

成长,又残酷又美好



图书在版编目(CIP)数据

成长,又残酷又美好:青春卷:英汉对照/《新东方英语》编辑部编著.一北京:北京语言大学出版社, 2015.1

(青少年的英文枕边书) ISBN 978-7-5619-3990-1

I. ①成··· Ⅲ. ①新··· Ⅲ. ①英语—汉语—对照读物 ②散文集—世界 Ⅳ. ①H319.4: I

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2014)第281819号

书 名:《成长,又残酷又美好》(青春卷)

编 著:《新东方英语》编辑部

责任编辑:李 亮 张 辉

封面设计: 黄 蕊 版式设计: 黄 蕊

出版发行: * 太京: 语言大学出版社

社 址:北京市海淀区学院路15号 邮政编码:100083

网 站: www.blcup.com

电 话:发行部 (010)62605588 / 5019 / 5128

编辑部 (010)62418641 邮购电话 (010)62605127

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印 刷:北京海石通印刷有限公司

经 销:全国新华书店

版 次: 2015年1月第1版 2015年1月第1次印刷 开 本: 720毫米×960毫米 1/16 印张: 21.5

字 数: 295千

书

号: ISBN 978-7-5619-3990-1

定 价: 29.80元(含光盘)

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■Contents

谁的青春不曾迷茫

Popular Misconceptions / 青春的误读

You're Not Special / 你并不特别

A Good Reason to Look Up / 给仰视一个理由

People Who Have Siblings / 那些有兄弟姐妹的人

Cheating in Tests / 作弊者

The Champion of Quiet / 沉默大王

Roll Call / 点名

No-hair Day / 无发日

Drawer of Memories / 回忆的抽屉

My Retainer Has Me Bent out of Shape / 牙套, 你把我气疯了

Growing Up in Five Minutes / 五分钟成长

年轻的热血就该沸腾

Hardball / 莫以胜负定输赢

A Reason to Run / 奔跑的理由

This Is What I'm Into / 这就是我喜欢做的事

Button Up! / 徽章大作战

My Christmas Vacation / 我的圣诞假期

Ali Goes to University / 阿里上大学

Childlike Not Childish / 童心永驻

Advice to Little Girls / 给小女孩的建议

What I Wish I Knew at 21 / 青涩的 21 岁

Riding Dorothy from Sydney to London /

从悉尼到伦敦:骑车走天涯

那些回不去的校园时光

Middle School Lesson on Life / 中学时代的一堂人生课

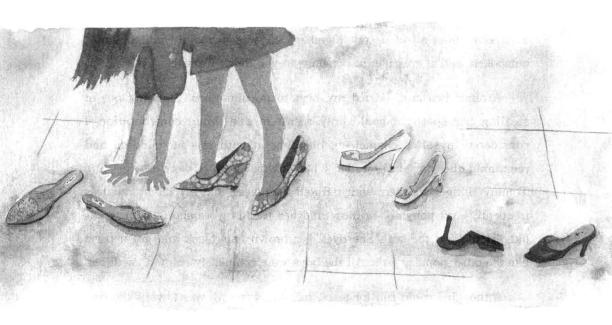
The Ideal School / 理想学校狂想曲

LOST and FOUND / 大川安侍的思家刀	146
Tiffany's Turn / "最棒小孩",该你上场	152
The Try-athlon / 勇于尝试者三项	160
The Experiments of Miss Ellis / 一堂"自由"实验课	168
The Empty Easter Egg / 复活节空蛋	174
The First Day of Middle School / 开学噩梦破除记	182
I Believe in Being a Nerd! / 书呆子宣言!	188
Thomas and the Trapdoor / "缺课"的托马斯	196
友情的乐章一路奏响	
Good Question, Chowderhead / 问得好,傻瓜	204
Egg Drop Soup / 蛋花汤	210
The Goodwill Gift / "善意"的礼物	218
Slumber Party Secrets / 睡衣派对的秘诀	224
Trick or Treat! / 不给糖果就捣蛋!	236
I Know You Need Me / 我知道你需要我	242
Goodwill / 善意	248
The Forgotten Friend / 忘记邀请的朋友	256
The Missing Wallet / "丢失"的钱包	262
逆境中收获成长	
Getting My Honesty / 寻找回来的诚实	270
A Different Kind of Athlete / 一位特殊的运动员	276
Beautiful in My Own Skin / 我的肌肤,我美丽	282
You Are Not Alone / 你不是一个人	290
Diary of an Anorexic / 一个厌食症女孩的日记	302
Peggy's Paper Dolls / 佩吉的纸娃娃	310
Out of My Brother's Shadow / 走出哥哥的影子	314
Football Crazy, Football Mad / 为球痴,为球狂	322
Earth, Swallow Me Up / 让我钻到地缝里去	332

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谁的青春不曾迷茫

青春的岁月里,我们有过梦想,有过迷茫,有过叛逆,有过希望。我们 怀揣爱情和梦想,背负一身沉重的行囊,迎着风雨,勇敢找寻自己的人生航向。



Popular Misconceptions



I was awkward in middle school: bony and athletic, with a high grade in science and a low one in self-esteem. Though I had friends, I didn't fit the mold of popularity. I was picked last in flag football¹⁾ and I sometimes ate lunch by myself.

I remember the day Brittany came to our school. She was from the Bay Area, and told us stories of how she had snuck out at night to meet older boys and smoke in the park. Her teeth were crooked²⁾, and she was a little overweight. Not that mattered though, because she walked around like she was better than all of us put together. She was incredibly intimidating³⁾, outspoken, and aggressive—a person who you didn't want to cross⁴⁾.

Around Brittany, I tried my best to go unnoticed. Standing out or stealing her spotlight could only result in one thing: confrontation. I considered myself a chameleon, blending in with my surrounding and remaining the shy sixth-grader I had always been. I wore skorts⁵⁾ and Tommy Hilfiger sneakers with red and blue laces, and my blond hair was frequently in a ponytail. Brittany and her friends wore shorts with words like "Hottie" on the seat. She dyed her brown hair black and got a perm like the other popular girls. All the boys were completely smitten⁶⁾ with her.

Although I could run for a touchdown⁷, Brittany was always the first girl picked in flag football at recess⁸ and I was lucky if I was picked at all. I was thrown the ball while she stood with the quarterback, chatting about

青春的误读

中学时代的我很尴尬:擅长运动,却骨瘦如柴,理科成绩好,自尊心却不强。虽然我有朋友,但我并不是人人都喜欢的那种类型。在夺旗橄榄球比赛中,我总是最后一个被选中上场的。有时候,我还会独自一人吃午餐。

我仍记得布里塔尼来我们学校的那天。她从旧金山湾区转学而来,当时还给我们讲了她以前如何在夜里溜出去跟年长的男生会面并在公园里吸烟那些事。她的牙齿长得歪歪扭扭的,人也有点胖。不过这些都没关系,因为她走起路来趾高气扬,好像我们所有人加在一起都不如她似的。她极有震慑力,说话直来直去,还总是一副咄咄逼人的样子——她就是一个你不想去招惹的人。

只要在布里塔尼旁边,我就尽量保持低调。太引人注目或抢她的风头只会有一个下场,那就是与她发生冲突。我觉得自己就像一条变色龙,与周围的环境融为一体,保持着自己作为一个六年级学生一贯的腼腆形象。我穿裙式短裤和镶有红蓝相间的蕾丝花边的汤米·希尔费格牌球鞋,一头金发总是扎成马尾。而布里塔尼和她的朋友们却穿臀部印有诸如"辣妹"字样的短裤。她还像其他很潮的女生一样把棕色的头发染黑、烫卷。所有男生都彻底被她迷倒了。

虽然我可以持球触地得分,然而在课间的夺旗橄榄球比赛中,布里塔尼却总是第一个被挑中上场的女孩,而我若能被选中,就算我的运气。别人传球给我的时候,她却在跟四分卫大谈自己最近参加的啤酒宴会。那时我甚至还不知

^{1.} flag football:(美式)夺旗橄榄球(守方队员必须从攻方持球队员服装上夺取小旗)

^{2.} crooked ['krʊkɪd] adi. 弯的: 扭曲的

^{3.} intimidating [ɪn'tɪmɪdeɪtɪŋ] adj. 令人惊恐的, 吓人的

^{4.} cross [krps] vt. 以(某种方式)招惹

^{5.} skort [skɔːt] n. 短裤裙 (skirt 和 short 的合成词)

^{6.} smitten ['smɪtn] adj. 被美貌迷住的;着了迷的

^{7.} touchdown ['tʌt[daun] n. 【美橄】攻方持球触地得分, 达阵

^{8.} recess [rɪ'ses] n. < 美 > 课间休息

the last keg party she'd gone to. I didn't even know what came in a keg and had never contemplated⁹⁾ drinking. She was flirtatious¹⁰⁾ and mysterious while I was a declaration of what good parenting and strong Christian morals could produce. I had never been kissed, nor did I understand the tactics¹¹⁾ to get as far as she had gone with a boy.

One day, Brittany bribed a classmate to ask me to the school dance. I wasn't allowed to go, and I told him so, but I was flattered. I felt elite and accepted by those around me. I told myself, though I am alone, I am desired and that is good enough for me. I blended in the most perfect way: well enough to fit in and not nerdy enough to stand out. Then Brittany told me during science class that she had put him up to 12 it. She asked in front of everyone, "Why would anyone ever want you?" And I believed her.

I went home and cried, questioning whether I was an alien. I told myself over and over that she would amount to nothing¹³⁾ while I still had time to grow. She would become a middle-aged trailer park¹⁴⁾ renter in Northern California, with lots of kids and with her same buck-toothed¹⁵⁾ smile, while I would somehow turn into a high school social butterfly and move to New York City, Chicago, or Washington D.C., cosmopolitan¹⁶⁾ and sophisticated¹⁷⁾. We would never be in the same league.

Secretly, I emulated¹⁸⁾ her. Through everything that she did to me, I wanted to be 20 times better. Although she was seemingly perfect in everyone's eyes, I wanted to be everything she wasn't and yet a million times more perfect. Where she was loud and mocking, I wanted to be reserved and coy¹⁹⁾. She wore tight pants that exposed her chubby²⁰⁾ stomach, but I wanted to be thin and muscular. Brittany was intimidating

道啤酒宴会是什么样子,也从没想过要喝酒。她举止轻佻,很是神秘,而我则是良好家教和严格的基督教道德准则所能培养出的典范。从没有人吻过我,我 也不懂那些伎俩,不知道如何像她一样与男生交往。

一天,布里塔尼买通了一位同学,让他邀请我参加学校的舞会。尽管我告诉他家里人不允许我去,但这件事却仍然让我觉得受宠若惊。原来我也是优秀的,我觉得身边的人接纳了自己。我对自己说,虽然我总是孤零零的一个人,可还是有人喜欢我的,这对我来说就足够了。我以最理想的方式融入了他们:既能与他们相处融洽,也没有出尽风头招人讨厌。后来在自然课上,布里塔尼告诉我,是她唆使那个人邀请我的。她当着全班同学的面反问我:"别人怎么会要你这样的?"我把她的这句话当真了。

回到家后,我哭了一场,怀疑自己是不是一个异类。我一遍遍地告诉自己,她将一事无成,而我还有时间成长。她将人到中年,带着一大群孩子在加州北部租住活动屋停车场;她的孩子们笑起来和她一样,龅牙外露。而我将成为高中的交际花,会迁居至纽约、芝加哥或华盛顿特区,成为一个见多识广又成熟老练的人。我们永远也不会成为同一类人。

私底下,我暗暗与她较劲。就凭她对我做的这一切,我也要比她好一百倍。 尽管她在每个人眼里似乎都完美无缺,我要做一个与她完全相反的人,但却要 比她完美上万倍。当她扯着嗓门冷嘲热讽时,我就要含蓄内敛、矜持腼腆。她 穿紧身裤,露出她丰腴的腹部,而我则要变得修长健美。布里塔尼气势汹汹叫

^{9.} contemplate ['kpntəmpleɪt] vt. 盘算, 打算

^{10.} flirtatious [fla:'teɪʃəs] adj. 喜卖弄风情的

^{11.} tactics ['tæktɪks] n. 策略, 手段

^{12.} put sb. up to: 叫某人做, 唆使某人干

^{13.} amount to nothing: 一事无成

^{14.} trailer park: <美>(有水电等供应的)拖车式活动房屋停车场

^{15.} buck-toothed: 龅牙的; 门牙突出的

^{16.} cosmopolitan [.kpzməˈpɒlɪtən] adi. 见多识广的

^{17.} sophisticated [səˈfɪstɪkeɪtɪd] adj. 精明老练的

^{18.} emulate ['emjuleɪt] vt. 与……竞争, 较劲

^{19.} coy [kɔɪ] adj. 害羞的, 腼腆的

^{20.} chubby ['tʃʌbi] adj. 圆胖的, 丰满的

and violent, but I wanted to be, and was then, serene and not at all confrontational. I wanted to be the polar²¹⁾ opposite of her, showing how much better I was than her.

I forgot about Brittany somewhere between eighth grade and freshman year. I found a new group of friends—girls from other schools who finally became the "in-crowd²²" in high school. Looking back, I was and am better than Brittany, and though I let her rule over my inadequacies²³ in middle school, I never did again. She was exactly what I hated then and is the type of person I will never let myself become.

I found Brittany's online profile a few weeks ago and discovered nothing outwardly shocking. She still has the same chubby face and mocking smile, flipping off²⁴⁾ the camera as if she couldn't come up with anything original. I cringed²⁵⁾ at some half-naked pictures with captions²⁶⁾ that read "GeT bLaZeD". As I read on, I realized that Brittany had died in a drunken driving accident a year ago. She had been 16 and pregnant at the time. Suddenly my perception of Brittany changed from a bad influence into a struggling little girl whose life was taken before she could decipher²⁷⁾ right from wrong. I had wanted everything bad to happen to her, but no one deserves that. No one. Those who worshiped her may never again, but I will always think of Brittany as the girl who never had the chance to find herself.

My experience with Brittany taught me that though we are all naive in our youth, the choices we make will impact us forever. The people we choose to be will remain a part of us. I will always remember Brittany as that loud²⁸⁾, overconfident girl, and a part of that shy, insecure person I used to be will always keep me humble.

(By Lauren M.)

人害怕,而我却想文静安详,不与人争吵冲撞(那时的我就是这样的)。我想和她完全相反,以证明我比她要优秀得多。

从八年级到大学一年级的那段日子里,我忘记了有关布里塔尼的往事。我结交了一群新朋友,她们来自其他学校,最终成了我们高中的风云人物。现在回过头看,不论是过去还是现在,我都比布里塔尼更优秀。尽管她曾对我中学时代的种种缺陷指手画脚,但我再也不会让她得逞了。她的的确确就是我当时所憎恶的人,而我永远也不会允许自己成为她那种人。

几周前,我在网上看到了布里塔尼的个人主页。表面看来,我并没发现她有什么太糟糕的地方。仍旧是那张圆圆的脸庞,脸上依然挂着嘲弄人的窃笑。她对着相机竖起中指,好像再也摆不出什么新颖的姿势。看到她拍的那些以"变得激情四射吧"作为说明的半裸照片,我感到尴尬不已。等我继续读下去,才发现布里塔尼已于一年前在一次因酒后驾驶引发的事故中丧生。当时她只有16岁,还有了身孕。突然之间,我对布里塔尼的印象发生了转变,由一个对周围产生很坏影响的人变成了一个苦苦挣扎的年轻女孩,一个在能明辨是非前就已失去生命的人。我曾希望一切不幸都降临于她,可是,没有人应该受到这样的惩罚啊。没有人。也许那些曾经爱慕过她的人再也不会念及她,但我却会一直想到她——个永远都没有机会发现自我的女孩。

这段与布里塔尼有关的经历教会了我一个道理:尽管年轻时我们都天真幼稚,但所做的选择却会影响我们的一生。我们选择成为什么样的人,那种人的特征就会成为我们的一部分留存下来。我会一直记住布里塔尼,那个举止招摇而又张狂自负的女孩。而曾经腼腆而又不自信的我也会一如既往地保持那份谦卑。

(译/赵越)

^{21.} polar ['pəʊlə(r)] adj. 正好相反的

^{22.} in-crowd: <口>(熟人结成的)小圈子;(熟知内情的)小团体;小集团

^{23.} inadequacy [ɪn'ædɪkwəsi] n. 弱点, 缺陷

^{24.} flip off: 竖中指侮辱

^{25.} cringe [krɪndʒ] vi. 局促不安

^{26.} caption ['kæp[n] n. (图片的)文字说明: 标题

^{27.} decipher [dr'saɪfə(r)] vt. 辨认:解释

^{28.} loud [laud] adi. (举止等)招摇的,炫耀的

You're Not Special



Commencement is life's great ceremonial beginning, with its own attendant and highly appropriate symbolism. Fitting, for example, for this auspicious¹⁾ rite of passage²⁾, is where we find ourselves this afternoon, the venue. Normally,

I avoid clichés like the plague, but there we are on a literal level playing field. That matters. That says something. And your ceremonial costume ... shapeless, uniform, one-size-fits-all. Whether male or female, tall or short, scholar or slacker³, each of you is dressed, you'll notice, exactly the same. And your diploma ... but for your name, exactly the same.

All of this is as it should be, because none of you is special.

You are not special. You are not exceptional.

Yes, you've been pampered, cosseted, doted upon, helmeted, bubble-wrapped. Yes, capable adults with other things to do have held you, kissed you, fed you, wiped your mouth, wiped your bottom, trained you, taught you, tutored you, coached you, listened to you, counseled you, encouraged you, consoled you and encouraged you again. You've been nudged, cajoled, wheedled and implored. You've been feted and fawned over and called sweetie pie. Yes, you have. And, certainly, we've been to your games, your plays, your recitals, your science fairs. Absolutely, smiles ignite when you walk into a room, and hundreds gasp with delight at your every tweet. Why, maybe you've even had your picture in the *Townsman*⁴! And

你并不特别

毕业典礼是人生伟大的开端仪式,有其自身的附加值以及恰如其分的象征意义。比方说,与这个美好的人生庆典相匹配的,就是今天下午我们身处的这个地方——这个会场。我通常对陈词滥调如瘟疫一般避之唯恐不及,但今天却是一个要比拼文字的场合,用词自然就要注意了,用什么词就要说明点儿什么。看看各位的礼服……没型没样、千篇一律,还都是一个尺寸。不论男女、不分高矮、也不管学习用不用功,你们会发现你们每个人穿得都一模一样。还有你们的毕业证书,除了你们的名字以外,其他的完全一样。

这一切本就应该如此,因为你们没有一个人是特别的。

你并不特别, 也不出众。

没错,你一直是大人们宠爱、溺爱、娇纵的对象,享受百般呵护和无微不至的照料。没错,无所不能的大人们再忙也要拥抱你,亲吻你,喂养你,给你擦嘴、擦屁股,训练你,教育你,教导你,指引你,听你说话,给你忠告,鼓励你,安慰你,然后再鼓励你。他们对你费尽唇舌、好话说尽,或哄骗,或祈求,苦口婆心。他们赞美你、恭维你,叫你乖乖小甜心。没错,你拥有这一切。当然,你的运动会、你的比赛、你的朗诵会、你的科学展我们都会去参加。毫无疑问,当你走进教室,每个人都为你展露笑容。你发的每一条推特都会赢得数百声惊叹。哇,你的照片甚至可能还上过《同城人》报纸!而现在,你已经拿下了高

^{1.} auspicious [ɔː'spɪ[əs] adj. 吉祥的, 吉利的

^{2.} rite of passage: 标志人生进入一个新阶段的重大事件

^{3.} slacker ['slækə(r)] n. 偷懒的人, 逃避工作的人

^{4.} Townsman: 此处指 The Wellesley Townsman, 是美国马萨诸塞州韦尔斯利当地的一份报纸, 每周四出版一次, 报道当地的体育、商业、社区活动等。

now you've conquered high school ... and, indisputably, here we all have gathered for you, the pride and joy of this fine community, the first to emerge from that magnificent new building....

But do not get the idea you're anything special, because you're not.

The empirical evidence is everywhere; numbers even an English teacher can't ignore. Newton, Natnick, Nee ... I am allowed to say Needham⁵⁾, yes? ... that has to be two thousand high school graduates right here, give or take, and that's just the neighborhood N's. Across the country no fewer than 3.2 million seniors are graduating about now from more than 37,000 high schools. That's 37,000 valedictorians⁶⁾. That's 37,000 class presidents.... But why limit ourselves to high school? After all, you're leaving it. So think about this: even if you're one in a million, on a planet of 6.8 billion that means there are nearly 7,000 people just like you.

"But, Dave," you cry, "Walt Whitman tells me I'm my own version of perfect! Epictetus tells me I have the spark of Zeus!" And I don't disagree. So that makes 6.8 billion sparks of Zeus. You see, if everyone is special, then no one is. If everyone gets a trophy, trophies become meaningless. In our unspoken but not so subtle Darwinian competition with one another—which springs, I think, from our fear of our own insignificance, a subset of our dread of mortality—we have of late, we Americans, to our detriment, come to love accolades more than genuine achievement. We have come to see them as the point—and we're happy to compromise standards, or ignore reality, if we suspect that's the quickest way, or only way, to have something to put on the mantelpiece, something to pose with, crow

中……毫无疑问,我们今天相聚在此全是为了你们——你们是这所一流学校的 荣耀和喜悦,是从那幢雄伟的新教学楼里走出来的第一批学子……

但是,千万不要以为你很特别,因为你并不特别。

实证比比皆是,即使是一个英语老师也无法忽视这些数字。牛顿中学、内蒂克中学,还有李——我可以提李约瑟中学的名字吗?——那里或多或少应该有 2000 名高中毕业生吧,而这才仅仅是附近以 N 开头的几所高中的毕业人数。在整个美国,目前至少应该有 320 万名高中生正从 3.7 万多所高中毕业。也就是说,有 3.7 万名致告别辞的学生代表,有 3.7 万名学生会主席……但是,为什么我们只局限在高中范围呢?毕竟,你马上就要告别高中了。所以这样想想看:即使你是百万人中挑一的,但地球上有 68 亿人口,那就意味着世界上有近 7000 个像你这样的人。

"可是,戴夫,"你大声喊道,"诗人沃尔特·惠特曼告诉我,我就是我自己的完美版本!哲学家爱比克泰德告诉我,我有宙斯的才智!"我并不否认,但这样一来,就有 68 亿个有才智的宙斯。你瞧,如果人人都是特别的,那么谁都不特别。如果人人都能得到奖杯,那么奖杯也就变得毫无意义。我认为,我们对自身平庸的恐惧——这也是怕死的部分表现——引发了彼此之间达尔文式的适者生存竞争。在这种尽管我们嘴上不说但却显而易见的竞争中,我们美国人近来变得越来越喜欢荣誉和赞美之辞,而不是真正的成就,这对我们有害无益。于是我们把这些东西看得无比重要。我们乐于降低标准,或者无视现实,如果我们认定这是最简便的或是唯一的方法,能让我们得到某个可以放在壁炉架上炫耀的东西,某个可以拿来一起拍照合影、自吹自擂的东西,某个可以提携我

^{5.} Needham: 此处指 Needham High School。该校创立于 1930 年,以英国著名科学家李约瑟 (Joseph Needham, 1900~1995) 之名命名,是波士顿著名的公立学校之一,与 Wellesley High School 存在竞争关系。

^{6.} valedictorian [,vælɪdɪk'tɔ:riən] n. < 美 > (在毕业典礼上) 致告别辞的毕业生代表(通常是班上成绩最好的学生)

^{7.} detriment ['detrɪmənt] n. 损害, 伤害

^{8.} accolade ['ækəleɪd] n. 赞美; 荣誉; 奖励

^{9.} crow [krəʊ] vi. 夸口, 自夸

about, something with which to leverage ourselves into a better spot on the social totem pole¹⁰⁾. No longer is it even whether you win or lose, or learn or grow, or enjoy yourself doing it.... Now it's "So what does this get me?" As a consequence, we cheapen worthy endeavors. It's an epidemic—and in its way, not even dear old Wellesley High is immune—one of the best of the 37,000 nationwide, Wellesley High School—where good is no longer good enough, where a B is the new C, and the midlevel curriculum is called Advanced College Placement¹¹⁾. And I hope you caught me when I said "one of the best". I said "one of the best" so we can feel better about ourselves, so we can bask¹²⁾ in a little easy distinction, however vague and unverifiable, and count ourselves among the elite, whoever they might be, and enjoy a perceived leg-up on the perceived competition. But the phrase defies logic. By definition there can be only one best. You're it or you're not.

If you've learned anything in your four years here I hope it's that education should be for, rather than material advantage, the exhilaration of learning. You've learned, too, I hope, as Sophocles assured us, that wisdom is the chief element of happiness. Second is ice cream ... just an FYI¹⁵. I also hope you've learned enough to recognize how little you know, how little you know now, at the moment, for today is just the beginning. It's where you go from here that matters.

As you commence, then, and before you scatter to the winds, I urge you to do whatever you do for no reason other than you love it and believe in its importance. Don't bother with work you don't believe in any more than you would, a spouse you're not crazy about. Resist the easy comforts of complacency, the specious¹⁶⁾ glitter of materialism, the narcotic¹⁷⁾ paralysis of self-satisfaction. Be worthy of your advantages.