

June Nelson Memorial Scholarship
26th Annual Scholarship Competition

Your life is a series of stories. Tell a story that has helped shape you or reflects who you are today, and how that will move you into the future. (Example: stories of relationships, events that have happened in your school or community, etc.)

(Please write an essay of up to 750 words using 1.5 spacing, and use additional white paper if required. Please have proofread before submitting.)

In life we are given a prompt and we determine how the story unfolds. We have to learn to take each day page by page and roll with the plot twists presented to us. Learning how to do so is part of character development. A special little girl I know has quite the story, one of which she handles as a true protagonist.

My younger sister Caitlin has had a tremendous impact on my life and my perspective. From an early age she has dealt with many medical complications with grace and resilience. She had two surgeries on misshapen meniscus tissue in her knee, as well as a ten vertebrae spinal fusion to correct severe scoliosis. Before her first surgery at the age of six, she was not nearly as anxious as I was or would have been, if I had been in her shoes. She continuously greets every new challenge as a game and every medical instrument administered as an extension of her playground. When given crutches, she ran through the halls. When given a walker, she treated the wheels like those of a bike or scooter. She never let a brace or a surgery prevent her from having a good time. I love her wild spirit and carefree energy and do my best to blend her perspective with my own.

Caitlin is also quite mature for her age and I appreciate her as a best friend. Coming from a military family, and both having been adopted from the same birth mother, it is almost as if we have created our own bubble where we share personal thoughts, jokes and love. My sister has enhanced my life in such a way that I would not want to imagine a life without her. I view the world differently because of her.

I do my best to emulate her mindset when confronting setbacks of my own. I tend to take situations more personally and think in depth about the relationship with the person I am dealing with or varying ways solving a task would result. Keeping my sister in mind, I remind myself to

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detach from the situation and consider what she would do. She is a special part of my story that helps me fight off the antagonists of day to day life. I am constantly reminded not to take life too seriously and to treat each plot twist as an opportunity for adventure. Every new character can help create depth and unlock answers to questions I had never thought to ask.

Over the chapter of my senior year, I have learned a lot about myself, the world around me, and even more about the people in it. Young people tend to have a fixed mindset on the details in front of them, without taking a step back to view the bigger picture. It is useless to obsess over situations and minor details that do not have a significant impact on the plot as a whole. Some pieces of the story are there to interest the reader but are not necessarily significant. It is sometimes hard to come to understand that everyone has their own story to tell. While you are the protagonist of your own, you are one of many characters in the next. While every situation can be used as a learning opportunity, they should be treated as such, instead of a hurdle to overcome.

From shifting friend groups, to experiencing new things, to creating the person you want to become, you are in control of the way your story unfolds. A chapter now that seems unbearable, will be a distant memory by the end of the book. Not every mistake is detrimental and not every success is everlasting. While surprises lurk around every page, how you handle them is what truly shapes your character. I want to pursue a career in which I am able to have the impact on others that my sister has had on me.