



Scholarship Contest Winner

Gavin Isles

Fulton High School

Essay Topic: Examine your experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How has the pandemic altered your high school experience and how have you adapted? How has the pandemic affected your decisions for your future endeavors after high school?

The second week of March 2020 brought with it the many mandates surrounding Covid. Day two of track practice would not see a day three. Many of us had heard the rumblings in the news about Covid in China, but I don't think I gave much thought to its impact. Maybe I was naïve, or just being seventeen. The word pandemic was something you read about in history books or science fiction novels.

Having the ability to transition to online learning seemed awesome. As a computer nerd, I felt that I would have an edge. Sleeping in and zoom class seemed like a schedule anyone would love. Let's just say, the novelty wore off in about two weeks, and then fear set in as the unknowns of this pandemic unveiled themselves. Where do we find masks? Why is there no toilet paper? What is a ventilator? The nightly news televised semi-trailers full of the deceased. Stories of the young and old alike who were falling victim to the illness were on television constantly.

The first week in April, my family and I got sick. With no tests, we didn't know if we had Covid, but it was scary as it seemed everyone was dying. One long day of online classes ran into the next. Some teachers weren't accustomed to online teaching, so it fell on my shoulders to do extra research to grasp the concepts. Much of class time was spent helping others log in or unmute themselves. The long days of only interacting with humans via a computer monitor began to wear on my soul. I felt like I wanted to be a kid again, not worrying about whether a trip to the grocery store would bring home a deadly illness. Six-hour school days turned into twelve-hour days as I was doing so much extra work to make sure I was competent in the things I was being taught. The workload, feelings of being disconnected, and the isolation of remote learning were exhausting.

The end of Junior year meant no prom or banquets. I couldn't help but wonder what my senior year would look like. It seemed like the pandemic had stolen so much from everyone, and some paid the ultimate price with their lives. Throughout this ordeal, I learned that time made for family meals is time no one can take back. I know that I am resilient, and I know how to pivot. The extra research I did daily, opened my eyes to new ideas that I wouldn't have learned in the classroom. I am more socially aware of our world, and I want to play a role in making it better. I've changed my college major as I now know that long hours in front of a monitor are not for me, and life is too short to put my energy towards the wrong things. The knowledge gained allowed me to adapt to a new normal that ended up being so much better than the old.

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