



DISCOMFORT

DEFYING THE ODDS

JEEWOO HONG

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PROLOGUE

“Most people today rarely step outside their comfort zones. We are living progressively sheltered, sterile, temperature-controlled, overfed, under-challenged, safety-netted lives. And it’s limiting the degree to which we experience our one wild and precious life.”

- Mary Oliver

This has been my life. A constant state of comfort. I wake up in a soft bed in a temperature-controlled home. I commute to school in a taxi. At school, I kill any semblance of boredom with my smartphone or by listening to music. When I arrive home, I sit in an ergonomic desk chair and stare at my monitor. I can’t remember the last time I truly challenged myself. Both mentally and physically. I rarely, if ever, felt the sensation of real discomfort.

We are living in the safest, most prosperous era of humanity. This is the best time ever to be alive. But why are so many people unhappy? Why are more people committing suicide? This might be because of comfort. We are facing an epidemic of aimlessness. We are overstimulated and under-inspired. In the world of more, we often find ourselves with less. A lot of us have no purpose. We don’t have any real reason to do anything. The world we live in is so safe and comfortable and although it sounds like a good thing, for us humans, we grow from discomfort.

As I am approaching the end of my teenage years and approaching my adulthood, I have been asking myself “What should I do with my life?” I am unsure of who I am and what I want to become. The goal of this book is to reflect upon my academic career and my life in general. But this book is also the introduction to my new chapter in life.

“Fear, uncertainty, and discomfort are your compasses toward growth.”

What's In a Name?

Hong Jeewoo

洪志羽 hóng zhì yǔ

洪 means wide.

志 means ambition, determination, and aspiration.

羽 means feather.

The meaning behind my name is “fly around the world with great ambition.” This is my first time learning the meaning behind my name and I like it. I think the meaning suits me well because I want to do great, big things in life. Also, I don't want to live in Korea forever. After I finish university in Korea, I want to find a job or start a business in another country because of bigger opportunities.

My mom wanted me to become a pilot like my father and that is why she put this meaning behind my name. She started making me study English when I was young and we traveled a lot to foreign countries. She wanted me to become a “global citizen”, traveling the world. I am going to live out my life, following my name's meaning. I want to bring value to this world.



Personal Alphabet

A- Addictive

B- Briable

C- Clumsy

D- Daring

E- Easygoing

F- Fearful

G- Gluttonous

H- Heartless

I- Inflexible

J- Jolly

K- Korean

L- Lazy

M- Messy

N- Negative

O- Objective

P- Prejudiced

Q- Questionable

R- Reluctant

S- Senior

T- Troubled

U- Unenergetic

V- Visionary

W- Worrisome

X- Xeric

Y- Young

Z- Zany

As Time Goes Bye-Bye

There are many things that I want to accomplish before my time passes by.

Some of them are:

- 1. Dunk a basketball**

It means more than just dunking a basketball. It symbolizes my physical health.

- 2. Travel all around the world**

Experiencing the world, building new human connections, and widening my view of the world.

- 3. Survive in the wilderness for a month.**

Reconnect with nature, embrace discomfort, and escape the modern world.

- 4. Study psychology**

Helps me understand how and why people act a certain way.

- 5. Do a bungee Jump / Go sky diving**

I want to challenge myself and overcome acrophobia.

The one thing that I want the most by the time I'm thirty-five is to make half a million dollars, or in other words, become financially free. There is an emerging lifestyle movement called F.I.R.E: Financial Independence, Retire Early. I do not want to work until I'm sixty years old. There is a growing number of people in South Korea that want to get a job in the public sector. The competition is fierce because if you work in the public sector, you do not get fired until it's time for you to retire. Also, the government provides pensions after retirement. However, this is not the life I want. I believe that chasing stability is a waste of life. Studying a certain major in university just because you've been told it's the safest thing to do, picking a safe career path, getting married just because everyone else you know is getting married, and buying more and more material possessions just to show you are well-off. If I become financially free while I'm young, I won't have to follow the conventional stages of life. I would not need to worry about money and just do what I want to do. Live out my life's purpose whatever it may be. This senior year, I realized that I cannot waste any more time in my life. There is so much to see, experience, and accomplish. I do not want my legacy to be a man who worked at a nine to five job for thirty years.

My Own List of Lists

1. People who have influenced me

- I. My parents
- II. Matthew Walker
- III. James Nestor
- IV. Joe Rogan
- V. Paul Saladino
- VI. Ben Patrick

2. Places that make me happy

- I. My home
- II. My room
- III. My grandparent's house
- IV. Anywhere with friends
- V. The gym
- VI. Korea

3. Places I would like to go

- I. Spain
- II. Greece
- III. Atlanta
- IV. The Netherlands
- V. Egypt
- VI. Scandinavia

4. Things in people which I like

- I. Positivity
- II. Trustworthiness
- III. Insightfulness
- IV. Resilience
- V. Humility
- VI. Forgiveness

5. Things in people which I dislike

- I. Egotistic
- II. Pessimistic
- III. Condescending
- IV. Manipulative
- V. Aggressive
- VI. Vindictive

6. Things that worry me

- I. 2022 AP scores
- II. My university
- III. Future career decisions
- IV. Death
- V. Money
- VI. Health

7. Things I would like to know how to do

- I. Dunk a basketball
- II. Play the piano
- III. Master the violin
- IV. Make music
- V. Edit videos
- VI. Speak Chinese and Japanese

8. Things that have moved me

- I. The Fifth Vital – Book
- II. Tick...Tick...Boom! -Movie
- III. Newsies 2015 – Musical
- IV. Dead Poet's Society – Movie
- V. Circles – Album
- VI. Cast Away - Movie

9. Ideas that intrigue me

- I. Extraterrestrial life
- II. Lucid dreaming
- III. Psychology
- IV. Physiology
- V. Writing fantasy books
- VI. Life after death

10. My personal favorites

- I. The Office – Favorite show
- II. Mango – Favorite Fruit
- III. One Direction – Favorite boyband
- IV. Hamilton- Favorite musical
- V. Keira Knightley- Favorite actress
- VI. Robin Williams- Favorite actor

Look Who I Look Up To

Giannis Antetokounmpo

Giannis is an NBA champion, two-time MVP, finals MVP, and a six-time All-Star. He is currently the best basketball player in the world. However, this isn't why I admire him. His success story, his American dream, is what makes him my role model. He was an illegal Nigerian immigrant in Greece. He was a peddler since he was six, helping his parents make money to feed his two brothers. Giannis was scouted when he was 13 and started playing basketball just to provide for his family. Even after he started playing in the NBA, his only goal was to become great and make more money for his family. Once, he sent all his weekly salary to his parents in Greece so he had to run to the arena because he had no money to call a taxi. It is obvious that he is crazy talented, but his dedication to basketball, his work ethic, and his love for his family are truly awe-inspiring.



Lin-Manuel Miranda

Lin-Manuel Miranda is a singer-songwriter, composer, playwright, and actor. He is known for his musicals *Hamilton* and *In the Heights*, which are two of my favorite musicals. I know the lyrics of all the songs in *Hamilton* word-by-word and it's the most listened album over the past two years for me. I absolutely love how he tells stories with music and I also love his musical style. He is a genius composer and songwriter. He likes to mix different genres of music: rap, hip-hop, R&B, pop, musical, and salsa. I recommend you listen to *My Shot* and *Non-Stop* featured in *Hamilton*. He is a real genius. He wrote *In the Heights* when he was only nineteen years old and it wasn't a fluke! Every one of his works is a masterpiece!



Joe Rogan

Joe Rogan is a podcaster, UFC commentator, and a stand-up comic. He hosts *The Joe Rogan Experience*, a podcast in which he discusses current events, politics, comedy, health, sports, science, and more. The one thing I admire about him is his ability to interact with people. He had hundreds of guests on his show and he values real conversation and connection (all of his episodes are more than two hours long). He treats every one of the guests with respect and even if he doesn't agree with some of the things the guests say, he will form careful questions that respect the guests and lead to further discussion. His conversational skills and his insight in life are the most admirable features of him.



Remembering the Child



My mom tells me I was always a kid with a lot of curiosity. Always asking “why?” I believe this is true because still to this day, I would ask questions about rules that have no meaning and it would annoy my mom.

My cousin, who’s just started his own business, told me that his favorite memory of me is jumping on the trampoline in the arcade next to the beach. I would always lie down and he would try to launch me as high as he can. We had a lot of fun. My cousins are like my brothers that I don’t have, and although they are much older than I am, they always treat me kindly and like a friend.



I didn’t ask my uncle about his favorite memory with me, but instead, asked him what I was like. He told me that I was really annoying because I would always go to his room and steal snacks and bother him while he watches television. He is the typical funny uncle. He always made me laugh and he tried to have as much fun with me. Doing this assignment made me realize how much I miss the old days when I had no worries about anything. Just having fun and learning new things all day....



One Medium Suitcase



If I am leaving home forever and I can only bring one suitcase with me, these are the things I would bring with me:

My phone- My phone will connect me with my family and the world. If I could only take one electronic device with me, it would be my phone because it is the most portable and easy to use.

My kindle- The kindle is much more practical than physical books. I can store hundreds of books in one device and the battery would last weeks, which is good for traveling. My kindle would be used whenever I'm bored or on transport.

My headphones- I use my headphones when there is a lot of noise because it cancels out every sound except for what I'm listening to. I would normally listen to podcasts or music with my headphones.

Family photos- Although I can have family photos on my phone, I feel like having physical photos feel me more connected to the people and the event in that photo. So, if I'm never going to see my parents again, I would take a lot of physical photos with me.

The Perfect Present

The perfect present that I want to receive is **time management**.

It is the perfect gift for me because I have been struggling with time management during my middle school and high school years. In other words, I don't want to procrastinate anymore. I have wasted thousands (literally) of hours playing video games and watching YouTube videos. And what values did they bring me? None. Zero. The time that I spend aimlessly will never come back and it is lost time. So, moving on with my life, I want to spend my time effectively, with purpose in mind all the time.

"The lost time is never found again" – Benjamin Franklin

I want to achieve great feats in life and if I am going to strive for greatness, I must manage my time well. Last year, we had a new student named Xie Bo. I aspire to him not because he's a genius, but because his time management skills are world-class. He plays golf, watches football, runs a charity, and gets perfect grades while taking 7 AP tests. He is the definition of time management. If I'm not going to get back the time I lost, I must start using my time wisely which will allow me to cease bigger opportunities. These are the reasons why I want time management as the perfect present.



Memorable Event



The field trip to the farm on May 16th was the most memorable event of the year. Most of the students in high school attended the field trip. During the field trip, we flew kites, watched the farm animals, dyed handkerchiefs, and ate a whole lamb for lunch. However, it was not the most memorable event because I had a lot of fun. It's memorable because it was the closest thing to discomfort I have experienced this year. The uneven land, the scorching hot sun, and the bugs covering my body reminded me how disconnected I was from nature. During my time at the farm, I didn't connect myself to the internet or distract myself. I was present the whole time, embracing the discomfort while also finding ways to have fun. There were some people that were playing games at the farm and it made me think that I've come a long way. If it was me from middle school, I also would have played games. Although I have much more progress to make, I am doing a good job. The field trip was also memorable because it would be one of the last activities with my friends. So I took a lot of pictures.

Always Say Never

Books that I never want to read again:

- I. Monster by Walter Dean Myers
- II. Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
- III. Shakespeare's plays and sonnets

I never want to read Shakespeare's plays and sonnets ever again. If I had to choose my least favorite of all the things I studied in school, it would be sonnets. I don't know why I have to learn about rhyme schemes, poetic devices, and meter. If the argument is that students have to learn about different themes in literature such as love, heroism, and good and evil, there are other great options than Shakespeare. Teachers all know that students hate Shakespeare. It's time for the curriculum to change.

Place that I never want to go again:

- I. China
- II. YangShuo
- III. Fujian Tulou

It is not that I hate the people I met during my time in China. I just hate the place itself. Bad air, bad food, bad government, bad internet, bad transportation, the list goes on and on. After I graduate, I don't think I will ever return to China.

Things that I never want to do again:

- I. Write poems
- II. Reading books that I don't want
- III. Trigonometry

During my school years, I was forced to read many books in English class and I hated most of them. I believe that this has ruined my relationship with reading because I always associated reading with "boring" and "homework". I recently gained a lot of interest in reading and I rediscovered that reading can actually be fun. If I read what I want to and subjects that I'm interested in, time flies by while reading. These days, I get the excitement that I got when I was 10 years old reading the *Percy Jackson* series while reading *Dune*. The fact that one person mapped out a whole universe, with complex characters and world-building, just blows my mind.

The Examined Life

BEST THINGS ABOUT ME

Ambitious

A lot of curiosity

Health-conscious

Humorous

Honesty

Authenticity

Kind to the people I know

MY GREATEST FAULTS

Ultimate-procrastinator

Negative at times

Have a hard time letting go of things

Lacks confidence

Runs away from challenges

Uncomfortable working with new people

Bad balance between work and entertainment

Lessons I Learned After It Was Too Late

It seems like people always learn life lessons the hard way. After we already made the mistake. These are the lessons that I learned throughout my life that I wish I have known earlier.....

1: There is no time to waste

There is so much to achieve, experience, and love in life. We have so much to do and not enough time to do everything. Time slips, days pass, and years fade. One day, I will be lying on my death bed. There is no more time to waste in life.

2. There's nothing good about video games

I was addicted to video games for five years. Video games served me as a temporary escape from my bad life. People who play video games claim that video games improve focus and reflex skills. This was my self-justification for playing games. However, this is absolutely false and everyone who plays games knows it. Why make money in video games when you can make money in real life? Why level up in a game when you can level up in real life? Playing video games is a waste of time.

3. Health is wealth

After getting my back injured, and having bad eating and sleeping habits, my health was in shambles. Only after I realize I had poor health did I start taking care of it. It is a blessing that I got into health at a young age. By the time I hit my thirties and forties, I will still be healthy and young while the people who didn't take care of their health start finding serious problems in their bodies. Health is wealth and there is nothing more important than health. If you are a millionaire but you're stuck in your bed all day, what's the point?

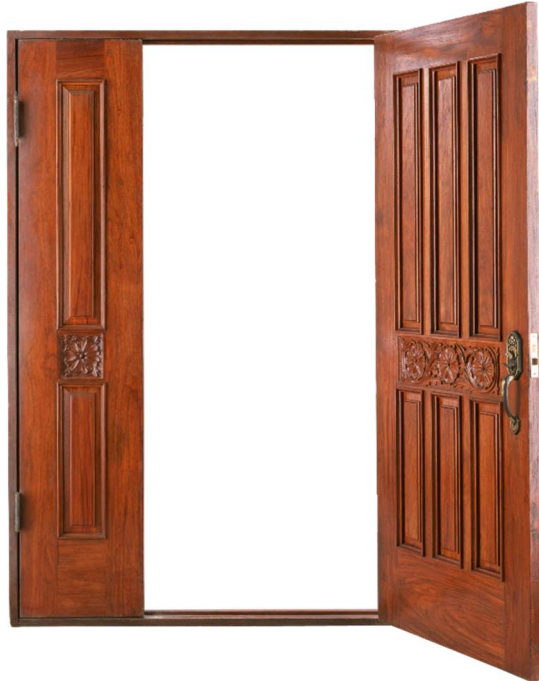
4. Habits take time to be developed

During my high school years, I learned that habits take time to develop. If I don't have good studying habits or time-management skills, it will take me a lot of time to get rid of my bad habits and form new ones.

5. You just have to move on.....

If I fail a test, got bad grades, or made a bad mistake, I had a hard time moving on. It would drag me down into a deeper hole and prevent me from becoming more successful. I learned that I cannot change the past so I just have to move on, and try to improve every time. Learn from your mistakes.

The Door



When I walk out that door, I never wish to return. I want to feel free, as if a burden has been removed from my shoulders. I do not want to think about anything school-related. I want to feel satisfied about my accomplishments and be excited about my future. I want to leave my past all behind when I walk out the door. This door symbolizes a new passage in life, a new chapter.

When I walk out that door, I never want to feel like a loser. I never want to waste my time. I do not want to be a failure. I don't want to see my 2022 AP scores. I don't want to see calculus every again in my life. I don't want to see the haters. The doubters. I only want the people that believe in me.

Advice to the Young

Looking back at my life, there are many mistakes I've made and there are lots of things that I want to change about my life. If I could give advice to my younger self and change my current state, I would do so without hesitation. That being said, these are my pieces of advice to my younger self:

1. Don't play video games

If I could change only one thing about my past, it would be video games. I have been addicted to video games for about six years, going from elementary to early high school. I believe that all of my bad habits came from my video game addiction. It was only two years ago that I realized that playing games add no value at all to my life. Video games serve only as a temporary escape from reality. Once you are done playing the game, you're only left with a feeling of emptiness. Why grind in a video game when you can grind in real life? Why level up in a video game when you can level up in real life?

2. Prioritize sleep

Ever since I started middle school, I stopped caring about my sleep. Connected to my addiction to video games, I would stay up at night to both play games and get my schoolwork done. I was the type of person that believed "Sleep when you die. Sleeping is a waste of time and I can both play games and get good grades if I didn't sleep." My bad sleeping habits peaked in grade nine when I moved to Tianjin. I would go to sleep at two and wake up at 6 to come to school. I started prioritizing sleep after I read the book *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker. I would be much healthier, taller, and more energetic if I slept properly during my puberty. So, young Jeewoo, stop playing games and go to bed!

3. Seek discomfort

This aligns with the theme of this book. I have lived such a comfortable life. Without any challenges or "brick walls" as Randy Pausch puts it. Comfort, or success, comes from discomfort, which promotes growth. I have been running away from discomfort and only stayed in my comfort zone all my life. Challenge yourself. Set goals that seem impossible to achieve. Don't just run away from things because they are awkward, scary, threatening, or uncomfortable. Embrace all the negative, uncomfortable emotions and grow from it.

Who Am I?

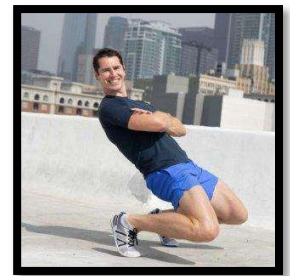
I am a **learner**. I am grateful and excited for my willingness to learn about psychology, physiology, and health. I believe that it will guide me toward my goals. I don't know it yet, but I feel like my life's purpose is in one of the three subjects. When I was young, I thought I would never touch a book after I graduate from college. Now my mindset has completely changed. Learning never stops.



I am a **basketball player**. Although I'm not good at playing basketball, hard work and dedication will one day make me a better basketball player. The game of basketball is so beautiful. The ball movement, the passionate players, and the amazing shots make basketball the best sport. Witnessing the greatness of NBA players such as Lebron, Curry, and Westbrook inspire me to work on my physical health and skills.



I am a **healthy person**. After hitting the lowest point of my life in terms of health, I learned that there is nothing more important than life in health. Also, I feel like health is more than just being healthy and looking good. Health allows me to connect to my primal ancestors. The modern world is filled with pleasure and comfort. Striving towards health made me understand how strong our primal ancestors were.



I am a **reader**. I used to hate reading books. I think my hatred towards books came from me being forced to read books that I don't want to read. Some people say that there is no point in reading fiction because you don't learn anything from it. However, from fiction, I can improve my empathy skills and creativity. I can also admire the greatness of our species. I remember getting my mind blown reading *Harry Potter* and the *Percy Jackson* series because I was able to draw the whole book in my head. It is just amazing that one person wrote the whole book, coming up with the setting, characters, and plot. Now I'm getting the same feeling reading *Dune*.



I am a **man**. The modern world is trying to sell the narrative that men and women are equal. But the two sexes are biologically unequal. I feel like there is a purpose in life just for men, and I am trying to find one for myself.



Valuable Lessons

1. Health is wealth

Do not take your health for granted. We have one life, so we must live out a healthy one.

2. Money doesn't bring happiness

Money doesn't bring happiness. Purpose does. I want to find my purpose in life. What's my legacy going to be?

3. Live the present moment

There is so much distraction in the modern world. Prioritize and focus on the present moment.

4. Life is not fair.

Equality is not the goal. Why would anyone try to succeed if everything is going to be equal? Success is for inequality.

5. You are what you eat

Food is not for the mind. It is for the body. What we eat heavily influences our actions and thoughts.

6. Learning a new language

Being able to speak English has opened so many opportunities for me and essentially gave me a third eye to view this world. If I only knew how to speak Korean, I would be much more ignorant.

7. Sleep is important

I used to laugh at Frank and Nadeem when they say they sleep eight hours a day. I learned my lesson the hard way. Sleep is one of the most important things for health and longevity.

8. You reap what you sow

If I don't study, I will get bad grades. I shouldn't rely on luck to solve my problems. This applies not just to studying, but to everything in life.

9. Everything is possible

With a positive mindset and determination, I believe every goal you set is achievable.

10. You are in control of yourself

Focus on what your mind tells you, not what others tell you.

Futures – Fantasy and Fact

Fantasy: In 10 years, I would be running a business that is related to health. I would sell products that I believe in and what people actually need. From the business, I made more than ten million dollars. Since I have enough money, I would step down from running the company and start enjoying my life while I look for a new purpose in life. I would travel to many countries and I would also go watch NBA games courtside. I would be wearing an Audemar Piguet royal oak on my wrist. I would also be helping people, guiding them towards success like what I achieved.

Fact: In 10 years, I would have served my time in the military and finished my studies in college. I would have saved just enough money to finally start my own business. After I launch my business, it won't be successful right away. I would struggle a lot. There will be ups and downs. At times, I would feel like giving everything up. However, I would keep pushing through. I believe that any business can become successful if it brings real value to the people.

In both scenarios, I would be running my own business. There is a lot of discrepancy between my fantasy and fact. In my fantasy, I've made so much money in my 30s that I can retire early. However, in my reality, I would just start making money because it takes a lot of time to grow a business and make profit. But life is what I make of it. My fantasy can be my reality or I might not even reach my fact. It all depends on how I set up my life, make plans, and become a disciplined, purpose-driven man.



Outliers

The Story of Success

Outliers is the first book that I read in my senior year. It has changed the way I view successful people. Nobody that I consider “successful” became successful overnight. They put in countless hours to their craft behind the scenes, and we only get to see the results of the hours, which make us think that they are natural talents. The book and the presentation taught me that everything has to click if I want to become successful.

The 10,000 hour rule: the secret to success

The 10,000 hour rule is the pivotal idea presented in the book *Outliers*. This idea that you need 10,000 hours of practice to master your craft and become successful has changed my perspective towards success.

Prezi

"Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good." - page 46



Prezi

The Beatles



February 9th, 1964, U.S. debut on The Ed Sullivan Show. They started breaking all kinds of records.

They came to the U.S. in 1964 after gaining popularity in the U.K.



Best-selling musicians of all time.
1.6 Billion singles, 177 million albums sold in U.S.
Most number 1 hits on the Billboard hot 100 chart
And much more....

Prezi

But behind their success...

In 1960, they were just a normal high school rock band. They were invited by a club owner to come play in Hamburg, Germany.

They started performing at the Star Club 8 hours a day, 7 days a week.



"They performed for 270 nights in just over a year and a half. By the time they had their first burst of success in 1964, they had performed live an estimated twelve hundred times."

-page 56

Prezi

TAKEAWAY: What is Gladwell trying to say?

"Outliers are those who have been given opportunities-and who have had the strength and presence of mind to seize them."

Only those who are ready can capture the greatest opportunities.

Prezi

Natural talent \neq success

Preparation, luck, and a bit of talent will lead you to success

Senior Journal #1

After almost a year of writing this journal, a lot has changed about me. I am still into psychology, physiology, and health. It has now become part of my identity. However, what I want to become in the future, my job, my career decisions have changed. Being a chiropractor brings benefits to people, but the impact is too small. I want to develop and sell something that would impact millions of people and improve the world for good.

Journal #1: What career interests you the most and why? Explain in detail your career interest and tell why you feel that you would be successful in your chosen field.

Looking back at my life, I didn't exercise that much, didn't get enough sleep, and didn't eat properly. With a lot of research and with making changes to my lifestyle (especially during Covid times and summer vacation) I had fixed a lot of problems that I had and is feeling better than ever. Recently, I have been reading articles and watching a lot of videos about physiology and psychology. Basically, I am really interested in the human body. How we sleep, how we move, how we think, why we eat, and how to live a longer, healthy life. As I was researching about different career paths related to my interests, I came across chiropractors. Chiropractors are physical practitioners who use their hands to correct a patient's body alignment and overall physical function. They relocate the bone of the patients and provide great satisfaction. I am personally looking forward on getting a treatment when I go back to Korea and the job looks very appealing to me because it earns good money, isn't that stressful, and gives satisfaction to both the patient and the chiropractor. I think I will be able to become successful in that field because I have genuine interest in the field and I have good problem-solving skills and business skills. However, I will have to work on my communication skills. I'm also concerned that it would be difficult for me to get into a good school to get a Doctor of Chiropractic degree in Korea.

BOAST!

Writing the boast was a new experience for me. I never bragged this much about myself. Although boasting can be seen as arrogant and egotistical, I learned from this assignment that it can give confidence. When I was reading the boast out loud it made me feel like I really did achieve something great. This assignment taught me that confidence is a key virtue, which is vital if I am going to run my own business one day.

The Great Jeewoo

I am Jeewoo son of Sangjun, sailor of the skies.

I was born in the land of Kimchi, small yet mighty.

Early in my life, I have traveled to many lands,

Left my beloved home and settled in the red dragon's lair.

Where I start my academic career, one that would go down in history.

My elegant, eloquent, euphonious voice

Granted me to *dominate choir for multiple years*

I have *conquered the world of statistics*

And have *mastered the art of basketball*

Defeating the best in our academy countless times

My hall is filled with awards and certificates

I am the shining star with no substitute

I have honored the code of the academy,

Helped my friends and foes,

And at long last, *proved to be eligible as a granted NHS member*

With my honorable accomplishments,

I will soon leave the dragon's lair

And move my talents to a prominent, prestigious, profound university.

There I shall *master physiology and neurology*

And passionately provide service for people in need.



Love Metaphor Essay

This essay shows how I view love. Literature and entertainment ruined how people think of love. A lot of people these days think of love as a constant feeling of high. However, love isn't like that. Being in a relationship and loving someone is bigger than just having fun with a partner and breaking up after the fun is over. It is about filling one's missing parts, learning from one another, and forming memories.

How Love Metaphors ruined Love

Love poems have existed for millenniums. The world's first love poem dates back four thousand years ago in Mesopotamia, which is called "The Love-Song for Shu-Shin." The poem is believed to be written for the ancient Sumerian king Shu-Shin's marriage ceremony. In the poem, the king only addresses the bride's physical appearance, "Goodly is your beauty, honeysweet", and promises the bride sexual pleasure. Since the creation of love poetry, it was focused on capturing and exaggerating women's physical beauty with metaphors. Love poems and love metaphors have formed misconceptions and skewed standards of love since they mostly highlight a man's dedication towards love, the physical appearance of a woman, and the eternity of love, as displayed in "Elephant Love Medley" from *Moulin Rouge*, *Sonnet 130*, and act 2 scene 2 of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Love literature has formed a gender role stereotype for men: In a relationship, men should always be dedicated to a woman and must be willing to give up everything for her. In the film *Moulin Rouge*, a poor writer named Christian falls in love with a courtesan named Satine that works at a nightclub named Moulin Rouge. Christian is offered a job at Moulin Rouge and the members of the club ask Christian if he believes in love. He answers yes: "Love is oxygen. All you need is love." Christian compares love to the one thing people cannot live without, oxygen. Though never been in love, he believes that love is the most important thing in life, and is willing to do anything for love. In the "Elephant Love Medley", where Christian confesses his love to Satine, he repeats "all you need is love" (Kidman, 0:05, 0:08, 0:12) numerous times. Also, he tells her that he was "made for loving you" (Kidman, 0:22), Satine, and "can't survive without your sweet love" (Kidman, 0:57). These lines highlight Christian's romantic and reckless outlook on love, contrasting with Satine's realistic viewpoint. In fact, throughout the film, Christian puts a lot of people in trouble and also risks Satine's career solely for his love towards her. *Moulin Rouge* is a typical forbidden love story. Two people from completely different worlds fall in love and end in a tragedy. The film and the "Elephant Love Medley" are the epitome of love metaphors and stereotypes. All but one number in the film are a mashup of popular love songs of the past. From this knowledge, it is no secret that Christian is a character purely formed by gender role stereotypes. Christian's dedicative, submissive, and foolhardy behavior towards Satine represents how love literature has portrayed men throughout centuries and misguided men on how they should act in a relationship.

In *Sonnet 130*, Shakespeare takes an unconventional approach to love poems in an attempt to clarify misconceptions about love. Instead of comparing his lover's eyes to the sun, he states, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (Shakespeare, line 1). Instead of comparing his lover's skin to white snow, he states, "If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun" (Shakespeare, line 3). And finally, instead of comparing his lover's hair to smooth silk, he compares it with black wires (Shakespeare, line 4).

With these statements, Shakespeare attacks common love poems. He points out that conventional love poems often exaggerate women's beauty by using unearthly metaphors, setting inordinate standards for women. They act as if women's beauty is all that matters and all men care about in love. These poems have given a false impression of what love is and has set gender stereotypes for both men and women. With *Sonnet 130*, Shakespeare argues that what truly matters in love is inner beauty. He thinks that there is no point in using exaggerated metaphors because every love is special and every woman is beautiful in their lover's eyes: "And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare as any she belied with false compare" (Shakespeare, lines 13, 14).

The final misconception that love literature and metaphors have spread is that love lasts forever. In common love stories, two people fall in love at first sight. They go through some conflict and live happily ever after or end up dying, forever in love. Romeo and Juliet might be the most cliché love story to ever exist. Romeo and Juliet fall in love despite the two family's feud and ends tragically with their deaths. In scene 2 act 2 of the play, Romeo sneaks into Juliet's family orchard at night and confesses his love to her. When Romeo tries to swear his love by the moon, "Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow, that tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops" (Shakespeare, lines 106, 107), Juliet rejects it because the moon always changes position and she doesn't want their relationship to be that way. She believes that love should never change between the two: "Lest that thy love prove likewise variable" (Shakespeare, line 111). Furthermore, Juliet promises unconditional love towards Romeo, "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep" (Shakespeare, lines 133, 134), and claim that their love will last forever: "The more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite" (Shakespeare, lines 134, 135). Countless love poems have made claims the same as Juliet's. They give a false impression that only love that lasts forever is true love and anything else is a failure. However, it should be known that love does not last forever. Whether it be death or a change in emotions and commitment, every love is destined to end. There is a famous quote by the Greek philosopher Diogenes. "We come into the world alone and we die alone."

The biggest joys in being in a relationship are being happy, learning from one another, and forming lifelong memories. However, they are gradually being forgotten by us due to toxic and provocative love metaphors. Love is meant to change. Love is meant to end. Love literature, poetry, and metaphors have made people perceive love in a destructive way. Behaviors shown in "Elephant Love Medley" and act 2 scene 2 of *Romeo and Juliet* are unsustainable because the high feeling of falling in love and beauty from youth quickly dissipates. In that sense, the relationship that the speaker in *Sonnet 130* is ideal. Humans are not beasts. Humans do not fall in love just for reproduction or the chemical reaction in the brain. Even if there is nothing sexual or physically attractive about a partner, if there is a special bond and care like non-other, that is true love.

Green Knight Essay

This essay is my favorite piece of work throughout British Literature this year. I put a lot of effort into this essay and I believe that it represents my writing skills, critical thinking skills, and creativity skills. The essay was difficult to write because I had to merge the movie and the story of *The Green Knight* and make connections.

The Green Knight: The Initiation Story of Sir Gawain

The Green Knight is the modern film adaptation of the Arthurian romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Though the basic plot of both stories is the same, there exist many differences between the poem and the film. The most significant difference between the two is Gawain's personality. While in the poem, Gawain is already a knight that embodies the chivalric codes, Gawain in the film is full of flaws. He is portrayed as a dishonest, lustful coward. In the movie's opening, it is shown that he spends much of his time at the Brothel and lies to his mother that he was at church. Also, Gawain emphasizes many times that he is no knight. By changing Gawain's personality from brave to cowardly, *The Green Knight* successfully tells the initiation story of Gawain. Gawain is tested for his worthiness as a knight and a future king by accepting the Green Knight's challenge, getting tested on five knightly virtues, and facing the blow of the Green Knight.

The poem and the film differ in how Gawain comes to accept the Green Knight's challenge. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain is already an honorable knight, and King Arthur is in his prime. Initially, King Arthur is the one who accepts the Green Knight's challenge, but Gawain steps up and asks the King for a chance to meet the Green Knight. Gawain also says, "the loss of my life would be least of any" (Borroff, Line 129), showing that he is brave enough to give up his life. It is evident that Gawain in the poem is courageous and prideful. On the other hand, Gawain in *The Green Knight* is not a knight. He sits in the roundtable just because he is King Arthur's nephew. Gawain sits beside the King because his mother, Morgan le Fay, did not attend the Christmas feast. She does not attend the feast to summon the Green Knight and allows her son to prove himself worthy. Also, King Arthur is old and frail, out of his prime, unable to accept the Green Knight's challenge. All the circumstances are set up for coward Gawain to rise and take his shot. While Gawain in both versions admits that he has not accomplished much in his life, "I am the weakest, well I know, and of wit feeblest" (Borroff, line 128), "I have none to tell, King" (Lowry, 0:12:06), Gawain in the poem is still brave and prideful enough to create his opportunity. However, Gawain in the film needs his mother to create an opportunity for him. At this stage, with the help of others, Gawain takes his first step becoming worthy of a knight. The real challenge presents itself when Gawain starts his journey to the Green Chapel.

Gawain's journey to the Green Chapel is rather short in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Most of the tests he faces in the film are not in the poem. Gawain's encounter with the Lord and Lady of the castle is the only commonality between the two versions of his journey. The movie expands on Gawain's journey and tests him on the five knightly virtues. In the Christmas feast scene, King Arthur and his knights wear a pedant with a pentagram, a five-pointed star, that symbolizes the five knightly virtues. For Gawain to become an official member of the round table, he must prove himself eligible for the five knightly virtues: piety, generosity, courtesy, chastity, and fellowship. Throughout the film, Gawain fails all of these. The first virtue that he fails is piety. Gawain is not religious in the slightest. He spends his time in the Brothel on Christmas eve, rather than the church. This shows that Gawain's actions do not stem from his desire to please God or King Arthur. He only cares about pleasing himself. In his road to the Green Chapel, Gawain fails to be generous when he meets the scavenger. When the scavenger asks, "Are my directions not worth anything to you?" (Lowry, 0:44:41), Gawain only answers by saying, "My thanks" (Lowry, 0:44:43), without giving the scavenger anything. In the interaction between Winnifred, when Winnifred asks Gawain to retrieve her head, Gawain answers by saying, "If I go in there and find it, what

would you offer me in exchange?” (Lowry, 1:00:37), failing the virtue of courtesy. Gawain fails chastity when he fails to resist his sexual urge and engages in intercourse with the Lady. With the interaction with the Lady, he also fails fellowship because he does not keep the promise that he made with the Lord to exchange their earnings. While in the poem Gawain returns the kisses that he received from the Lady, Gawain in the film fails to return anything to the Lord. When the Lord asks Gawain about their promise, Gawain answers, “I don’t want your games, or your gifts, or your kindness” (Lowry, 1:35:12), rejecting the fellowship between him and the Lord. Although Gawain fails all the tests, Gawain still learns that there will be serious consequences if he is not honest and generous. At this stage, even though Gawain has grown out of his days at the Brothel, he is still dishonest and a coward. As he approaches the Green Chapel, he is fully committed to taking the Green Knight’s blow, but fear grows in his mind.

In the film’s final act, Gawain finally makes his way into the Green Chapel. The Green Knight awaits Gawain on Christmas day and attempts to return the blow he was given. In another failure of Gawain’s chivalry, Gawain resists. He flinches even though the Green Knight did not flinch when the same blow was given to him. Not only does he resist death, but he also wears the magical green girdle that the Lady of the castle gave. When Gawain fails to complete his task, he sees a vision of a possible future. In the vision, he returns to his lover, Essel, and conceives a child. King Arthur dies from old age, and Gawain inherits the throne. Gawain leaves Essel but takes her son and marries a noble lady. The child he had with Essel is eventually killed in battle, and the kingdom falls to ruin. At the end of the vision, Gawain finally removes the magical green girdle, which shielded him from the blow of the Green Knight, and his neck falls to the ground, dying in neither honor nor nobility. This part of the film is where Gawain’s transformation is complete. He is no longer a coward that keeps running away from life’s challenges. After seeing his future flash before his eyes, Gawain finally takes off the girdle and accepts his fate. He would rather die as an honorable person than live out a dishonorable life without meaning. Gawain passes the Green Knight’s, or his mother’s, test and proves himself worthy of a knight. The Green Knight says, “Now...off with your head” (Lowry, 2:04:12), allowing Gawain to return home, granting him another chance to live a meaningful life. The journey of Gawain is over, and he achieves a new identity, thus completing his initiation.

The character development of Gawain in *The Green Knight* is much more meaningful than that of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain does not go through a full transformation. Though his flaws were revealed in the Green Chapel, he was still a relatively honorable knight before the journey. The one lesson that he learns from his journey is to be honest at all times. On the other hand, by taking up Green Knight’s challenge, getting tested on five knightly virtues, and accepting his fate, Gawain in *The Green Knight* achieves spiritual growth-initiation-and transforms into an honorable knight.

Epilogue

Words by Frank Olsson: This man is an ambitious man. He admits his failures and mistakes, such as playing video games and procrastinating, and is willing to grow. He thinks he hit rock bottom and he truly believes that the sky is the limit. The only way for him is up. After reading his autobiography, I now have faith in him. I have no doubt that he will make it to the top. He will see his dreams unfold right in front of his eyes. He knows exactly what he wants and views the world with a hawk's eye. It is amazing that he wants to find a purpose in life and not just make money.

I have no doubt that he will dunk a basketball. I have no doubt that he will unlock his full physical potential and become healthy. And most of all. I have no doubt that he will run a successful business one day.

I especially like *Who am I?* by the author because it seems like he exactly knows what kind of person he is, and what kind of person he wants to become. I have read that identity is at the core of all of our actions. The author has a clear identity and it will guide him towards success.