

Writing is an art form that affects every single human on the earth in different ways. The power that a good novel has is something so unique and special. *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins, *Looking for Alaska* by John Green, and *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner are all fantastic novels that transformed me to a new place, captivating me in so many ways. These three books have one single thing in common: they came from a good writer.

Growing up I loved reading, and would spend hours in the library picking out the perfect books. Books were able to take me to a place where I felt safe, comfortable, and accepted, because in reality, those three words did not resonate with me. I have four sisters and no brothers, so as you can imagine growing up trying to fit the stereotypical boy type was a challenge. My guy classmates would talk about all of the sports books they were reading and there I was sitting and listening, trying to interact even though I just finished reading another of the *Rainbow Magic* series. I was unsure as to why I gravitated towards these books; I just did and truthfully, I didn't care. Reading these books about two girls who met fairies and stopped Jack Frost made me so happy, so I kept reading them despite feeling left out.

As I continued to get older, my parents did what any parent would do, and tried to put me into sports. I tried everything: basketball, baseball, soccer, football, lacrosse, and cross country. I could go into detail about every single sport and what happened but I think you get the idea: sports were not for me. While I loved physical activity and being surrounded by other kids with a common hobby, I always found myself longing to pick up a good book and find my happy place: reading.

By the time middle school came around, I started to struggle a lot with depression and anxiety. Those books that I used to use as a coping mechanism for an escape no longer worked. I'd officially outgrown the one thing that kept me safe. I'd never felt so alone in my life, it felt like nobody understood me, and nobody would listen to me. That is until I discovered the art form of journaling. Writing allowed me to express myself in ways nobody else will ever be able to understand. I would write about my days, (the good, the bad, and the ugly), write letters to friends, teachers, even my future self. I easily spent hours on end writing out my feelings and just letting go of all of the inner emotions I'd been holding in for a long time. This helped me tremendously as I was able to get things out of my head and onto paper. It allowed me to open up with others, but most importantly, myself. I will forever be grateful that I discovered journaling because it helped me understand my sexuality, something which confused nine year old Colin. I have kept my very first journal to this day and will look back and reflect on how much I've grown since I first started journaling.

Even after all of this self acceptance, understanding, and love, it still felt like a part of me was missing. The day I was introduced to colorguard and the world of dance my life changed forever. I fell in love with colorguard which later inspired me to audition for the Somerset County Gifted

and Talented Honors Dance Program my sophomore year. "When words fail, music speaks. But when music fails that's when dance begins" -Carlin Michael Dixon. The art form of dance allows for any individual to express how they are feeling without using anything auditory. While the written word is extremely important in communication and a way to get your point across, being able to tell a story without a single word is so beautiful to me. The art form of dance has allowed me to express myself in ways I cannot describe simply by moving my body unconventionally.

From personal experience, dance has allowed me to explore myself physically and psychologically. Every single time I walk into the studio my goal is to figure out a new way to move my body that makes me feel good. Because our bodies are our instruments, the possibilities of innovation are endless. Finding different ways to use protraction, retraction, dynamics, musicality, and negative space is my absolute favorite aspect of dance. Dance has allowed me to appreciate myself for what I am because every single person has different strengths and weaknesses. It has allowed me to explore my individuality, finding the quality of movement that makes me feel good. It has taught me to appreciate the little things in life in and out of the studio: to appreciate the small victories because of how important they are.

My dance training started at the age of 16, but from my very first class I knew that this is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I have trained at Flair Dance Academy, Elite Dance Center, New Jersey School of Ballet and currently dance at both the Gifted and Talented Honors Dance Program at Somerset County Vocational and Technical High School and Epic Dance Company.

I am pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance at Montclair State University and I could not be happier to be continuing my education as well as growing as a dancer.

It has been an honor applying for the Drew McLachlan Memorial Scholarship. Reflecting on the written word and the power it holds has been a deeply therapeutic process, starting an inner conversation I had never thought about before, so thank you. His values align with many of mine, and if chosen to be the recipient, I would do my best to make him proud every single day moving forward. I hope you consider me as your recipient.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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