

In Our Own Voices
A Collection of Essays



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Department of English, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics

As the editor of the Spring 2017 edition of *In Our Own Voices* I proudly present this new collection of exceptional essays written by California State University Fullerton English 99 and English 101 students. The purpose of this journal is to showcase the selected essays, giving the writers an opportunity to take pride in their accomplishments and to share their work with others. Thank you to all of the student writers published in this journal and to the faculty members who took the time to select and nominate the essays in this collection.

April Medrano

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Growing Up Fast

It finally hit me that early morning on June 20, 2013 when I arrived to San Antonio, Texas. I could no longer go back to California and change my mind about going to the Air Force Basic Military Training. I laid on my new uncomfortable bed that screeched every time I moved. That first night I was shivering but fear kept me from going under the covers. I did not know how to make the bed if I messed it up. The gray wool blanket was folded over the bed in a way I had never learned and it was tucked in tightly between the thin mattress and the springs. It was dark but the little light that came from the windows at the top of the wall allowed me to see other women around me lying in their separate beds. I looked up to the ceiling, scared as the tears quietly ran down my face and I dozed off to sleep.

I awakened later on that morning when the sun was up. I was unaware of the time and where I was exactly. I laid still until a powerful woman's voice came out of the speaker on the main wall. She commanded, "Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Get dressed with urgency, then form up downstairs." That very moment a herd of women got up and rushed to the restroom to do just as they had been told. I followed to avoid any trouble but I was filled with confusion.

I later identified the mysterious voice with a slim, green eyed Caucasian woman. She wore a big round hat that signified her authority. She was one of the many military training instructors that roamed around the building yelling at us, the "trainees." It would be a rare sight to see them smile but if they did, it was most likely from laughing at us. Their purpose was to break us down mentally, week after week, and then built us up right before graduation. It was a mental and physical game to see who would survive and move on to become a strong Airman.

For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by complete strangers and in a new state. I could no longer rely on my parents to guide me, or my friends to give me comfort. I was alone until I could find someone or something to make me feel at home. Most of the other women seemed to be going

through the same problem. All they would talk about was missing home. I had to completely break out of my shell in order to survive. I could no longer be shy and depend on others. My responsibility level grew immensely. I became completely responsible for buying the right items, eating the right foods, making my bed and hair properly, and keeping my sleeping area orderly. If any of those things were not done correctly, I knew to expect unpleasant consequences from the training instructors.

The stress level I encountered was very different from what I had experienced before in my life. The lack of sleep, the pressure, and the little to no kind gestures made many women break down. Every morning we would be woken up by reveille at exactly 4:45 to do physical training exercise for at least an hour. I started with only being able to do a mile and a half in thirteen minutes, twenty push-ups, and thirty sit-ups. Towards the end I was able to complete forty push-ups, fifty-five sit ups, and a mile and a half in eleven minutes and sixteen seconds. My brain would go into autopilot some mornings from the repetitiveness of the schedule. I fought sleep every day especially during the lecture classes. I saw others in the class room bobbing their heads back or forth as they drifted into sleep, and waking up frantically when their heads fell too far. By nine o'clock at night the lights in the dormitory had to be turned off and we all had to be in bed. Some nights I would knock out from exhaustion. Other nights I would hide in the restroom stall and cry while everyone else was in bed. I had to cry quietly, because if I was loud enough to make an echo, the women in the dormitory would hear me. I did not want the others to know I was feeling weak. Living in a small space with over thirty other women for eight and a half weeks was very difficult. I made a few good friends the second week but became separated from them a few weeks after when I was moved to a bed on the other side of the dormitory. It was harder to talk to them when their beds were not nearby. Most of the time I cried of frustration or sadness from what other women had said or done to me. Cliques would form around me and make me feel excluded. During the last couple weeks, I was surrounded by older women that liked to kick me down with their negativity,

because my positive attitude annoyed them. I had to learn how to go on every day without letting their comments get to me. One indirectly said I lacked confidence and another one told me she did not like me. They looked at me as if I were crazy when I said things and laugh rudely. I started to build a wall around my heart so those with whom I was not close to could not hurt me as they did before.

As the weeks went by, my loved ones sent me letters that filled my eyes with tears of joy. I felt as if the letters arrived when I needed them the most. I would read them over and over to remind myself that, even though I was states away, I always had them in my heart supporting me. My parents would write to me about their travel plans to see me when I graduated and all the fun things we would do as a family that weekend. Seeing them was my motivation to keep going strong in my training. Turning of age did not result in living life without my parents but the exact opposite. I grew closer to them as I learned more about adulthood and its challenges.

I will never forget the morning of August 16, 2013 when I put on my dress uniform to finally graduate. All those horrible days that I had spent no longer mattered to me. I marched off the bus that drove us to the parade field. The sky was clear with the sun shining bright, creating the usual Texas heat that I had felt all summer long. I had adjusted to the crazy humidity that used to make sweat roll down my whole body. I first confused the feeling with bugs crawling under my uniform. After having plenty of water daily, the three-digit temperature was more bearable. As I looked to the stands, all the friends and families of the soon to be Airmen were drenched in sweat. I saw my parents in the distance wearing their bright yellow shirts that said "Airman Segovia" across the front. I struggled to keep myself from smiling as I stood at attention. I sang the Air Force song and said the Airman's Creed with such pride. It felt surreal that I had actually survived basic training and became an American Airman in the United States Air Force.

I felt so free when my parents drove me off the base that day. I had no idea what there was outside of the base gates. It was as if I were a prisoner and I had just been given parole. That weekend was filled with so much laughter and storytelling. I told them the cool things I had learned like how to roll my socks and shirts, wear my uniform, assemble and disassemble a rifle, and hold the flag while marching. I also took them to see the dormitory where I lived for eight and a half weeks. They were shocked at how every item had to be placed in a specific way. The hangers were evenly spaced, all the uniforms faced the same direction on the hangers, the shoe heels touched each other and the bed post, the beds were aligned to each other, the towels were evenly hung on the bed frame, and so on. They kept telling me how proud they were and how much they missed me.

Soon enough it was time for me to return to the dormitory to pack my belongings and leave to technical school early in the morning. I had to spend another two and a half months in Texas learning my Ophthalmic Technician job before I could go home. I felt comfortable going to technical school because I felt it was going to be slightly better than basic. I had already lived through the strict and tedious rules of basic training. In basic I was told when to wake up, shower, eat, learn, and sleep in order to build discipline. Tech school was said to be more of learning than training. Once I arrived to the new base I immediately sensed the difference. Everyone was nicer and I had no trouble making friends. I was free to use my phone, walk instead of march, talk to boys, eat whatever whenever, wear regular clothes after school hours, and go out on the weekends. The rooms were the best with one roommate, a private shower, a walk-in closet, a comfortable bed, and controllable air conditioning. I spent most of my time in my room listening to music, studying, talking on the phone, or just enjoying the alone time.

Technical school flew by compared to basic training. I felt great going to class, learning about the human eye, because it allowed me to discover my enjoyment in Optometry. It lead me to want to pursue it in my civilian side by majoring in Biological Science when I returned to college. When it was

time to graduate technical school, I was very excited to go home after five long months of living in Texas. I planned to surprise my parents by showing up to the house unexpectedly. I asked my boyfriend, Ben, to pick me up from the airport, and my sister, Crystal, to keep my parents at home. Butterflies filled my stomach as we drove up to my neighborhood. Ben rang the doorbell as I hid around the corner. My mom stepped outside confused by his random visit. I jumped out and gave her a huge hug as tears ran down both our eyes. I then surprised my dad and his reaction was also priceless. It was so great to do something for my parents after all they had done for me.

I was forced to grow up and become independent less than two weeks after I graduated high school. It was a bitter sweet experience that has changed the course of my life in a positive way. I struggled during the process but I gained skills in how to handle a fast pace course and made a great amount of money. I do not regret enlisting because I have learned so much about myself as a result. I was pushed physically and mentally beyond what I thought was possible. I now feel even more confident that I can overcome life's challenges after being able to survive the torture of Basic Military Training.

The Light in Writing

With the increased use of social media and technology, writing has inevitably become an important factor in our everyday lives. When the word “writing” came to mind, I initially thought of having to write essays or research papers. However, the correlation between writing and papers does not accurately describe the word “writing” as a whole because of the increased use of it in our everyday lives (i.e. sending, posting, and responding to messages). Past experiences and certain individuals have had the ability to contribute to both my positive and negative attitudes towards writing in general. Personally, just hearing the word writing brought anxiety, disgust, and dread because of such a negative experience, which also may be the reason for my inability to realize that there are so many purposes. As a writer, I have the ability to express and communicate my thoughts and feelings and rather than focusing on negative writing experiences, I have realized the importance in reflecting and learning from my times of discouragement in order to develop as a writer.

Writing is the process of analyzing and expressing information that we come across. It allows me to brainstorm, clarify, organize, and put together my thoughts into words before sharing them. Having the ability to write out my thoughts makes building connections less confusing and challenging to understand. In most cases, I use writing to express opinions or feelings, give information, demonstrate an understanding, share life’s greatest/upsetting moments, or even communicate effectively with those around myself. Without being able to write in all of the above and additional situations, the world would be a cloud of confusion and chaos. Communication is crucial when interacting because it allows for the exchanging and bringing of new ideas. As a result, in being able to express ourselves or knowledge, we are able to understand information in greater depth. By expressing our ideas and thoughts, we can build upon our knowledge and see where we might need additional clarification. The process and act of writing should not be painful because it is a combination of our reactions or responses

and analysis to the given information. It can be difficult at times for me to express my thoughts, but I have found that writing them down has helped with following my train of thought. The writing down of my thoughts has led to greater organization, allowing me to see where the ideas relate or connect with one another. When writing, the organization and connecting of ideas can result in a more developed focus or argument. Not only am I able to understand information in greater depth, but I can learn, share, and apply them to unknown concepts/ideas.

Writing should not be dreaded nor have the need to cause additional anxiety whenever hearing about an upcoming assignment because of one or several negative experiences. Despite having a negative experience with an English teacher sophomore year of high school, I found it necessary to look on the bright side because having a negative attitude didn't benefit me in anyway when trying to complete a writing assignment. Instead of giving ideas as to how a concrete detail could be changed or supported more, Mrs. Glowacki would indirectly tell her students that their papers would need to be rewritten. Many students including myself, found ourselves having to restart an entire assignment due to a single part not showing an entire understanding of the prompt. It was as if there was only one way to address the prompt, which was her way. My frustration and feelings continued to build up against her because of the condescending manner in which she taught. I was too intimidated and discouraged by the words she had given to me as feedback to ask for further assistance. Holding a grudge against her only made matters worse and at that point I realized how important it was to let go of the negative experiences. Because I was not asking for additional assistance or advice, my writing did not develop as I had hoped it would. Regardless of my negative interactions with her in class, I finally built up the courage to speak with her about my writing. At first I felt uncomfortable meeting with her to discuss my writing because I feared her criticism. Despite her harsh feedback and advice, I found the instruction helpful for developing my concrete details and analysis. Even though she may have come across as a

harsh and difficult teacher to please, I realized that she was only trying to help me strengthen my writing and paper.

Even when those negative writing experiences do occur, it is easy to become discouraged and not have the desire to continue writing. I lost confidence in my writing due to the negative experience I had with my English teacher, Mrs. Glowacki. Every time a new paper or essay was assigned, I dreaded it knowing that my writing had several flaws. With the assistance of an influential individual, Mr. Horrigan, my senior English teacher, I was able to learn about new techniques and apply them in order to develop as a writer. The wide range of activities (i.e. quick writes, passage analysis, etc.) gave me the ability to build confidence and show a greater understanding in what I was trying to communicate or express depending on the assignment. Mr. Horrigan used quick writes and passage analysis assignments to check for our understanding of the text. Before turning these assignments in, we would go over possible analysis to make sure that the entire class was on the same page. Mr. Horrigan encouraged us to take the writing process step by step and practice techniques in order to become greater writers. Before starting our papers and essays, he would check to see that we were heading in the right direction. I'm glad that he spent the time to address any concerns that he had with our individual thesis statements. Starting with a clear thesis statement is important because we could write the remaining part of our essays, knowing that our ideas supported the prompt used. We do not become professional and perfect writers overnight, so we were reassured that learning how to write properly takes practice. Just as we learn differently, we all have different interests and levels of understanding. Therefore, we were given several prompts, in which we had the ability to express main ideas and answer in various ways. Because he understood the writing process and different interests, we were taught to learn from our mistakes and find the prompt that we felt was most natural to write about.

Without having the ability to write and effectively express our thoughts with those around myself, it was difficult to communicate or understand one another. At times it is easiest to become discouraged after having a negative writing experience, however it is important to understand that these experiences can lead to the development and growth as writers. As technology and social media are heavily relied upon in our everyday lives, it has become one of the most common forms of communication and shows us that additional uses do exist. From experience, I have found that holding onto a negative attitude or experience towards writing has not been beneficial, and it is assuring to know that positive experiences are possible in the future. Look towards the light for a spark of positivity, as there are many great uses to be had with writing.

An Appealing Advertisement

Some advertisements typically try to appeal to an individual's wants or needs on a given product that the company is trying to sell. These companies fail to attract their audience through advertisements because they do not understand the importance of rhetorical appeals. Additionally, rhetorical appeals are the most important attributes of a well-developed advertisement because it catches the consumer's eye and even the consumer's support for that given product. Often, companies formulate concise and yet effective ways to attract the audience that they try to appeal to. One particular advertisement that accomplishes the three rhetorical appeals and is well-known for their advertisements is the company, LEGOs. In fact, LEGOs are recognized by their brightly colored blocks and achieves recognition by advertising to the public through catchy and memorable ways. Successful companies like LEGOs persuade consumers to purchase their products by the use of the three rhetorical appeals —Logos, Pathos, and Ethos— in their advertisements.

The rhetorical appeal, Logos, is achieved clearly and effectively by LEGOs in their advertisements. In the advertisement, there is a suggested message of children being interested in building and creating with a variety of materials by themselves. Since, the ad implies that children are attracted to creating then it is only logical for the child to play with LEGOs like other toys or materials. The advertisement effectively focuses on children and how they are drawn to creating their own ideas through LEGOs. For instance, the logic behind this advertisement is that the children will tell their parents about the product and then the parents will agree by purchasing the product for the child. The parents will reason through the possibilities of purchasing the toy for the child, like giving the child something to interact with and engage his or her mind. The process of how the product is illustrated to its consumers is often related to how it will affect other individuals when purchasing the desired product. Additionally, the LEGO car having bright colors creates a focal point for the viewer. By

creating this focal point, it draws the attention to the product that the company is trying to promote. Not to mention, this is a common norm that companies try to invoke onto their consumers to purchase their products and even the process itself is logical when promoting a business. The advertisement provides an educational purpose to encourage children to have a creative mind. As a cultural assumption, parents convey to their children to be creative by coloring, building, creating etc. Logically, LEGOs has achieve their goal of appealing to children and their parents when creating an effective advertisement. Yet, their advertisement consists of two other appeals —Pathos and Ethos— that allows this company to thrive compared to their competitors.

Pathos— the Greek word— refers to the idea of emotion and LEGOs have a variety of emotional connections to their consumers. The advertisement has a boy stretching out his arms to reveal to the consumer that he created a car by using LEGO blocks. The idea of a young boy building something with his own two hands brings excitement and happiness. Specifically, the boy being able to build something by himself without the assistance of his parents is remarkable and emotional. Another illustration is the boy smiling without worrying about how he built the car but just the sole enjoyment of him doing it by himself. Emotionally, the parents would be happy for the boy and his accomplishment of creating a toy car. Also the centered text clarifies the viewpoint that his parents and parents, in general, will be proud of what their child will make. Though, the parents did not focus on how well the boy made the car but, it was the sheer enjoyment of him creating the car. As a matter of fact, the advertisement uses a variety of colors like yellow, white and red. The advertisement conveys to the consumer that these colors create comfort and happiness. Actually, LEGOs used these colors strategically in their advertisement to link emotions to their products. The boy stretching out his arms in the advertisement is also interesting in terms of emotions. His arms reaching out suggests to the consumer to purchase their own LEGO set to be as happy as the boy in the advertisement. In turn, this persuades us as adults to connect to our former

selves as children who played with various toys. Though Pathos focuses solely on emotional appeal, it is linked with trustworthiness —Ethos— of LEGO consumers.

Trustworthiness and or Ethos, is viable when trying to uphold a successful business like LEGOs. When viewing the advertisement firsthand, the consumer notices the brightly colored logo on the bottom right hand corner. Though this advertisement was printed around 1978, the name LEGO and their vibrant blocks are noticeable to the consumer. By acknowledging this, the consumer understands that the LEGO company is trustworthy in what they produce and offer to their consumers. The use of the boy and his parents —hinted in the text— offers another trustworthy source for LEGO's credibility. The boy revealing to the consumer that the product is reliable and durable, along with the parents' willingness to purchase the product. Furthermore, the LEGO car appears to be sturdy and withstand able like their product. For instance, the LEGO brick itself is seen as a stable object but offers many services to the person who chooses to use their imagination. Coherently, the three rhetorical appeals work as one unit when defining the successfulness of the LEGO Systems.

Today, the production of LEGOs has shown prevalence throughout the years since the published advertisement. LEGOs, the company had diverged from typical advertisements into being incorporated in different areas as its own entity. Places such as, Disney World, created areas for individuals to purchase LEGO related items. Also, LEGOs have grown popular to a point where they have their own theme park known as, LEGO Land. The franchise incorporates the three rhetorical appeals—Logos, Pathos, and Ethos—when trying to appeal to their consumers and it is still prevalent today. In order to become a successful and well-known business like LEGOs, then the best option is to use the three rhetorical appeals and to understand what the consumers want from that given product. The franchise encompasses success and prominence in our society and additionally, their brightly colored blocks will live on for centuries to come.

Works Cited

LEGO Systems. Parents' Magazine 1978: n. page. Print.

As We Write a Letter, a Word, we Are All Writers

“A child who writes her name for the first time, a father who records the birth of the baby in a journal...A lover who sends a valentine is a writer...A writer is anyone who uses written language to communicate a feeling, a fact, or an opinion” (Mangelsdorf and Posey, 1). Usually when an individual thinks of who is considered a writer, Shakespeare, John Milton, or other famous authors might come to mind. By reading Chapter 1, “The Writing Process”, in the book *Choices*, I realized that a writer is considered any individual who uses written words to communicate ideas. Therefore, that very moment was when I realized that I am considered a writer. In that case, I reflected on how my writing became a learning process from simply writing in a personal diary, to writing essays based on book analysis. Improvements of myself becoming a better writer began in high school, where I had great help from my AP English Literature teacher, Ms. Koo, who became the most influential person in my development as a writer when I had various struggles and felt discouraged as well as inadequate.

Before taking Ms. Koo’s class, in my childhood years I liked writing my feelings and thoughts in a diary. I considered it a way to express myself without opening up to anyone personally. Being that I was not at all a social person, I kept my feelings to myself. I would write what I did every day and how I felt about it, therefore, writing became my best friend. As I started high school, then that passion for writing turned to struggle as it became difficult with greater expectations. From freshman year through senior year, I encountered various difficulties when writing essays. Luckily until this day I have been able to improve on some of those difficulties. For example, when it came to writing, I struggled with simplistic vocabulary, structure, run-ons, misuse of punctuation, generalization, writing in both present and past tense, no analysis just summary, awkwardly wording sentences, and no transitions. Therefore, the feedback from my teachers helped me develop a valid understanding of the things that I needed to improve on in order to better my writing skills. Although I had help from a couple of my teachers, the

most influential person in my development of my writing, became my AP English Literature teacher Ms. Koo. Before enrolling in AP English Literature, I was assigned writing assignments that stated the author's opinion or point of view about an issue, and then more depth essays that required me to analyze difficult books. I started off by receiving C's on my essays, but my dedication showed that I began to improve on my writing and receiving A's. Afterwards, in AP English Literature, I began to write lengthy essays comparing and contrasting various novels, analyzing quotes while portraying the central theme, and answering thoroughly the essay prompts. The most critical feedback that I received from Ms. Koo was very helpful. For instance, as she gave me examples and explained to me specifically what I had to fix based on structure, vocabulary, and run-ons. I was then able to reflect and proofread my work. When she gave me feedback, she was direct, patient, but most importantly knowledgeable. In addition, I wasn't accustomed to brainstorming my ideas regarding the essay prompts before writing my essay; therefore, my ideas were at times unclear and out of order. As a result, I began to take my time and plan my essays without starting them last minute and indeed that showed great results while I received better grades.

Despite the hesitance that I had toward enrolling in AP English Literature, I gained a lot of confidence toward my writing due to the constructive feedback from Ms. Koo, which helped with improving my writing. My teacher influenced the way I think about myself now and my writing skills because now as I write I make sure I write clearly. I never considered myself a good writer because I struggled getting my thoughts on paper and using specific structures such as topic sentences followed by concrete details, etc. I would read my peers' essays which were organized and well written, that I began to feel incapable of being able to write in those ways. Their essays had great vocabulary words, provided in depth analysis, and they were able to answer the prompt fully and clearly.

Although I developed improvements in Ms. Koo's AP English Literature class, when it came to take the AP test, I felt discouraged and inadequate as I struggled getting through my essay prompts. When I was writing, I felt as if I was running out of time completely and I began to only think negative things such as "I am not going to pass". I felt confused, overwhelmed, frustrated, angry, disappointed and I had difficulties getting through the essay prompts. I felt stuck and I thought of myself as incompetent. I felt discouraged due to knowing how smart my peers were and how easily they were able to write. I would look around and notice that my peers were further ahead of me and some had finished early, but that actually gave me the motivation to try and not give up. After receiving my AP score and seeing that I did not pass, I definitely felt disappointed but also proud of myself for taking the class because of what I learned. I learned my weaknesses such as vocabulary, structure, clarity, and new fundamentals to help with my writing such as transitions, new vocabulary words, and brainstorming. I think of it now as a step forward toward my improvements. I might not have the greatest vocabulary but I have learned a lot of new words that I can use when writing. Sitting down with Ms. Koo and talking about my writing skills and her thoughts, helped me gain a confidence in myself that I did not believe I could have gained. Improvements do not just come immediately and it takes a lot of effort. I might not like to write as much as I love to play sports and dance, but I know I have to put in effort in order for me to keep improving. In addition, my readings skills helps with how I write and I tend to not read much; therefore, it will hinder me from expanding my vocabulary. Ms. Koo influenced the way I gave more importance into how I read, analyze, and write. I know that there are others out there that have natural skills but an individual has the abilities to grow the same way through time and practice.

Many individuals might have a broad definition of who is considered a writer. When I thought of a writer I generally thought of famous authors such as Shakespeare and Gary Soto. After reading *Choices* by Kate Mangelsfor and Evelyn Posey, I realized that I have been a writer all my life. Either

when we write in a journal, an email, text, or simply our names, we are considered writers. A writer is anyone that has the ability to communicate through the written language. When I used to write in a diary I had no specific structure until I got older and I had to write essays. My AP English Literature teacher has been the most influential person toward my development as a writer giving me confidence and skills to better my writing.

Wi-Fi Disconnected

Escaping to Mammoth gives you the opportunity to transition from smog to crisp air, from trees to pine green, and from a world that is consumed by social media to a place where you can find tranquility. Mammoth Lakes is a place where Wi-Fi being “unable to connect” is a good thing. It is a small town located in Mono County, just a short six-hour drive north of Los Angeles. One of the most popular attractions the small city has is Mammoth Mountain. Standing at approximately 11,000 feet, Mammoth Mountain is one of the tallest mountains in the state of California. Mammoth is a place where you can open your eyes to an endless sunset and close your eyes and breath in the scent of the surrounding pine trees. The city is quaint, charming, and addicting. Mammoth is a place deeply treasured by many because it gives you the chance to get away from traffic and the stress of life at the willingness to travel the road untraveled. Mammoth is the ultimate destination to visit all year around due to the endless activities you can do from snowboarding, to fishing and hiking. Being completely consumed in the beauty of nature is essential to enjoying Mammoth.

Once November rolls around, snowboarders get ready for the start of a new season. Their bags are quickly packed as they anticipate the first snowfall. Tourists across the country mark opening day on their calendars. Everyone waits for the chance to snowboard or ski in the deepest, lush powder and ride alongside Woolley, the mountain’s mascot. The snow in Mammoth is unlike anywhere else. As my family makes our first trip up the mountain, the streets change from black to white. The lines on streets disappear as the town becomes extremely slippery. Everyone races to the mountain to take the chair lift to the top which is like taking a personal escalator up to Woolly’s Heaven. As you sit on the lift, the snowflakes land on your jacket, and quickly melt away. The higher the lift takes you, the colder it gets. As you get closer to the top of the mountain the view unfolds around you in all directions. The entire mountain is covered in a thick blanket of white powder; it is breathtaking. Once I get off the lift I strap

my boot in and begin making my way down the mountain. I carve from side to side, dodging the pine trees and other boarders. Half way down the mountain, I catch an edge and lose my balance. Falling in midair, I was thinking, "this is going to hurt." But once I fell, it felt like I fell on my bed the snow was that soft. I finally make it down the mountain and repeat the process of going up the lift and boarding down until the mountain closes. At the end of a full day of snowboarding the best feeling is falling asleep next to a wood-burning fire with a cup of empty cocoa in hand. The next morning the balcony is filled with the product of the nights' storm. Eventually, the snow melts away as the weather becomes warmer.

As the weather changes, it is the same story, but a different season as everyone waits for opening day for fishing season. You know it is fishing season when the ice on the lakes melts and you can see the trees on the mountain. Fishing in Mammoth is a very relaxing way to get away from school and work and enjoy nature. The lakes are stocked with the most colorful rainbow trout just before the season starts. Leaving the condo, it is pitch black outside, but as you pull up to the lake you get to see the warm sunrise come over the mountains. The water in the lake is very cold due to the snow melting from the mountains. After setting all my fishing gear up, I wait patiently for that first bite. Meanwhile, you get the lay back and soak up the breathtaking scenery of sky scraping mountains and thousands of trees. Before I know it, my pole dives down towards the water meaning I hooked a trout. As I am reeling in my fish I can feel that it is a pretty good size. Someone else is waiting anxiously to net the fish and get it into the boat. The fish is flopping on the floor of the boat as the sun highlights its rainbow colors. The scales are so shiny and vibrant it is almost blinding. Boil after boil, fish after fish; you can continue to catch trout all morning. The peak time to catch fish is early in the morning; once the cold morning air disappears, it is time to move on to another activity Mammoth has to offer.

Mammoth is known for its hiking trails and Mammoth Falls. Mammoth has endless amounts of recreation you can travel. Many people hike many miles to see the magnificent Pacific Crest Trail, Devils Postpile National Monument and lots more. As you hike up the mountain, you look up and see how far you really have to go. You get to soak in the refreshing surroundings and enjoy the fresh, yet dense air. As you breathe in your lungs can feel the difference between being in Mammoth versus back in the city. Hiking near waterfalls is soothing as you get to listen to water and feel the cool breeze. You also get the benefit of burning a few calories as the air in Mammoth a little thinner than in Los Angeles. When you hike in Mammoth you are using your legs, core, and back. But you do not realize you are working out until the next day when you are sore. Altogether, hiking in Mammoth gives you the perfect opportunity to turn off your cell phone and only listen to the sound of nature. You get the chance to escape your daily routine and stress.

Going to Mammoth definitely has its price tag, from the cost of gas to the lift tickets. Each lift ticket is nearly one hundred dollars per day, which is nearly double the cost of a lift ticket at Bear Mountain. The drive to Big Bear is fairly short, only being about an hour and a half away. But with Mammoth being nearly 5,000 feet higher in elevation than Bear Mountain, the snow is as soft and as white as a marshmallow. Even though your pockets need to be deeper to go to Mammoth, you get what you pay for.

Mammoth lends itself to endless opportunities to experience the outdoors and take full advantage of the postcard scenery the city has to offer. For being only six hours away, you cannot beat what Mammoth has to offer. If you want to fully immerse yourself in the city's presence, you should be willing to ditch an agenda and go wherever nature takes you. Mammoth will allow you to have the time of your life.

Down by The River

Do you have that one place in your hometown that you could not imagine growing up without it? I grew up in beautiful Ormond Beach, Florida and the Halifax River is something I could not imagine growing up without because of its location, its diversity in things you are able to do, and the places it leads to. I've always been a big water person, and growing up my family went on several vacations to many places, but there always had to be some sort of water nearby. Out of all the places we've gone to nothing has compared. So being a person that loves all things to do with water I was fortunate enough to grow up with a beach and a river. However, you don't have to be a water person to enjoy the Halifax River's unique location. The river brings people from all over town together whether it's for a holiday, town event, or even just on the weekends for fun.

The river is located right in the middle of town and separates the "mainland" from the beachside. To go back and forth from each side, there is a bridge called the Granada Bridge, and it is an indicator that you are at the river. One of my favorite parts about the location is that you can watch the sunrise and sunset on the water because in the morning you can sit on the mainland side and watch the sunrise if you're not up to watching the sunrise on the beach and in the evening sit on the beachside of the river at one of the parks and watch the set. Its location also gives business owners the opportunity to open up businesses that attract to the crowd such as baits shops, water sport equipment rentals, and little boutiques. Since the location is very outdoorsy, there are several parks that lie on the outskirts of the river that give many people the opportunity to just enjoy the essence of the river. Since the river runs along John Anderson and Beach Street on each side of the bridge you can experience either the beach or river or just the river and you don't even have to get out of your car. Sometime it is nice just to drive down either road on either sides of the river with

your windows down and music blasting and enjoy the river from your own car, but the car isn't the only way to explore the river.

The possibilities are endless when it comes to the river, and there is something to do for almost everyone. Kids growing up so close to the river means that many will play hooky and go fishing all day on the boats with their dads. Along with fishing during throughout the year, the weekends and breaks during school is when the river is usually packed. Saturday is when the river is filled with boats, jet skis, and kayaks. Other than fishing there are several other water sports that go on, on the river such as wakeboarding, waterskiing, tubing, and skurfing that have to do with a watercraft. While wake wakeboarding or tubing down the river there is a great view of both sides of the midland and the beachside until there is a wipe out then the view under water is almost just as great. If a boat isn't assessable that's always okay too because without a boat paddle boarding, canoeing, walking under the bridge along the pathway that lies over the water, and jet skiing is just as nice to do as well. During a nice walk under the bridge there are lights and artwork to be seen from local artist. If physical activity doesn't sound enlightening the river is still the place to be because just a nice cruise on the river is always nice or a walk down the river through the parks are enlightening if you aren't up to being on the river, but near it. Along with a nice little ride or walk animal watching is always an option, because there are always manatees, dolphins and even alligators to be seen with friends and family or even some nice alone time.

The Halifax River is also a great place to get together with people because it is surrounded by such a large are of land. There are several bridges that connect the mainland to the beachside that while on a boat going down the river heading to a spot to hang out or to be picked up at either friends' houses or even at a boat ramp or dock. The convenience of all the locations to be picked up at come in handy when friends live far, but are on the way to the location you are heading to on the

boat. Along with the convenient places to pick up friends there are also restaurants along the river where you can tie up your boat and hop off and have some lunch or dinner. Many of the restaurants on the river are filled with locals and serve fresh fish right from the river. Since the river is so large and goes along the east coast the river doesn't just hit Ormond Beach, but it also hits around 4 other cities and there are about 6 bridges.

Growing up I never thought of the river as being this amazing place to hang out because it was always there, but moving 3,000 miles away from it made me realize that its location was great, and all the endless activities you are able to enjoy on it, and all the places it leads to. I was lucky enough to grow up with a place to go with my friends and family and not have your average beach day because we were able to have beach days and river days, the best of both worlds. As I grow older I appreciate this place a little more everyday especially because I am unable to enjoy all that it offers whenever I want like when I was growing up and when I have children of my own I want to make sure that they are able to have a place like the river to have to make endless amount of memories at.

In the end the river is a great place to hang out, site see, and is a great little staycation location. Depending on the person and what one likes to do there is a little bit of something to do for everyone from being very active to having a nice relaxing day reading a book near or on the river, but the essence of the river is a wonderful place to be for all ages.

CSUF's WiFi

Internet access is essential in our modern society. Whether college students like it or not, they have to rely on the Internet on a daily basis because that is how they communicate with their professors. Students are expected to check their emails and submit homework assignments in order to do well in their classes. Professors will post their assignments online, share announcements, or contact the students through email. However, it is difficult to complete electronic tasks when the school's internet is unreliable. Ask any student or staff member at California State University of Fullerton (CSUF) if they have ever struggled with connecting to the school's WIFI; they will answer "yes". None the less, the fees of the school's WIFI is part of our tuition, it is only fair that students receive a reliable internet connection to succeed in college.

The issue with the internet has been going on since at least the beginning of this school year. This is not an issue that should concern students, because the school advertises that it will provide high speed internet. College students value their education, therefore when students have to deal with their classes, jobs, clubs, sports, homework, or any other commitments, they do not have time to "wait" for the internet to work, or to be constantly checking if the internet is back. For example, if a student is unable to submit essay on time, it may be due to the fact that the internet stopped working or it is way too slow to upload files; the professor will not care or even consider taking it as an excuse. Professors expect it to be the student's responsibility to submit their essays but a lot of the time it is out of the student's control.

Furthermore, the situation for residential students is much more complicated. Students living on campus have no choice but to live with the school's WIFI. Occasionally, they have to go days without internet connection. On a daily basis, the internet will disconnect due to the high volumes of users. This affects the connection from 3-11pm, these are crucial hours to be working and submitting homework.

On the other hand, a reason to why the internet might be crashing is due to the fact that students stream videos from Netflix, or play video games that require a lot of bandwidth. At the same time, the students cannot be blamed for that; they live on campus and it is their right to use the internet for personal reasons. Residential students already pay for overpriced housing, this campus is not only their school, but at the same time their home. Students are not being provided everything the school promised to provide. In the main housing website, it clearly states that high speed WIFI will be provided along with all the other essential utilities. Students are already paying for their housing and tuition. It is not complicated for the school to follow their own agreements.

Admittedly, demographically speaking there are 38,000 students at CSUF, and with all of them trying to have a smooth internet connection can be overwhelming to the system. Moreover, there are four floors in the library with rows and rows of running computers. Sadly, most of the time when passing by all the occupied computers at the library most of the people using the computers are watching YouTube videos. Places like the library are known as a resource for students to study successfully; in reality, the library is probably the most unreliable place to access the internet. Surprisingly, places like the school's Recreational Center have the best WIFI. The gym is not exactly the ideal place to write essays, but sometimes students have no choice. If all students only used the internet for educational purposes, there might be a chance that the internet would not fail as much.

However, it appears as if the school does not make the WIFI a priority. Students and faculty complain about the internet on a regular basis, yet the school seems to ignore it. A solution would be creating more networks. Currently the school provides 3 different networks available for students; CSUF- Titans which is for residential students, Students-Secure which is for all students in general, and CSUF- Guest which is for visitors. When one of the other networks stops working, then all the other networks follow.

Therefore, if each building at this school provided their own network, there would be less issues concerning the internet. Students would not have to stress out about internet shortage and the internet would run faster. However, creating connections for each building would not be an easy task. As well, the tuition would be raised, which is definitively something students would not appreciate. Although, there are also resources the school could sacrifice, for instance, ASI's fees are included on our tuition. ASI takes advantage of the money, and most of the time a very small amount of people go to their events. Instead of charging \$70 for ASI, it would be possible for ASI to cut back and with the remaining money the school could use it towards the WIFI. Another example is the remodeling of the TSU, even though it is in good standing. Instead of the students' tuition being invested for things that actually need more attention, the school is providing money to minor things.

Overall, the school's WIFI can be improved, and it should be the school's priority to improve it because everyone at this school depends on it. Students stress out about how they will submit their work while managing their other priorities. The situation residential students go through is much worst. Although, the school's demographics are overwhelming, there are ways to afford better internet. It might be difficult to control the internet, but it is a serious issue that needs obvious attention.

Instagram and Self-Esteem: Double Tap This

Entering Instagram, we are swarmed with photos of beautiful people, heart melting relationships, and friends taking part in thrilling activities. We scroll down our newsfeed to find friends adventuring through the night. Another posts their great sense of style, followed by a seemingly flawless face. All this is experienced while we are sprawled across a couch. Staggering statistics show depletion in the self-esteem and healthy mindset of a college student with increased use of Instagram. A study on self-esteem and anxiety conducted by University of Salford found 50% of their 298 participants claimed, “use of social networks like Instagram makes their lives worse.” (Soltero and Kierce)

Instagram creates a virtual world where users are prone to sharing their exhilarating life events. Through the exposure of other lives, college students compare these high-energy worlds to their own, followed by a fear of missing out and the constant pressure to be perfect. Additionally, Instagram gives bullies an environment to do their work with ease. As long as use of Instagram persists, college students will continue to be susceptible to a drop in their quality of life.

Despite the constant anxiety and pressure to live up to the idea of what people want to see, why does the use of Instagram continue? To begin, there is the idea of conforming. If all surrounding friends were active on Instagram, a college student would be more prone to creating an account as well. Instagram has grown to be incredibly prevalent around college students. Without partaking in the latest trend, a college student often feels left out and not as cool or important as those who do.

Along with increasing the number of users through peer pressure, Instagram contains a variety of enthralling features. This social media network consists of a very simple layout with key features making daily use a breeze. Upon opening the app, we are taken to the main newsfeed, viewed by an effortless scrolling action. “Liking” a photo is made as simple as a double-tap on the screen. The popular page, a collection of various photos receiving a high amount of likes and attention, is also presented as

an option. Instagram is filtered down to 5 main tabs: newsfeed, popular page, camera, notifications, and your own profile. Instagram gives college students exactly what they desire, the ability to keep up with friends with minimal complexity. College students greatly enjoy the features of Instagram. With its effortless layout, daily use of Instagram has grown to be addictive. The constant intriguing posts of friends' lives keep students hooked. Instagram is an excellent source to consume leisure time.

With continuous scrolls down a newsfeed, a college student encounters seemingly endless posts of friends with fun-filled lives. Instagram is an exceptional source to effortlessly keep up with friends. It creates a virtual world to pool friends' latest updates in one area. Through the constant view into another's stimulating world, many experience a fear of missing out. This exposure into the lives of others leads college students to believe their life is dull when compared to those on their newsfeed. Instagram users tend to post only the intriguing aspects of their life. This specific use leads a profile to present a heightened version of the individual. A profile solely containing the exciting activities in one's life, along with several good looking photos of themselves and some delectable meals. Instagram provides us with an outlook of another's experiences through rose-colored glasses.

This heightened experience of another individual's lifestyle is often viewed at the wrong moment. For example, a college student decides to take a Friday night in. The student opens the Instagram app while relaxing on a sofa to find a close friend is going out to a fair with plenty of friends. The outlook of said activity presents itself to be far more admirable as the student lies at home.

Following the fear of missing out, college students form a desire to enhance their lives in a way to intrigue their friends. They are left with a fear they will become a dull person with nothing to share. As stated by Katlyn Tolly (2014) students have a constant pressure to portray themselves as "living it up" in college. Students begin to build their online profile attempting to share any stimulating photo of themselves they own. They strive to live up to the expectations they set of a "good life."

Along with life events, friends share good-looking photos of themselves providing college students with more to compare to. This leaves them unsatisfied with their physical appearance in addition to lifestyle. Users tend to ignore a strong underlying aspect in the beauty presented through an Instagram photo. Smart phones are well known to include easy access to endless photo editing tools to enhance the look of a photo along with the person within. Photo editing tools range from the choice of a filter, to blemish remover and teeth whitener. With prolonged exposure to this technology, users have mastered the techniques needed to present themselves to be far more appealing. Although, the thought of these beauty enhancers is ignored when we are looking at a friend's latest "selfie." College students admit to wishing they looked different, or like someone else, when gazing at these photos. These enhanced photos and quality of life encounters a never-ending pressure to be perfect. An Instagram profile is demanded to be the highest possible representation of the individual.

Improving the presentation of a lifestyle does not solely fulfill college students. A form of reassurance and acceptance from others is needed. College students claim to determine self-worth through the amount of "likes" received on a post. Tolly explains, those more active on Instagram agree that the number of "likes" is highly valued. "I know people that if they post a status and get no likes, they will delete it," said Merlyn Thomas, 18, Columbia College Chicago student. "I think it's because they want people to be interested in them, because if they look interesting to other people maybe they'll look interesting to you." This form of fulfillment leads to the spread of anxiety and stress amongst college students.

Building up on the anxiety and stress over "likes", Instagram is many times correlated with depression. Jaime Perez in *The Sundial* claims research finds a correlation with time spent on social media and depression. The greatest impact this social network leaves on self-esteem is through the act of bullying. Students find it far easier to voice their true opinions of an individual behind the safety of a

keyboard rather than in person. It is not unusual to find bullying and hate through the comments of an Instagram post. In addition, others are more likely to join in on an act another has started as it captivates more users. With continuous hate comments, the original poster feels ganged up on. Such bullying acts towards college students often lead to depression and depletion in self-worth.

It is unfortunate that these students allow themselves to form absurd guidelines to define self-worth. Along with its beneficial component of keeping up with friends, Instagram creates a dramatic impact of self-esteem that often goes unseen. The next time you scroll through your Instagram newsfeed, free your mind of any toxic comparisons. Only you can define your own self-worth.

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Calla Lilies

Calla Lilies, my grandmother's favorite flower. My fondest memory of her is when she would water her garden filled with Calla Lilies. What a wonderful, patient, kind, loving, caring, yet sad woman she was. My grandfather died from lung cancer many decades earlier, leaving her with fourteen children, very little money, and worse of all, a broken heart. She must have loved him dearly because she never spoke of him. She had everyone's picture framed in her living room, except for one, my grandfather's. At our family reunions, when everyone gathered around in a giant circle to reminisce, it was obvious that she avoided every story, question, and comment mentioned about my grandfather. Being that my grandfather died when my father was two years old, it was so frustrating to get my grandmother to say anything about him. She would simply say that I was too young to understand. Despite the fact that I have an enormous family, till this day I have yet to hear anything about him.

I remember waking up every Sunday morning eager to visit my grandmother. She lived only an hour away, but as a child, the drive to her house felt like an eternity. It was no surprise that she'd have delicious food on the table awaiting our arrival. Her home always felt warm and welcoming. It was the biggest reason as to why family visits and reunions were always held there and highly anticipated. I remember her constantly making sure that we had everything we needed and were as comfortable as possible. It was almost impossible to go on through the day without her constant, "If you need anything, just ask Nana." Once she was convinced we had received more than everything we needed, she would excuse herself and walk outside. Everyone understood why she would leave, for one reason, and one reason only, to water her precious garden. Her beloved garden filled with beautiful Calla Lilies. I remember running after her eager to help. She'd simply take my hand, and we would walk together to the backyard. As a child, I was amazed to watch how much she'd care for a simple, odd-looking flower.

I began to notice, that every time I would visit, she would have a new flower blooming marvelously in her garden.

As I grew older, I found myself making excuses not to visit my grandmother. There are a hundred and sixty-eight hours in a week, and even then, I couldn't dedicate just a couple of hours to her. Most times I would rather go out with my friends and think, "I'll go tomorrow" or "I'll visit next week." Well sadly, *every Sunday* visits became *once a month* visits. I grew *too busy* for grandma. Although, I had a gut feeling that constantly pushed me to visit, I grew stubborn each time, and honestly, I did not know why. I simply ignored the guilt, and just moved on with my day. I never thought my actions affected my grandmother, but they did, extremely. She knew I prioritized many other things before I decided to actually visit her. My mother tried convincing her that I was "at that age" but my grandmother was stubborn too. She was convinced that something was wrong, and that whatever it was she wanted to talk and just get beyond it because she missed her granddaughter eager to help water her lovely Calla Lilies. It was something so simple to me, yet so meaningful to her. It was as if she would care for these flowers as much as she constantly cared for her family. She dedicated a majority of her time to this garden. Unfortunately, that same year, she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

I forgot about my weekly trips to grandma's house, as it slowly became a challenge for her to remember my name. Even then, I was still *too busy* to make the time to go visit her. I never thought Alzheimer's disease would affect her life so drastically. Late Christmas Eve I remember thinking, "Tomorrow for Christmas, I'll surprise grandma with a visit!" After all, she always said the best gift in the world was a simple hug and kiss from her grandchildren. That cold, late, Saturday night, I remember getting an urgent call from my aunt telling my dad that my grandma was in the hospital severely ill. I clearly remember everyone gathering their things and rushing to the hospital. The drive was long and dreadful. We had just exited the freeway when we received another call from my aunt. I felt relieved

when my mom said my aunt's name. My mind automatically believed that she was calling to say my grandmother was completely fine and that she'd be home in the next day for Christmas, but that wasn't the case. I did not want to accept the reality of my grandma. My mother's face turned pale, and her eyes filled up with tears as she turned to look at me. My aunt called to say it was too late. My grandmother died a couple minutes before we arrived to the hospital. That instant, my stomach dropped. I was in shock. I couldn't believe how fast everything happened. It took me just a couple seconds to realize all those months I wasted on prioritizing unimportant things, when I could have been right at her side helping her get through whatever she needed. I had the opportunity to get to know my grandmother and maybe now that I was older, we could have gotten in depth with what happened with grandfather, but I took it for granted and now, it was too late.

Till this day, one of my biggest regrets in life is not visiting my Grandmother as often as I once did and, taking for granted the precious time I had with her. She worried constantly about other people and other things, and I never appreciated it. I never thought to ask her what she might have needed, what she might have wanted. Who knew she would be gone so fast? Who knew that in an instant everything could change? With this experience, I have learned to think twice about decisions and prioritize what matters most to me. Looking back now, I realize that I should have spent more time with her when I had the opportunity to. I never had the chance to say goodbye or apologize for my ignorance, and although I wish I could go back in time and change the course of events, I know that one day my grandma and I will reunite. She will welcome me with open arms and take my hand as we walk through her beautiful garden once again. I know this because that was just the kind of woman she was: pure, calming, and above all else, beautiful. Just like Calla Lilies.

The Sequel of Success

There have been many movies that can rarely say they have had successful sequels. Sequels do not always have a big impact on an audience as the original movie did. Breckin Meyer, an actor and producer states that, "With a sequel you're always trying to get bigger and better." Toy Story 2 is a perfect example of how well this idea was portrayed. Toy Story is about toys that come to life whenever their owner Andy Davis is not around. The movie follows the story of a cowboy, named Woody, who feels threatened by a Space Ranger, named Buzz Lightyear, of being replaced as one of Andy's favorite toys. In Toy Story 2, Woody is stolen by a toy collector at a yard sale and so Buzz and his friends go on a journey to find Woody. All while Woody has an internal conflict of whether or not he wants to be just someone's toy or a showcase. Both films are animated and adventurous stories that follow themes and characters everyone fell in love with. In Toy Story 2, however there is so much more added to the story line, with not only improvement in the conflict that arises, but action that appears more. Although Toy Story was a great start for a movie, Toy Story 2 was better because it had more variety within the plot, character development, and setting.

As oppose to Toy Story, in Toy Story 2 we see the plot fully develop more than the original movie. However, the plot not only developed, but became more complex. In Toy Story we get a glimpse all of the characters involved, but the storyline itself followed the two main characters, Woody and Buzz. The story focuses on Andy receiving a new toy which makes Woody and the other toys afraid of being replaced. Buzz Lightyear the new toy, and Woody do not get along. Buzz struggles to figure out if he is a real space Ranger. In Toy Story 2 Woody is stolen by Al, a toy collector, at a yard sale. Al is satisfied with finding the missing piece to his Woody's Roundup collection. Along the way, Woody realizes he is the main attraction to a children's show and loves the attention he gets, especially from the new characters involved. Not only is there conflict with Woody, there is a conflict with Buzz. As Buzz

and his friends look for Woody, they search a toy store. Buzz finds out that his "enemy" Emperor Zurg is his father. The story continues to the rescue of Woody, but Woody turns his back on his friends. He realizes he wants to be a collector's toy. Buzz tries to convince Woody of who he really is. The internal and external conflicts of this movie went more in depth with not only new characters, but a variety of different situations rather than a couple.

Not only was the plot of Toy Story 2 better, but the character development of this movie surpassed Toy Story. In Toy Story the characters Woody and Buzz were a majority of the main focus. In Toy Story 2 however, we were introduced to new characters and to more background information with Woody and Buzz. The movie shows that the two characters were not just the main focus of the second, but other characters such as Jessie, Bullseye, and The Prospector, Stinky Pete were to. We first see Woody struggle with the idea of whether or not he wanted to be a toy or be a main attraction. There is a segment in the movie that shows Woody's Roundup, a show for children. Woody realizes he is more than just a toy and that he will not have to ever worry about being forgotten. As the story continues he has help from Buzz to realize he is Andy's toy and that he would not want to give up the friendships he has made. In this movie we see the conflicts play out with Woody's character developing into who he truly wants to be. The new characters Jessie, Bullseye, and the Prospector all struggle with the same idea of feeling abandoned by their owners. In the movie Jessie is so set and stone on being afraid because of this idea of abandonment. She looks at Woody and cannot help but think the same thing will happen to him. That is why Woody starts to overlook his situation apart from wanting to be a main attraction. Jessie learns however, not to be afraid. The characters developed a lot more in this film because of the inside look we had with being able to see who and what they really were.

As seen in character development and the plot differences, there is variety in the setting. In both films the settings have occurred in Andy's house, but in the first movie we see a few more locations

involved. However, in Toy Story 2 we see the story travel to a more different places. We not only get to see Andy's house, but Al's apartment. Al the collector takes Woody to his place where he keeps Jessie and the others. This is also where Woody is confronted by Buzz and his friends towards the end of the movie. One other setting that is presented in the film is Al's toy barn. In the beginning of the movie, we see Buzz and the other characters go looking for Woody at this Toy barn. As the audience we got a glimpse into the conflict that arises in the toy barn with Buzz and Emperor Zurg. There is also the airport in the final scene, where Woody and his friends battle against the Prospector. With the better graphics and CGI effects that occurred with the time gap in both films, audiences had the experience of seeing flashbacks of both Woody's and Jessie's life. Both took place over different locations and the scenery was more visual in this movie.

Even though some audiences would argue that the theme in Toy Story was better than the second, the theme of Toy Story was a strong start. The theme was that, assuming something of someone you may not know can only lead to resentment, however it could be turned around when a friendship develops. This theme is big for audiences of all ages, because many people struggle with feelings similar to how Woody felt when he thought he was being replaced by someone he did not know. The theme was only furthered in Toy Story 2. As seen in the first film a friendship forms as acceptance appears, but in Toy Story 2 we see a bit more about friendship and this idea of never second guessing yourself. This is a great theme that many can relate to as we see it play out in the film. When Woody realizes he could be a collector's item rather than just a toy he is excited by the idea, but soon realizes that is not who he wants to be. The moral of the story shows that a person should never second guess who they are. That friendship is worth so much more than not being surrounded by people who care about them every day. In the first film we see how Buzz tries to find who he is, while Woody goes to help him figure that out. In Toy Story 2 the same concept appears when Woody gets stolen and Buzz tries to help Woody come

back. The second movie goes more into depth with its theme and furthers the idea from the first, making it a better movie. Overall, the theme was better in Toy Story 2 with more for audiences to relate to.

To get to follow different locations, see how each character worked through any conflict they may have had, and the more diverse story line made the sequel better and successful. A quote by The Hollywood Reporter states, "Toy Story 2 does what few sequels ever do...Instead of essentially remaking an earlier film and deeming it a sequel, the creative team, led by director John Lasseter, delves deeper into their characters while retaining the fun spirit of the original film." A sequel is very hard to make without it being a total failure, especially with having to live up to the expectations of the original film. Being able to expand on more locations throughout the film and to have it tie together was well represented. As characters grew and learned more about themselves, so did the friendships. In this film we see a consistent story line that feeds off of the original movie. All of these points and more are what made Toy Story 2 a well-known success. It worked to not disappoint the Toy Story franchise, but rather build it up. This Animated/Action film left all people of ages feeling like they could relate to the movie. They would most defiantly be entertained after watching the conflict unravel and see how it was resolved. Toy Story 2 will forever be one of the best sequels to be made.

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Writing Journey

Some people enjoy writing and take excitement in putting their thoughts onto paper, but others see writing as stressful and frustrating. I was one of the few that struggled to find an interest in writing until I gained more experience in elementary school. My elementary school experience was the changing point in the way I viewed writing, it helped me keep the motivation I needed to get past the even harder assignments throughout high school. Once I entered high school I finally had the chance to truly test my writing skills.

One of the first important writing assignments I completed was in the 3rd grade, when I was forced to enter a school writing contest. We were able to write any kind of essay we wanted, so I chose to tell a story of my life. It included each member of my family and the family events and trips we took. However, I hated sharing my writing with others because I did not believe my writing had any potential. So I was taken by surprise when I was announced the winner of the contest. Soon after the contest, my essay was published into a book that remains at my elementary school. From this experience I finally gained confidence in my own writing and decided to pursue writing as a hobby. I continued to keep this hobby all the way until high school, where I had the chance to explore new writing opportunities.

In high school I decided to enter a speech contest for a scholarship. It was for The Rotary Foundation, an organization that focuses on giving back to the community and funds different charities. The scholarship did not have a specific topic I to write about, instead it consisted of a four-way test. The topic I could be anything in general but had to answer four questions. Though having an open topic seemed exciting at first, this made it difficult to write about because there was no direct guide to follow. The questions focused on concepts such as truth, fairness, goodwill and why it is beneficial for others to become aware on our topic. I chose to write about the importance of informing people about bullying. The essay was very important to me because I had the opportunity put my own personal experiences in

the speech. Having first-hand experience with my topic helped my speech sound more convincing and persuasive. The speech came easier to me than other writing assignments because I had more information and many arguments to build. Although the writing portion of this assignment was fairly easy the speech itself was harder to accomplish. This speech was an important writing event in my life because it was more than just writing a speech but also informing people about a serious topic.

Another important writing event that took place in my life is my college personal statements. These assignments brought more stress on me than usual because it was very important that it was done right. The essays were big opportunities to prove I was the right person for a university and could succeed there. Writing the essays made me nervous because it was a big part of my application. It took a lot of drafts and different versions of the essays until it worked well. Even after I made revisions I shared my work with different people so I could gather more feedback and continue to edit it. I did ultimately like writing most of the essays because it was my experiences and stories. I had the chance to show how certain obstacles and events in my life made me the person I am and how it shaped my aspirations. After this writing event I knew I could take on any other challenging assignments that came my way.

One recent writing event I completed was my senior project for my AP English class. The project was a true test of everything I learned from the class. I had to take multiple writing concepts and apply them in our project. This project was different from everything else I had written in the past because it involved using literary analysis, a new idea I had not fully mastered at the time. I choose three books I read throughout the school year and had to compare and contrast them. I also had to find other people's analysis of them and use them to back up our topics and ideas. It took a lot of work to go through many pages of other people's work to find the ones that fit just right with what I was writing about. This project was one of the most stressful papers I have ever written because it took a lot of hours

of dedicated work and research. The paper went through countless revisions and because it consisted of many parts, it took a long time to make all the ideas flow together in the right order. It was definitely a huge challenge to accomplish but was some of the best writing I have done.

Writing essays in high school inspired me to start creative writing, so I set time aside to keep personal journals. I have found much excitement in writing stories, poems and prompts. I enjoy freewriting and being able to create my own world through my writing. This writing comes easier to me and does not stress me out like big writing assignments. Freewriting is not as difficult because it does not need to be perfect and I do not need to know everything about my topic. My writing process is faster because I do not need a lot of time to plan and organize. I like to challenge myself as a writer and take on new projects other than just freewriting.

All of my writing experiences from elementary school to now, have given me more confidence in myself as a writer. I do not stress as much when taking on bigger assignments because I am constantly reminding myself of all the tough writing challenges I have already accomplished. My first important experience opened a doorway that allowed me to explore bigger writing opportunities. But confidence is not the only aspect I took from my experiences, it also taught me to not dismiss any new opportunities or ones I do not like, until I have discovered my full abilities within them.