

I felt confident and wanted these odd and obscure pleasures. The lack of judgment from prying eyes was refreshing. My face became more familiar to me, as it was the only face I could see for a while besides those within my immediate family. This was the first time ever that I was left alone with myself. My being was not as boring as I had imagined it to be. My brain lit up with passionate ideas occasionally. Doing the once unimaginable was now within reach. Smothering freshly crisped toast with ripened avocado and sprinkles of sea salt was a new ritual of mine. Breakfast was never a priority until I recognized the feeling of hunger within my stomach. My brain, body, soul, and heart were all becoming well acquainted. It felt as though I had all the time in the world to myself, and in a sense, I did.

Breathing by myself was beyond profound. The typical anxieties of life had been swept under the rug and began to decompose. I figured that since I am the only person I have, I might as well get to know myself. I became my own best friend. During this isolation, this time alone, I was healing one day, breaking down the next day, but during both of these days I never gave up. As my eyes welled up with water, I could sense that relief would follow shortly. Salty tears that streamed down my face were rapidly accompanied by a genuine smile. The physically draining task of freely crying allowed me to feel once again.

I was determined to be better, do better, and be there for myself. The warm feeling from others' validating words was unavailable. I had always neglected my body, my feelings, and my needs. Smacking my lips open and painfully asking for opinions on my appearance, knowledge, and every aspect of my life ceased to exist. I no longer desired that empty feeling inside from meaningless opinions. The gray, dark matter that ate at my determination melted away like candle wax. I now accepted the comforting warmth that was entering my body, and I began to reflect that warmth as heavenly gold light.

Without isolation, my full potential would have been wasted or come about in another way that is unfamiliar to me. For the first time in my life, I began to eat healthily. I investigated better eating habits and nutrition. The unexplainable energy that emerged from nutrient-dense foods excited me. I utilized my time and efforts into seeking treatment for my body. Eating healthier, meditating, journaling, exercising, and spending time exploring new hobbies healed my soul. Anxieties were put to rest quicker as I fed my body self-love. Pounding headaches accompanied by uncontrollable irritability were cured once my anxiety was controlled.

I wanted to heal from the inside out, and the best way of doing this was by eating healthy. I converted to veganism. This allowed me to heal my body. The once rough and bumpy skin that lay across my face was now as soft as peach fuzz. My dull hair began to shine, and my energy was now plentiful and ready to be picked from the fruitful tree of life. I began to care about what I put into my body and my ethical consumption. The empathy I felt for the animals was now heightened. Caring about myself allowed me to care for the ones that could not do it themselves. I wanted to not only help myself but help the environment. I began by consciously eating and consuming. I no longer desired to eat animal products or buy brand new clothing. I began practicing minimalism and making efforts to protect the planet.

After witnessing the world collapse in a matter of weeks from a simple airborne illness, I realized how easy it is for change to snowball. I wanted to do everything I could to protect it and its wellbeing. I wanted to be a role model for others. During this time, I discovered growth is better than any company. I realized that I was able to exist on my own and that I did not need others to function. Recognizing that I was the only person in my life that would consistently stay with me was an eye-opener. Sometimes I would have to face challenges alone, and that is what I did.

As I worked on my person, acknowledging my body's doubts, skills, pleasures, and needs became as easy as lifting my fingers. Vivacious brilliance and drive poured from my now glowing being. Growth, evolution, and change are much more approachable than people make them out to be. It is like when trying new foods, it can be intimidating at first, but sometimes the pre-perceived notion is broken down once the new flavor enters the mouth. I was content with life.

My simply beautiful smile no longer annoyed me or looked funny. My body no longer looked disfigured, for it

was perfectly imperfect. I found joy and excitement in the little things. The passion for wanting others to grow into their true beings was ignited. I found my niche in encouraging others to thrive and assisting them in life. The discovery of psychology was my newfound passion. I enjoyed the thought of being able to help people grow as well as listening to their stories and being a crutch or a shoulder for them to lean on when necessary. The comfort and ease found within me were too good not to spread to others. Taking it as a blessing allowed the connection with myself and the universe to take over. I accepted things as they were and allowed myself to breathe deeply. The connection between my mind, body, and soul now made sense. I felt a sense of inner peace and worth. That girl before the lockdown was a different person.

The new person I had become was a change maker. The inner contentment, peace, and harmony found within me were a true treasure. I wanted to spread this to everyone I met and cared about. I wanted to make a difference in the world and myself. The chaos within the pandemic encouraged a young but enthralling curiosity deep within my gut. I found passion, perseverance, and success in motivating others to do their best. The addictive and beneficial effects of self-discovery through daily rituals and practices of health handed over purpose. All the little things in life that I once took for granted were now my favorite aspects of creation. I thanked the universe every day for the little things, and this awareness is what allowed me to grow. Without becoming my own best friend, success and contentment would have never been within reach.

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The Importance of a Role Model

Jayden Robinson

Growing up, I always knew that I wanted a career in the fashion industry. My Aunt, a business owner who has her own clothing line, is actually the reason I want to pursue a career in the fashion industry. She has always been a big inspiration to me because of her drive, her strong personality, and of course her sense of style. It almost seemed like she was destined to be a business woman and her own boss. Without her being my role model I might not have stuck with my desired career path in fashion. Role models play a big role in shaping the person that looks up to them. An article by Fayyaz (2018) says, "Having role models in our life is very important, and having good role models is more important, as they influence what we do and how we turn out eventually" (Fayyaz, 2018). Her sharing her numerous stories of why she got into fashion intrigued me back when I was younger. She would say, "One time I had to make a dress in two days, and I was an inexperienced designer, but somehow I knew I'd get it done, and sure enough I got a pretty decent grade for my first dress." I felt a sense of inspiration, because I figured if she managed to create something that beautiful in that short amount of time, being inexperienced, then I can do it too.

Seeing that she was able to overcome an obstacle like that really inspired me. Fayyaz (2018) says, "Though they may have their flaws (who doesn't?) they should be inspiring in spite of their weaknesses. This will help us to see how it is possible to overcome or simply turn a weakness into a strength, and not let flaws hold us back from being the best of us" (Fayyaz, 2018). Overtime, watching her create beautiful, unique garments, and tagging along with her to different fashion shows, made me fall in love with fashion. I've wanted to be a designer ever since. Seeing the different fabrics and techniques intrigued me. The first couple of times she had taken me to a fashion show, I didn't really know what to expect. Something about being able to bring out your best outfits, and show up to a fashion event. Looking into the crowd seeing everyone with anxious, yet exciting looks on their faces, wearing their most stylish clothing. As I looked into the crowd I saw fine fabrics like corduroy, denim, velour, and many more fine fabrics. I remember seeing men wearing fedoras and women with their hair done beautifully with all different hair textures and colors. I felt like I was supposed to be there, because I had the same look of anxiety, but at the same time I had felt as

if I was already living in my dream. My heart felt warm but had a beat similar to the speed of a cheetah.

Seeing all of the clothing the models wore and seeing the creators motivated me more and more. Seeing that all of the creators looked like me and some of them even came from where I grew up, so seeing that gave me a lot of hope for my future as a designer. They all came from Dorchester, Boston and or surrounding areas. Some came from poverty filled areas in neighborhoods near mine. Also, Seeing the creators that looked like me was a very important moment for me because in my mind, they were a live representation of who i want to be in the near future, and seeing their talent and success made me want to have a career in fashion. I remember watching my aunt sew, trying to understand how she did things so that eventually I would be able to mimic her techniques. Vyas says, "A person whose values and actions you can emulate. That's what a role model is" (Vyas, 2018). What Vyas is saying in this quote is when you have a role model you tend to want to imitate the good things/strategies you see them do. She handled the fabric like it was a delicate flower, her face looked as if her designs had been the only thing on her mind at that very moment. I remember her showing me a beautiful cherry red dress, with tassel-like additions. It was beautiful looking at her creation and it really moved and inspired me to make beautiful creations of my own. Even watching my mother and aunt get all dressed up to go out made me want to get into fashion. Vyas (2018) says, "One of the major advantages of having someone as a role model is that they act as a constant source of inspiration" (Vyas, 2018). I remember one night my mother wore black pleather thigh high heel boots, and a cotton long sleeve burgundy form fitting dress. My aunt wore a black fitted dress, short black heeled boots, and a cropped Jean jacket. Seeing the way they put their outfits together, and seeing the way their beautiful golden jewelry looked on their warm brown skin mesmerized me. That's how I knew fashion was going to be the career for me.

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Growing Pains

Kamren Sicard

Most if not all men will forever complain about those awkward teenage years where they felt so awkward about everything, but I can tell you my years were far worse. Among all the growing pains I had to deal with, the loss of a loved one would have my world come crashing down upon me and shock me to my core.

It was freezing on the morning of February 15th. I remember waking up at my grandmother's house and seeing frost on the windows, I knew that it had snowed again last night. I raced to get dressed and ran towards the door, but the smell of warm pancakes and bacon grease filled the air. I immediately diverted my attention from the snow to the food, because what twelve-year-old boy doesn't love food. I meandered into the kitchen; my grandmother looked over at me with a smile.

"Well, somebody is in a rush, huh mister." I giggled in response.

"I saw there was snow and got excited" I said with a massive grin.

"Well clearly the snow didn't stop you from making a quick food break."

I laughed and began to devour my pancakes. I wanted to go outside so bad, I was basically running out the door before I even finished my last bite.

"Be safe. I'll be out in a few minutes with your sister after I get her dressed." My grandma threw in quickly before I dashed out the door. February 2015 was the year of the thousand-year storm, where basically all New England was thickly coated with at least three feet of snow. I pranced out into the snow wonderland; the air so crisp it hurt to take a breath. I spent my day traveling the yard as if it were the Antarctic, conquering hills like they were mountains, and seemingly discovering new areas as if nobody had ever been there before. My sister and I had begun to freeze through our snow suits and returned inside for a steaming cup of hot cocoa. We walked inside and stripped the snow coated suits off ourselves, and trudged upstairs after our long adventure. Two warm cups of cocoa sat on the table awaiting our arrival. I ran to the fridge to add a little bit of milk to cool it down before I drank. As I drank the cocoa, I felt it warm every inch of my body. It was like a wave of

heat rushing through my body. It was only six o'clock, but we had school the next day, so it was time for us to head home, but my grandmother had a change of plans.

"You guys will be staying with me for a little but longer." She spoke.

"Why?" my little sister quickly interjected

"I don't quite know yet, so I will let you know when I find out."

We stayed until like eight o'clock and then my uncle came over to take the ride with us. I had a weird feeling, but I thought nothing of it. Roughly an hour later we arrived at a hospital, and I had no clue of what was yet to come. We walked through the front door of the hospital, the news of my father being hurt, the whole place smelt of antiseptic, it made me nose sting. We walked into a waiting room where my entire family stood in wait, all looking like they had seen a ghost. I knew something bad had happened. Then the doctor came in with my mother and took me and my two sisters into a separate room. He then stood aside so my mother could tell us what is going on. She started tearing up before any words had left her mouth. She took a deep breath and began.

"So, your father had an accident today, while he was shoveling... we don't know quite how it happened, but he had a heart attack, and he passed away."

The room was silent for ten seconds. It was like the air had been sucked out of the entire room. We all looked at each other in awe.

"They did everything that they could to try and help him, but they couldn't bring him back."

I immediately began bawling my eyes out, I had felt like I got punched in the stomach, fighting for every breath. I was fighting tears while my mother hugged me tightly, my mind had not yet comprehended the pain that would suffocate me for years to come.

I could never quite wrap my head around what had happened to my father, as he was in great shape, and was only forty-seven years old. It just never made sense to me. He left us far too soon and with way too many questions as to what happened that dreaded day. His passing was not only a shockwave to our friends and family, but it also devas-

tated the entire community, as everybody knew and loved Kevin. Whether he was coaching my football team in a sling following his extensive shoulder surgery, or coaching my sister's softball team left-handed because of that same sling, or even handing out ice cream in a tutu at my youngest sister's birthday party, he was always there to not just support his children, but to help others as well. His passing brought tragedy and sorrow amongst the entire community, as everyone lost a great man today, someone that they could truly cherish. Without his presence, I no longer knew what to do. I had no footsteps to follow in; I was lost.

I will never forget the days prior to my father's passing, as they were some of my fondest memories with him. Three days prior to the passing of my father the initial wave of the thousand-year storm, and me and my father decided to take on the snow as early as possible. We trudged outside into the brisk winter air, shovels in hand, ready to attack the snow after a hearty breakfast. We started by shoveling out the front walkway, as the snow was already too high to use the snow blower. We worked side by side, and moved swiftly down the path, only to turn around and see that there was INCHES packed on the ground where we had just been, it was going to be a long day. We continued to work diligently, as we moved to the back yard to clean up the back pathway, it had already been two hours since we started, and we had made little progress. We fought the snow for hours on end, with a nice lunch break at around noon. We were welcomed inside with a cup of hot cocoa, and a warm grilled cheese. We sat and warmed up for about thirty minutes and returned to the battle. When we walked back outside, the cold stung my face, and my fingers quickly became numb.

I looked up at my dad and said, "This is going to be rough isn't it."

"Yes, it is Kam, let's get to work."

"Sounds like a plan dad." And we were off.

We spent the next four hours shoveling out the driveway, our progress became noticeable as it stopped snowing, we were proud of what we had accomplished but knew there was more to be done. The roof was our last task. Over the course of the day, over four feet of snow had been accumulated across every inch of our property, and all that snow was not good to leave on the roof of the house. We grabbed a ladder and hoisted it up against the house, ladder seemed to freeze my fingers even more as we scaled the house. We pushed all the snow down in a small path to allow us to scale the roof without risk of falling, and then proceeded to push all the snow off the roof into on large pile at the front of the house. Me and my dad, exhausted from our hours of labor, decided to lay on our backs and look up at the sky to rest. We saw a bald eagle soaring overhead, and we watched it in amazement for what felt like an hour. It was amazing. Although we had worked all day, we enjoyed

it thoroughly with jokes, pushing matches and impromptu snowball fights throughout the day. Right as we were ready to get off the roof, I wanted to see how big the pile of snow had been. I looked down to see how much snow had been at the bottom. The entire yard was filled snow, with a gigantic pile of close to ten feet right in the middle. I heard footsteps approaching from behind me, and a question arose.

"How many feet do you think that pile is?"

"Probably close to ten feet, it like half of the house!"

"How much do you weigh?" he asked with a smirk on his face.

"About one hundred and ten pounds" I spoke.

"Well, let's see if ten feet of snow can stop one hundred ten pounds."

I was quickly off my feet and in the hands of my father, he gave me a countdown,

"Three! Two! Oneeeee!"

And I was in the air, tumbling towards the ground. I hit the soft snow, and it had felt like a pillow had broken my fall, I looked up and yelled to me dad.

"Ten feet of snow can handle one hundred and ten pounds." He burst out laughing whilst looking down at me in the heap of snow. I broke out in laughter as well. This was a day I would forever remember, but never expected it to be one of the last with my own father.

I remained out of school for a month that felt eternal. On a frigid March morning I made my return to school. Everybody in the school new what happened but nobody knew what to say or how to act. I walked in through the front doors with my mother and sister by my side. It was so quiet in the hallway that I could hear the blood circulating my body, and my heartbeat was pounding in the back of my head.

"How are you guys?" my mother vocalized, to ease the silence surrounding us.

"I am doing all right" I said in a hoarse voice, as I had not spoken one word the entire morning. My sister responded with a blank stare and a shrug.

"I don't know yet mommy, how long do I have to stay?"

"Try to stay as long as you can. I will be here all day baby."

I just wanted to get to my class because I thought that it would make it better, but boy was I wrong.

I entered the room expecting a warrior's welcome, as my friends had missed me, right? My English teacher Mrs. Lucy jumps up quickly to come speak to me in private first.

"How are you? How is everything?" she asked. I did not quite know how to answer, because the wound was still so fresh.

"As good as I can be for now" I responded

She smiled back at me and walked me to my seat and told me about everything that I had missed, which was way

more than I had expected. I sat down in my seat and the class resumed, only my two closest friends moved desks to sit next to me and make me feel like it was all normal again, but it was all so different. I could feel everyone's eyes staring at me, like I was being watched. I quickly realized that I would have to just get used to it like I would everything else, the awkward feeling would only continue, since twelve-year-old kids would never be able to just act normal after something like that happens. They just label you as "different." I had kids ask me what it felt like when I found out, if I was sad. They did not know how much those questions tore me up, ate me from the inside out, they were just kids. That was my new mission; adjust, help my mother, and survive.

Fast forward a few years, and now I am almost an adult, a seventeen-year-old boy who had just started his junior year of high school. I had grown so much and had come so far from that tragic day. I was proud of myself; I had overcome all the adversity. The sadness still lived with me every day, but I learned to accept it and move forward with my day, knowing that I become a man that my dad looked down on, smiling and proud the whole time.

It was a brisk Sunday morning, on the seventh of November. I walked outside in my jeans and flannel, and could smell the rain in the fresh morning air, and could feel the fog setting in. I walked briskly through the yard to take care of my chores; I've got to mow the lawn one last time before winter. All was going well in my life. I had just begun my junior year of high school, and the football season had just ended. Going back about an hour I woke up to my mother and sister making eggs and pancakes for breakfast, I could smell the small hint of fresh vanilla all the way from my room when I had awoken. The vanilla was a small family secret that my father had introduced to us when we were children, and even after his passing we continued with his secret. I lingered outside to start mowing the lawn, as I did not want to cut the grass. I grabbed a gas canister and carefully filled the lawn mower to the brim, the sweet smell of benzene filling my nose as I capped the tank. I snagged my headphones, ready to begin cutting the grass when as soon as I turned the key, the engine started abruptly, and chugged and screamed before it came to a sudden stop. I got off lawn mower cursing up an absolute storm. I knew that I would not be mowing the lawn today, but I had a new project at hand, to fix the god damn lawnmower. I spent hours finding the right sized wrench for a specific bolt, and deep diving through YouTube to know what I was doing, the whole time thinking to myself, "I wish my father was here to teach me what to do." My mother reached her head out the back door,

"How ya doing?" she asked as I lay in the wet grass fighting this machine.

"Making progress!" I yelled back, but my head was spin-

ning out of sheer frustration.

"Good luck kiddo, I love you!" she yelled as she retreated to the warmth of the house.

I kept fighting with the mower, asking myself what my father would do, what he would check, where he would have looked, when finally, after five hours of spewing oil, and fighting this machine, I had found what the hell was wrong. The snapped bolt within the engine block that had ruined my day, causing the oil to not properly circulate throughout the damn thing. I made a quick stop at Home Depot, got a new bolt, and finally, the lawn mower ran. I knew my father was smiling down on me, proud of my effort and my success. I returned inside for dinner with the great news that I had fixed it. With a warm celebration and a couple hugs I felt better about my long struggle. I sat down on the couch after eating an amazing dinner of steak and some asparagus, and my mother sat next to me and embraced me strongly, with tears in her eyes. She looked at me with a proud look in her eye and said,

"Watching you not give up and fight with that lawn mower until you figured it out, reminded me of your father, and it's so nice to see how far you've come, and how alike you are."

I looked back at her in shock, I did not know what to say in response. I began tearing up as she hugged me,

"I'm so proud of you." She said quietly to me.

"I love you so much mom, thank you for always being there for me." I said in response, and we remained in silence for the next few moments, before returning to the living room to watch some TV.

That night is when it all hit me, when I was sitting alone in my bed, all my years of trauma and all the words of positive reinforcement and comparison regarding my father all came together, and I could see how far I truly came. I went from feeling misunderstood, and alone, to feeling confident in myself as a person, and adopting all the traits that my father instilled within me in our measly twelve years of life together. I lie on my back, staring up at the ceiling with a grin on my, but with tears rolling down my chin. I had made it. I had completed the goal I had set for myself in the sixth grade. I had adjusted to my situation, learning to fulfill the roles necessary to make everything function properly. I had helped my mother by finding things to do around the house when she didn't ask, whether it be by doing laundry or fixing something that I noticed wasn't working, and finally I survived the hardest portion of my life, I faced adversity and conquered it, I became a stronger and better man. I slept well that night, with the knowledge of triumph keeping me content all night long.

Jump forward a little over a year, and I have wrapped up my high school career. A week or two before my graduation I had decided that I was going to attend Lasell University and I could not be happier. The day had come, June fifth,

the day that I would walk across the stage to receive my diploma and move on to the next chapter of my life. The emotions hit early in the day, as soon as I woke up, I could feel myself tearing up. I started my morning with a graduate's breakfast of eggs and waffles and began preparing for the event ahead of me. I ironed out my shirt and pants, made sure I had my cap and gown, and got dressed and ready. Per usual at every event, I had to take at least thirty minutes of pictures with my family before I could leave, which has always seemed quite excessive to me, but had to be done. I began my journey to the school, dressed to the nines and so excited for what was ahead. I got to see all my friends in the parking lot and mingle amongst each other before the big ceremony, saying congratulations to each other and just enjoying the last day of high school with my closest friends. The grand march ensued, and I could see my family in the stands waiting for me to walk by them, as I approached not on my family, but the families of my friends went wild for me, which felt amazing. We all sat down in our assigned seats and went through the long speeches from students and faculty, and that's when the big moment came, the diplomas. The students moved row by row to cross the stage and accept their diplomas, I was in one of the last rows, so the anxiety built and built whilst everyone else's names were called. Finally, my row began the walk, I could not wait to be on that stage. Then as I got closer, I started listening to the names more closely.

"Ty Patrick Scholtz, Alexander Graham Sharpe..." And finally, my name.

"Kamren Mitchell Sicard." The crowd roared for me as I basked in the glory walking across the stage, shaking the hand of my principal and superintendent, who both congratulated me on my achievement. As I passed the table, the vice principal handed me my diploma, and I was on my way, completely done with high school. I felt myself start to tear up on the walk off the stage. I knew it would hit eventually but I was hoping to get home at least. Walking back towards my chair I knew my family was proud of me, as I could hear them roaring up in the stands, but what was making me cry was the absence of my father. I knew he was looking down and watching me, but I just know how proud he would have been if he was there to see it. I sat down in my chair, and looked up into the sky, to see a bald eagle soaring overhead. He was here with me, he was watching, and he was proud. I had learned to live with the fact that he was gone, and accept that he won't be here, but moments like that really get the best of you, because you always just wish that they could be there for you that one last time. I've grown tremendously as an individual, and have become a strong young man, I love you dad, and there is never a day I don't wish that you were here. I hope I made you proud.

Natural Radiant Longwear Foundation

Taylor Thompson

Many makeup companies try to really sell their products in high energy commercials that promise you perfect flawless skin. However sometimes lower quality product commercials can be ineffective because of its lack of details and open-ended promises that are never met. Higher end luxury brands, like Nars Cosmetics, do a great job of not only showing you how their products work in calm video advertisements, but they also have a great description on their website page that appeals to the target audience by showing you how their product works in pictures. They describe how their products will come out and give data to support their promises of perfect looking skin. Though Nars Cosmetics can be up in the price range due to the fact it is a luxury brand, the Radiant Longwear Foundation is definitely worth the money and checks off all promises that Nars claims the product will do.

This easily accessible website with a detailed description of the Radiant Longwear Foundation, and all of its other products has a list of benefits and even a description of how to put the product on. Nars Cosmetics persuades the audience that this foundation is full coverage, will match your skin perfectly, and make it look like you are not wearing makeup at all. The Nars Radiant Longwear foundation is targeted towards anyone who likes “a uniquely lightweight foundation that provides 16 hours of fade resistant wear with buildable, medium to full coverage that looks and feels natural” (Nars US, 2022). Many people like to have a more natural look but still have their skin look flawless with no imperfections and this product is targeted towards said people.

Nars Cosmetics uses rhetorical devices such as ethos, to help in persuading their customers to buy their longwear foundation. One way they do this is by including a section of the website labeled “What Narsists Are Saying” (Nars US, 2022). A “Narsist” is the name they gave to the supporters of Nars Cosmetics. In this section there are pictures you can click on that bring you to the Instagram pages of makeup artists and even celebrities and influencers that are sponsoring Nars. A picture from makeup artist and influencer Hindash is featured in this section. Hindash is an experienced makeup artist with a following of 1.3 million

people on Instagram. By featuring credible makeup professionals and influencers people now show the audience that people who are well qualified in the makeup world approve of and love this product. By establishing credibility its audience is more likely to invest in the product.

Nars Cosmetics also uses pathos in the form of emotional appeals to aid in connecting the audience to other people who have also purchased the longwear foundation. One way they do this is by including customer reviews and ratings of the product. On the website you can see what customers wrote about this product and how many stars they awarded it. For example Joanna said, “Best longwear foundation! Looks so natural on my skin and lasts all day,” and awarded it with 5 stars (Nars US, 2022). Another review by Cassie stated, “I have combination skin and was worried this would not help control my oily skin but it works great. I made the switch from Lancome and couldn’t be happier!” and awarded it five stars (Nars US, 2022). If someone who also struggles with oily skin read this and saw how happy this product Cassie was, they would emotionally connect to her and possibly buy the foundation. Adding reviews helps the customer emotionally connect because it allows them to see how the product made other people feel and base their emotions and feelings about the product.

In the overview of the Nars product page, logical appeals in the form of statistics show how women feel about what the product claims to do. The website uses percentages such as, “75% of women agree skin looked radiant all day” to support their claim that the foundation is fade-resistant and looks better with each hour of wear (Nars US, 2022). By using statistics, the audience can visually see that the product’s claims are backed up with logic. It also mentions that these percentages came from a “1 week independent U.S. consumer study of 65 participants” to show where they got their data from (Nars US, 2022).

Through the entirety of the Nars natural and radiant longwear foundation website, rhetorical techniques such as ethos, logos, and pathos were used to persuade the audience to purchase their product. The most effective appeal was pathos. Nars did a great job of connecting to the audience by adding reviews of previous customers. Adding custom-

ers' emotions and feelings about their personal experiences with the product allowed the audience to connect to these experiences and possibly be the persuading factor to buy the product. The second most effective appeal was logos. Nars provided hard facts in the form of statistics to show the audience that its claims were backed up by data. The most ineffective appeal was ethos. Although credibility was established by influencers and makeup artists, if someone doesn't know that particular influencer they might not connect as well. All in all this website was persuasive and Nars did an outstanding job of really selling the product to its audience. This easily accessible, hands on, and well-funded

website with rhetorical techniques persuaded the audience to buy the natural radiant longwear foundation more than a short commercial would have.

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“Get On The Line!”

Courtney Tello

“Get on the line!” Those four words are enough to keep any athlete up at night. There is no feeling worse than showing up to practice, and those are the first words out of your coach’s mouth. Whether it’s the first day of preseason, or the day after a tough loss against the rival team, it all feels the same. Being an athlete isn’t an easy feat. It takes a lot of mental toughness and physical strength. It doesn’t matter how many trophies you’ve won or how many medals you have hanging over your bed. At the end of the day, all that matters is how you feel on the inside. Personally, I have been playing sports since I was five years old. I grew up in a family of athletes, and I just loved being around sports. Just like everyone at that age, I began with playing youth soccer for my city. We all wore the same fluorescent yellow t-shirts that had “NYSL”, or “Nashua Youth Soccer League” displayed across the front. You truly never know how many friends you have until you play sports. Looking back now on those pictures of fifteen or so little kids all lined up all sporting their best smiles, I realized how many people, who I am now familiar with, that played on the same team as me. As you get a little older, it gets hard to remember things like that. Having those team pictures to look back on, of a bunch of little kids, always gives me a very nostalgic feeling.

Once I hit middle school, I was introduced to yet another sport: field hockey. My mom played field hockey in high school and loved it, so you can imagine how excited she was when I brought it up to her that I wanted to try out. When I showed up to the tryouts, it was completely different than anything I had been used to. This is when it got a little harder to balance both school and sports. All my friends played sports, and we were all constantly on the go. I knew that I wasn’t the only one having a little bit of trouble, so it was nice to have people who I could talk to who were going through the same thing as I was. Once I finally got the hang of balancing my work and field hockey, it was only up from there. An article from Sustain Health mentions, “Students who are active in extracurricular physical activities have shown higher levels of commitment to studies and an enhanced desire to engage in school life” (Barden, 2021). While it was difficult at first having so

many things on my plate, it got so much easier to balance everything once I was able to manage my time better. Once our season really began to take off, I realized that I wasn’t too good as a field player. My coaches suggested I try out the goalie position. When they handed me the equipment and I put it on, I felt like I was swimming in it, since it was so big on me. After a few adjustments, and what seemed like an endless amount of duct tape, I began practicing. I wasn’t very good at it at first, but I stuck with it and learned the ropes.

Middle school flew by in the blink of an eye. I played goalie all three years and I made so many new friends. In eighth grade, I began to play club field hockey where I would go to practices in Bedford, Massachusetts with a couple of the girls who also played on my middle school team. We had a blast going to tournaments all over the country from Virginia all the way down to Florida. Once high school started, I was more than comfortable in the position. My freshman year I made varsity, which was a huge accomplishment. Unfortunately, since my middle school team was combined with three schools, most of us got split up when we went to high school. My city has two major public high schools, Nashua North, and South, and depending on what side of town you lived on was the deciding factor on which school you went to. High school field hockey had a lot of ups and downs. When I was a freshman, there was already a senior goalie who had been playing there for the last four years. Since I am very competitive, I showed up to practice every day fighting for my spot. Unfortunately for the senior, she suffered a back injury halfway through the season, so it was my time to step up. After that, I was a starter for the rest of my high school career. Being a student athlete in high school is an experience like no other. You must be performing well in the classroom, to be able to stay on the team you’re playing for.

Unlike middle school, high school was a lot more demanding when it came to the workload. However, our coaches would always preach to us saying that you are a student first and an athlete second. A study from the University of Kansas states, “looking at the performance of students in grades 9 to 12 showed that more than 97% of

student athletes graduated high school, 10% higher than those students who had never participated in sports. Athletes were also shown to have better G.P.A. outcomes than non-athletes” (Maslen, 2015). I finished high school being the number one ranked goalie in New Hampshire in saves. Everyone thought I was insane, but I absolutely thrived on the adrenaline rush that I would get after every game. The thing is, if you are ranked number one in saves, that means that your team isn’t the best. We would get crushed by teams sometimes 5-0 but I would end the day with around 25-30 saves per game. As nice as being number one was, it takes a toll on you both mentally and physically. I would be so crushed every time the ball went in, or if a ball went in that I knew I could’ve saved, or anything along those lines.

As I got older, I realized how much of a mind game being a goalie truly is. I had never really thought about playing field hockey in college because I always felt like it would be too much of a commitment, or that nobody would recruit a girl from a high school where their record was always 2-12. Little did I know how wrong I was. It wasn’t until October of my senior year of high school when I decided I would give it a chance. As my grandmother always said, “Just give it a chance! You’ll never know unless you try!” I reached out to multiple coaches and the one school I decided on was Lasell University. I met the coach and that has led me to where I am today.

As of this moment, I am the starting goalie as a freshman once again, and I am leading the GNAC conference in number of saves. It’s almost as if everything has come full circle. The difference between playing in college versus high school is the level of play is much higher, and you are faced with a lot more shots. Also, everyone on the team actually wants to be there, and if you’ve ever played sports or been a part of any club, you’ll know exactly what I mean. All in all, sports have taught me a lot of life lessons like how to make friends, and how to always keep fighting. However, the most important lesson that I have learned is to always be true to yourself. At the end of the day, you need to be able to look at yourself in the mirror and be proud of the person who is staring back at you. Every day I show up for practice and I am thankful that I am given another opportunity to do a little bit better than I did yesterday. I just always hope that the coach doesn’t say those four words. “Get on the line!”

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Tea and Rich Red Apples

Meghan Theall

As I march down the stairs, I begin to fantasize about what my life used to be. The simplicities of childhood that were merely lost with time raced back into my mind. Early morning soft-boiled eggs with toast dunked into the yolks like a fishing rod plunged into the lake and midday cursive lessons at the kitchen table or a warm cup of tea with a cookie that was submerged at every break in the conversation. Those are the glimpses of my past that make me cherish my life. I learned the most significant lessons; cursive was a dying skill and that making your bed in the morning is the best way to start the day. This picture is something I find myself looking back on when I want to remember life before the struggles of becoming an adult. The house behind me was more than just windows and vinyl. It was this place where I took steps of independence—each year, walking up the driveway as I conquered another day of school. It overlooked the bus stop where I slowly became older and more mature. Although this was not my house, it was an extension of my home. It watched me grow up every day. Through the tears, the joy, the anger, it saw everything. I would never have thought that something of such materialization would hold an eternal place in my heart. Although there is much joy that comes from inside those walls, there is also sadness. As time went on and we grew up, things faded away. Traditions became a faint memory, and the people closest suddenly were gone. Days we had dreaded were soon upon us, and this house, the one where we began, brought us together again. Years had passed, and family gatherings had been a thing of the past. The day my uncle passed away, it was like we had never stopped coming together as a family. The living room that was once cold and dark soon filled with light and laughter. With such a tragedy, we rekindled relationships and bonded over our melancholy.

Each room in the house drew out memories from the past. I was dancing in the big room, dreaming about life as a ballerina up on the grandest of stages. I twirled and leaped, each time getting back up and trying again. Then there was the workbench in the basement where my Papa taught me

to paint and hammer. His watchful eyes were looking over as I attempted to accomplish what took him years to learn. The den, with two recliners set up at the perfect angle to see the TV. A space of comfort and relaxation where within those four walls, all my worries faded away. I now realize that I never cherished the last time I sat in that room and felt my worries fade away.

I was swept up in the excitement of growing up that time quickly raced away from me. Now looking back, it is those days that molded me into who I am today. My passion and my anxieties all made their mark in this place. I discovered my strengths as well as my weaknesses. It is the difficult times I face in my life that I long for the simpler days. Days when my worries consisted of making it up the icy driveway without falling or if I could ride my bike down the street by myself. I wish I could go back to those days. When life was easy and we were healthy. I remember every day, as I would leave, I would hug them goodbye and kiss them on the cheek. Over time this tradition went away. As I sit here and think, I can't remember why I stopped hugging them when I would leave. However, I wish I could go back in time and re-live those moments. I want to give one more hug and kiss after an afternoon filled with joy.

I never realized my life would not be consistent when I got older all those days spent at that house. One day, I will grow up, and the hours spent there will diminish. The photo shows me right before my first day of kindergarten. My metallic pink flats carried me around as I danced with joy in the driveway. I wear the rich red apple on my neck like a trophy. At that moment, I felt so old. All I had ever wanted was to grow up and be older. This picture is a defining moment in the journey that I was about to embark on. The years of school, friendships, and lasting memories were right in front of me, waiting to be discovered at that moment.

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The Misogyny in Music

Emily VanHouten

The portrayal of women in today's music has led to controversy. Some believe that too many songs are sexist and degrading towards women, more than any other time period. Jose Barrera, in "Last Friday Night- Mainstream Music Degrades Women," argues about how today's mass media disregards lyrics to songs that shame women. Barrera wrote with a credible group of editors for the Los Angeles Times. On top of his article about modern day music, he has also written about topics such as rape culture, climate change, and diversity in modern media. Sarah Osei, in "Why Cardi B is Right to Highlight the Misogyny in Hip-Hop," argues that there is no equal representation in the hip-hop industry. Osei is a young writer, but that has not stopped her from publishing her beliefs and arguments. She writes for Highsnobiety, an online blog which covers topics such as media, music, fashion, and culture. On top of being a featured writer for this brand, she has also been named the senior music editor. Both authors, Barrera and Osei, are spreading word of how toxic today's music industry is through the use of logos, ethos, and pathos in their writing.

Jose Barrera, in "Last Friday Night- Mainstream Music Degrades Women," argues of the sexist lyrics in today's music and the ignorance in its audience. Throughout his article, he makes it a point to mention that people are blind to the lyrics of songs. Because a song is qualified as "bop" and has electrifying beats and background music, listeners disregard the messages and literal meanings of the lyrics. Not only does Barrera cover the lyrics of the songs, but he also brings awareness to how degrading and damaging music videos can be. He argues that music videos, on top of lyrics, sexualize and degrade women, but many people continue to sing along because they do not truly listen to what the song is saying.

Although Jose Barrera is informative with his argument and provides many details supporting his belief, he still expects his audience to be familiar with today's music industry along with the artists that are part of it. In his article, he refers to artists such as Dua Lipa, Cardi B, Justin Bieber, Daddy Yankee, and G-Eazy. He also uses their songs to

support his argument, including "New Rules," "No Limits," and "Despacito." Barrera is a writer for Los Angeles Times, a well-known company based in Southern California which allows students and young adults to publish stories for other high school students. The author is writing for teenagers who are familiar with today's songs and their lyrics, as he brings up a story of his brother and sister singing along to the degrading lyrics of "No Limits" while driving around town one Friday night. By telling this story, he is showing what type of audience he is reaching out to. It shows that he expects his audience to be filled with people who take drives and listen to music, specifically teenagers. While doing this, people usually sing along to the lyrics regardless of what the message of the song actually is. This is the argument that Barrera is attempting to make; people disregard the misogynistic and sexist lyrics of songs just because of their popularity and upbeat soundtrack.

To back up his argument, Barrera brings up varying facts and studies that support his beliefs. After telling the story of his car ride with his younger siblings, he mentions that according to Harvard Health Watch, "the average person will spend 37,935 hours of their lifetime in a car" (Barrera, 2018). To follow up with that evidence, he argues that if people are spending so much time in cars listening to music, how have they not truly taken a deeper look at the lyrics they are singing along to? To support his argument, he also goes into detail explaining lyrics to songs. One of them include "No Limitz" by G-Eazy featuring Cardi B, as the artists sing "If I hit it one time I'ma pipe her/If I hit it two times then I like her/ If I f*ck three times Imma wife her" (Barrera, 2018). He then argues that despite these sexualized and degrading lyrics, this song still made it to Billboard's Top 10 Chart for a total of nineteen weeks (Barrera, 2018). He then moved to live performances, bringing up the performance of "Despacito" in 2018. He states that during the performance, the dancers were thrusting their pelvises towards women who hardly had any clothing on (Barrera, 2018). All of the evidence that he mentions in his article further supports his argument that women are sexu-

alized and degraded in the music industry.

Jose Barrera follows a structured outline to prove his belief. At first, he draws the readers into his writing by bringing up a story that most of his audience can relate to. He then claims that songs in today's society are demeaning and humiliating for women. He supports his argument by stating that throughout music, women are referred to as "bitches" and "hoes" making them seen for only their bodies. He counters his argument by stating that the listeners live in a liberal society, where women should be able to stand up to men and fight for what is right without any repercussions. However, despite today's world, he explains that men are still writing music about beating and degrading women, and are even being praised for doing so. Barrera finishes his writing by concluding that women are slowly forgetting their worth and losing their dignity because of these songs, and that they are forgetting that they are equal to men, not below them.

To further prove his argument, Barrera uses Pathos to invoke feelings of anger, frustration, and a desire for change. All of these feelings are necessary for his message to get across to the readers. Barrera uses specific word choices in his writing that could cause these feelings. For example, he uses the word "horrible" many times throughout his article when arguing that women are beginning to feel worthless and used for their bodies. When speaking about how men are praised for degrading women, he says, "It's sad to say, but it is true" (Barrera, 2018). He also expresses his personal values, hoping that his audience will share the same feelings. He argues that women have been fighting for so long to be equal to men, just for these songs to set them back. He follows up by saying that women should be valued for their worth, and should not have to question it. Throughout his article, he also questions why songs that degrade women, objectify them, and talk about their bodies seem to end up on hit charts so often. He does this to be able to connect with his readers who feel the same way and question the lyrics. This subject may be sensitive to many women, and his stating of his feelings on the matter can get his audience to agree with his argument even more so.

While Barrera mostly focuses on gender discrimination in the lyrics, Osei opens up a new horizon of conversation of the music industry itself. Sarah Osei, author of "Why Cardi B is Right to Highlight the Misogyny in Hip-Hop," argues that there is no equal representation in the hip-hop industry. She speaks about artists such as Cardi B and Nicki Minaj and how they have impacted the industry. Osei specifically covers Cardi B and her desire to make a change in music. She closes her argument by saying that male artists should listen and understand these issues, as well as supporting female artists in the genre.

Osei expects her audience to be familiar with certain topics before reading her article. She speaks of artists such

as Cardi B, Nicki Minaj, the hip-hop duo City Girls, and Megan Thee Stallion. Along with these artists come their songs, one of them in particular being "WAP" by Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion. She expects her readers to be familiar with the controversy behind this hit song. Osei also hopes that her audience is up to date about the murder of Breonna Taylor and the Black Lives Matter movement right behind it. Overall, she writes her article with the expectation that her readers have an understanding of the hip-hop/rap industry, as she goes into grave detail on what is going on inside of it.

Osei supplies her argument with various interview quotes to further her argument. She goes into specific detail through an interview with Rick Ross, a man who owns his own record label and has signed many of today's well-known artists. In this interview, Ross stated that he would not sign a female rap artist solely for the reason that "he always thought he would be fucking a female rapper" (cited in Osei, 2020) instead. This specific quote used by Osei proves her argument that there is no equality and fairness in the music industry, and that women are still not treated with the respect they deserve. She uses another quote from an interview with the hip-hop duo City Girls member, JT. In this interview, JT spoke on how her transition into a male-dominated industry was not welcoming, stating that men "are used to being in control of putting women on records, and now women are starting to team up and do it without them", along with mentioning that men are "threatened by the women dominating right now" (JT, cited in Osei, 2020). By using the following quotes of well-known rappers, Osei builds credibility. Using exact words from these women in the industry makes her point more believable to the audience.

Osei's argument is well structured and follows a detailed outline in order to prove her point. She opens up and claims that many artists in the hip-hop industry are arguing over whether or not women are treated equally to men. She backs up this claim by bringing up artists such as Cardi B and JT from City Girls, and how they are speaking up about their experiences in the industry. Both female artists are trying to get male rappers to stand up for what is right. She counters her argument by stating that "female rappers are painstakingly claiming their rightful place in the genre, shoulder-to-shoulder with the boys" (Osei, 2020). However, her rebuttal to that counter argument is that the men are not welcoming women into the industry. She concludes her article by making one thing clear: men in the rap genre need to truly listen to what the women have to say. A change needs to be made.

Osei uses Pathos in hopes to appeal to her audience's emotions. She does this by speaking about her personal values of women and how they should be treated. She claims that women are expected to appeal to the male gaze and are

being shamed for displaying their sexuality throughout their music, and that it is unfair to the women that suffer through it. Although men do this and are praised for it, women are discredited for doing the exact same. She argues that the industry “regards women as objects instead of rappers with merit” (Osei, 2020). Values that have to do with supporting women and fighting for equality can provoke emotions in readers such as trust, agreeance, and an overall want for change in the industry. She does this to connect with her audience on a personal level; to relate to women who feel the same.

Both authors, Barrera and Osei, wrote articles arguing the same thing but wrote in different ways. Barrera wrote an article from the outside perspective, as a listener of music with a strong opinion. He went in depth about specific lyrics of songs along with their music videos. He also used data and sources that he could find online and used them to back up his argument, unlike Osei. She took a perspective that was more detailed on the inside workings of the music industry, as she was able to get specific quotes from interviews with big time artists. She also leaned more towards

the hip-hop industry, as supposed to Barrera covering today’s top music as a whole. Barrera took a stance as a listener, or someone who would hear music and become upset by the lyrics, and Osei took a stance as someone from inside the industry. Both authors made strong arguments and found a way to connect with their audiences. They both made it clear that today’s music industry is sexist and degrading towards women, and a change needs to be made.

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Life is a Tumble

Aaliyah K. Wyman

When you move to a new town, what do you expect? You expect to be an outcast because everyone has their friend groups already and you won't be included at games, lunch tables or being picked to play a game in gym class. That happened to me when I started high school. I moved to Andover, MA right before my freshman year and I was so nervous. I kept thinking to myself that I wouldn't make friends and everyone would think I'm weird. I ended up completely isolating myself in my room until the first day of school.

After two months at my new school, I decided to try out for basketball cheer. That winter my mom had started to work longer hours at work. She couldn't drive me back to school, so I stayed and did my math homework in the cafeteria until 5pm. I started walking into the gym and my heart was racing. We got into lines, started to stretch and then ran laps. I kept looking around and watching all the other girls talk to one another. I felt like an imposter. I felt like none of the other girls would like me because I was different. I felt like I didn't belong. They were all having a good time and giggling about random things and I was just standing there alone. Suddenly, I saw a separate group of girls walk away and I asked them why they had left the group. Someone responded and said, "That's tryouts for hockey cheer." I immediately got excited because I had never heard of such a thing and was eager to find out more about it. I was intrigued to try something new and try to make new friends because it was clear to me that nobody in basketball cheer wanted new friends. I left basketball cheer tryouts and tried out for hockey cheer instead. Three days of tryouts had passed. The next day I got the alert that I had made the team, and I was so happy! I ran through the apartment, yelling to my mom and siblings that I'd made the team!

Eventually, a year had passed, it was my sophomore year and I was still doing hockey cheer. At our last practice, my coach, Christine, and my mom were badgering me about trying out next month for football cheer for the following year and telling me that I should do it. At the time, I was still cautious about what the other girls would think about me, so I decided to try out. A month later, it was a rough three days, but I pushed through my fears and succeeded. I

eventually got the email from our coach, Marisa, that I got accepted into the junior varsity team. The next couple of weeks, we had summer training. The first day was fun, but it went downhill after that.

We started right away with putting the routine together for competition and Marisa started forming each stunt group and deciding where everyone had to be standing before performing the stunt. While I was making sure I was doing the stunt right when practicing, there was always someone telling me what to do and I got really frustrated. I would be taken out of my original spots and moved somewhere else and have to learn new moves over and over again. I had to learn the layout of the new spot I was in everytime. Marisa wouldn't listen or see that I was struggling and that the other girls weren't treating me right. I tried talking to them, but they just ignored me. They were only thinking about themselves and what they should do in the routine. I had my own ideas, but never got the chance to tell anyone because everyone else's ideas were top priority. At that point, everyone was trying to take control of the team. The captains had us run through the routine a couple of times, but then people kept messing up or coming up with something different to do instead. When Marisa came back and saw everyone fighting, she started to yell. She got so upset that she said we weren't going to compete if we didn't start acting like a team. In that moment, I wanted to scream because I hadn't done anything wrong, I listened to the captains and did the routine every time. I didn't argue.

It was my junior year and everything was falling apart. In hockey cheer, we got new recruits because all the seniors were gone. There were three juniors, including myself, that were the oldest and could be a captain this year. There was no discussion, or debate on who was captain. The other two girls got it and I was stuck on the side lines with the freshman. I started to feel left out again. I didn't understand why there couldn't have been three captains because I was very helpful when the girls needed help and they weren't there to help. I still had fun with the girls and at the games, but I felt like I was put at the kids table at a birthday party even though I'm 16 years old. By the end of the season, COVID-19 hit and our last game and banquet got cancelled.

Before I moved to Andover, I did cheerleading from the ages of 5 to 12 in Medford, MA. My mom got me into it because she didn't want me stuck in the house everyday not enjoying life. After the first season I fell in love with cheer. I loved showing my spirit, cheering on the boys, while tumbling and stunting. As a bonus, I got to hang out with my friends. We would hangout before and after games because I lived right next to the field we had our games in. I had such an amazing experience with bonding and trusting exercises with my teammates and coaches, that I thought it would be the same in Andover. I didn't want to believe all the superstitions about Andover, that they're all just rich, white people who only care about themselves and their "kind." But I gave them too much credit because that's who they were and still are. The whole experience wasn't what I wanted at all. I thought we would all have a great season, I would've made new friends, and we would have placed in the competition. I wanted to be a part of something special because looking back when I was part of the Medford Mustangs, I made amazing friends from cheer and I still talk to them to this day. I loved making routines with them and going to competitions. Even though we had to be up at around 7am in the morning, we still had a blast at competitions. However, it wasn't anything like that. I ended up crying multiple times because I was thrown around like garbage and wasn't taken seriously. You might think I'm overexaggerating, but I never felt so discluded, even when I was in the room, or the gym, with them for hours.

We were supposed to be a team, but we weren't at all. I wasn't included when I should've been. I wasn't updated on practices being rescheduled, and times for games until the last minute because I wasn't part of the text chain, just because of what type of phone I had at the time. The only difference between football and hockey cheer is the coaches. At least, Christine communicated with me. That's the one thing Marisa wasn't good at. I was just blown away by how the team acted as a whole and how Marisa handled it. I admit that sometimes I had an attitude, but I never said anything to anyone's faces or to Marisa. By the end of the football cheer season, everything was starting to crumble down. Two girls got injured and couldn't perform at the competition. One broke her finger after falling in the shower, and the other girl got a major concussion from someone falling on them from a stunt. Another girl got dropped from a stunt and had to use crutches until a couple days before the competition, but couldn't do anything we had originally planned. I had been moved at least three times in the routine because of the two of the girls who couldn't be in the competition.

The day of the competition, I was so nervous and didn't think I could do it. My family and my best friend, Angelina, came to cheer me on, but all I could think about was fail-

ing. When we got there, we put all our stuff on the tables in the back before we went to practice our routine before our actual performance. Everything was going fine, we took pictures, then Marisa made us practice our tumbling, even though I tried warning her that I shouldn't. When I did cheer in Medford I learned that it was better for me to not practice beforehand because I had this thing where the first time is always gonna be perfect, and I've stood by that since. My coaches understood that and in the end, we placed 1st. Marisa didn't understand and told me to do it and I landed it perfectly. We practiced the whole routine after and then we went in line to perform. Everyone was taking pics again and I was still pretty nervous and stressed about everything. I saw everyone in the stands and I was regretting everything leading up to that moment. Everything bad that happened and I thought would happen was rumbling in my stomach. The routine was changed multiple times and I wasn't feeling confident about my back-hand-spring. As expected, one of the stunts fell and instead of landing the back-hand-spring, I fell on my face. The whole routine was messy and we ended up getting last place. In my opinion, we deserved last place because nothing about our routine was great or pristine. The routine was already used in early years, and not once did Marisa even stop to think, "Maybe we should come up with something brand new!?" Maybe in the end, things might have ended differently. If people were more inclusive, it would've been a great season!

We finished the routine and everyone was so disappointed. I walked to the stands and saw Angelina and my family and they started congratulating me. I just denied everything that had happened because if I hadn't I would have balled my eyes out. All I wanted to do was go home, but we were required to take the team bus home. When we got back to the school, I left the school as soon as possible. I got home and cried for hours about everything. Everyone was trying to cheer me up, but I couldn't bear to anyone change the way I was feeling; anger, sadness and regret. After processing what went down that day, I learned that you shouldn't let others drag you down. I could've quit the team at any time, but I didn't because I didn't let anyone stop me from enjoying what I love. Cheerleading has always been part of my life and if anyone thinks they're gonna take that away, that'd be wrong. Yes, I was mistreated and cried multiple times because of what had happened in cheerleading, but it was because of the people, not the sport. I moved on with my life and I'm still continuing cheerleading in college.

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