

One of the first things people will say about me is that I talk a lot. Ever since I was little it seemed I always had something to say, which when you're little is both endearing and annoying. As you grow up though, it gets harder, harder to say what you want to say, harder to find the time to say it, and harder to find people who will listen. I'm a person with a lot in my head, thoughts, ideas, dreams, and an overactive imagination. I talked a lot because there was too much sitting and swirling endlessly in my head and it needed somewhere to go. I wasn't someone who was able to put down those thoughts neatly onto paper, but that didn't change the fact that I loved words. So instead I fell in love with reading. I loved how someone could take a single line and make you feel a thousand different emotions. It could bring back a long-forgotten memory, or remind you of a person in your life. Books can make you smile and cry. They can help you escape even for just a moment.

I fell in love with books at a very young age. They were something I just gravitated to whether it was a fictional story or learning about another time or place, I loved it all. Listening to someone else's stories, thoughts and feelings helped quiet the chaos in my head. It gave me something else to focus on and in a way helped me organize my thoughts. Not only that but opening a book and seeing someone's imagination sprawled across a page was inspiring. Out there somewhere in the world was someone whose mind was filled with these beautiful ideas and they were able to share it with the world on the pages of their book. This was something I gravitated towards and knew that I wanted to make people feel things like that and create beauty but art was the way for me, not writing.

Through my art, I was able to tell stories and express my thoughts in a way that fit me. Art has room for chaos but also times for precision and focus that really helped shape me as a person. I wanted to make art that made people feel things and reminded them of happy memories. Art became my passion and something I knew I wanted to pursue in life. It was something that made me happy and allowed me to make other people happy too.

Books were where I fell to when I was stuck or hit a block with a piece. They served as an infinite source of inspiration. There's a quote from Theodore Roosevelt I go back to a lot and even named a piece after, "I am a part of everything I have read." This couldn't be more true for me. So many parts of me are inspired by stories and characters I related to and so many of my art pieces reflected stories that inspired me.

When I got to high school, my life became incredibly overwhelming trying to manage all the things I loved. Between art projects for my portfolio, school, year-round color guard, and working backstage on the drama productions I had very little free time. Times to sit down and read became few and far between. Then the pandemic hit and everything that kept me busy disappeared overnight.

I was really lost for the first few months. I didn't know how to spend my time and my motivation came and went. Some days I would work on a project for 6 hours straight and then a month would go by where I couldn't bring myself to work on anything. I struggled a lot with the isolation, the distance, and the inability to be social. I became a lot more introverted and only talked to a few close friends and grew apart from the rest. A few months into it I fell back into books and it changed my whole experience. I was able to go back to what I loved so much as a kid. I found myself revisiting old books and finding new ones. Reading became a way to escape all the stress and anxiety I had. Reading came back into my life when I needed it most and became a bright spot in what seemed like the endless dark of the pandemic. My days were

spent curled up with books in my room or outside in the sun and before I knew it, my room pretty much turned into a library with no shelf space left and books stacked on every possible surface.

Then 2021 came, I had a new outlook on life after reading the challenges that were overcome in every book and being reminded of the strength inside all of us. I started writing down little things. Every day my goal was to write one good thing from the day so that when I looked back on the year I'd be able to see all the good things that came out of the year and not just the bad. Words carried me through one of the hardest years of my life. For the first time in my life, I found beauty not only in the words of others but in my own too.

In the fall I'll be furthering my passion for art at the Rochester Institute of Technology studying art and design. I'd love someday to work in publishing or film and continuing to share my art and love of stories with the world. Drew seemed like a dreamer who was truly passionate about everything he did and it would be an honor to be considered for this scholarship that is in memory of such an incredible person.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
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