student judges
Ashley Blake, Shawn Buckenmeyer, Brian Hershey, Nicci Mechler and Andrew Risch

editors
Dr. Janel Bloch’s Spring 2013 “Traditional Grammar” students
Dr. Janel Bloch, Department of English

on the cover
Author Wes Moore speaks with first-year students at the Book Connection Conversations, held in September 2012.

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Department of English
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Highland Heights, Kentucky 41099

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Going on its 14th year, the Book Connection program, part of the Office of First-Year Programs, features one book and invites more than 1,000 first-year students to engage in a shared reading experience. Each year, a committee of faculty and staff selects the book, and the featured author participates in conversations with first-year students. At the same time, faculty from such courses as University 101, English 101 and Critical Reading 110 assign readings and projects related to the book.

This year’s book was *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*, by Wes Moore. Here’s a quick overview from the author’s website: “Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question.”

Wes Moore’s words – both on and off stage – are inspiring. When visiting NKU in September 2012, he spoke about the value of community service, building meaningful relationships, and being aware of our choices and the environments in which we make them. He stayed more than an hour after his scheduled book signing, speaking with every student and community member who waited in line. All told, it was a memorable evening.

To build on Wes’s book and his visit to NKU in September, the Office of First-Year Programs sponsored a Book Connection student writing/visual art contest, inviting students to respond to the themes and messages of *The Other Wes Moore*. In Spring 2013, undergraduate and graduate students in Professor Andy Miller’s “Literary Publishing” course judged Book Connection contest entries; when reviewing the submissions, the judges were focused on identifying first-year students who best demonstrated insight, creativity, critical thinking, and engagement with the book. Later, Dr. Janel Bloch and her “Traditional Grammar” course edited the winning submissions.

And on behalf of the judges and editors, I’m pleased to write that this year’s winners possess those qualities and more. Please join me in celebrating their work in this edition of *Connected* as well as the students, faculty and staff who make the Book Connection program wonderful.

Sincerely,

Rich Shivener  
Assistant Director, First-Year Programs  
Coordinator, Book Connection
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WRITING/VISUAL ART CONTEST WINNERS

PERSONAL ESSAY

FIRST PLACE:
Sierra Hall
“Struggles Lead Some to Success”

SECOND PLACE:
Kiarra Mckinnon
“My Own Other”

THIRD PLACE:
Alex Hutton
“Choices, Determination and Risks”

HONORABLE MENTION:
Autumn Hatton
“The Choices of Today”

HONORABLE MENTION:
Brittani Humphrey
“The Other Wes Moore”

CREATIVE WRITING

FIRST PLACE:
Taylor Straman
“Two Fates and Only One Name”

SECOND PLACE:
Lindsey Tackett
“You Are Not Alone”

THIRD PLACE:
Jason Thomas
“The Choice Is Yours”

HONORABLE MENTION:
Samuel Ruwe
“P. S. I Love You Always and Forever”

VISUAL ART

FIRST PLACE:
Raven Maple
“One Life, Many Paths”

SECOND PLACE:
Alyssa Crouch
“Moore Family Tree”

THIRD PLACE:
Michelle Albrinck
“What My Eyes Seem to See and to Miss”
What My Eyes Seem to See and to Miss
Artist’s Statement

Wes Moore and the other Wes Moore have a lot in common; however, at the same time, they are completely different in their own ways. I wanted to portray in my art that the Wes Moores are linked by where they grew up and how they both began their lives. I want the audience to understand that even though each of them started off the same way, their lives took very different turns. Even though you may share the same name with someone else or grow up the same as another person, it does not mean that your future will be dark and will turn out badly. Every person has a say in how to live his or her life. Everyone has the chance to stop themselves from doing something they know they should not do. The chance to be good and bad always stands; it just matters which one you decide to go along with. The image I have created will show the audience that you can follow the path you think is destined for you, or you can dig and pave another one and do what you know is right for you. You always have a choice; make sure you pick the right one.

Connected judges said:

“A mirrored profile depicts two identity paths that branch from the same origin—both people grow from the same literal point in space (neighborhood), but each has made different choices in life. Bars fill the eyes of one individual, indicating a closed-in mind and eventual location, while the other individual’s eye views a brighter future. The artist writes: ‘You can dig and pave another path. You always have a choice; make sure you pick the right one.’“
Moore Family Tree
When I was thinking of an idea for the Book Connection contest, I was confused about what I should do. The teacher gave us a few ideas, and I interpreted one of the ideas in my own way. My idea is a family tree made out of pipe cleaners. It is just one tree with both the author Wes Moore’s and “the other Wes Moore's” family on it. One side of the tree is green and growing (looking full of life) to represent Wes Moore, the author, and his success and good choices. The other side is only brown and made to look dead to represent the other Wes Moore and his bad choices and the outcome. Everyone on the family tree isn't only family but also people who influenced the boys' lives as they were growing up and the choices that affected their present-day lives.

Connected judges said:

“This piece combines the two halves of a tree-like form to represent the halves of a whole—the good and the bad, the vibrant and the decaying side of an entity. The movement in the shape lends itself well to meaning, illustrating both the twists and turns of each choice put into our paths, combined with a representation of a literal family tree, and every person who influences the decisions we make, for good or ill.”
Wes Moore the author and Wes Moore the criminal had their struggles and successes throughout their lives. I can personally relate to their struggles and successes in many ways. At first, I didn’t think they would relate to me at all. However, as I dug deeper into the book, *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*, I realized I was more like both of them than I realized. Many themes from this book relate to me, but I narrowed it down to seven themes: single parenthood, education, bad experiences, loss and death, decision making, motivation, and choices having consequences.

I, like both Wes Moores, did not have my father in my life. My parents were young when they had me. They married before my younger brother was born and divorced when he was a toddler. Almost all of my life, my mother has struggled being a single mom. She had no job and no college education, only her GED. When I was about five, my brother and I moved in with our grandparents because my mother couldn’t take care of us. Similarly, when Wes Moore (the author) lost his father when he was young, his mother moved them back to live with her parents because she was struggling to make ends meet. The other Wes Moore never had his father around because his father did not want to be in his life. When he ran into his dad, his father didn’t even recognize him. His mother was constantly working so that she could afford to take care of her kids. My mother currently lives with me, but still has no job. She just takes care of my two brothers and me.

Another theme I could relate to is education. I was a good student throughout elementary school and junior high, but once I got into high school, everything went downhill. I got bad grades and did really stupid and bad things and didn’t have good friends to influence me positively. I struggled to make it into college because I did so poorly through high school. I had no college fund, so I am completely relying on loans and grants to pay for my education. As a first generation student, my chances of sticking with college are much lower than students who have parents who went to college. Also, not many of my friends from high school went to college. Wes Moore was put into a private school because his mother thought that the students there would be a better influence on him, but that proved to be untrue. Wes was sent to military school by his mother because he rebelled so much that she had no other choice. She thought it would be a great chance for him to learn to be a better person. That proved to be right and he then went into Johns Hopkins University and graduated as a Rhodes Scholar. The other Wes Moore quit

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*Struggles Lead Some to Success*

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school and had kids. He went into the Job Corps and graduated, but eventually got back into the drug scene.

Both Wes Moores had bad experiences, particularly relating to loss and death. I also have had a lot of bad experiences in my life. When I was a freshman in high school, my grandma died. She was like a mother to me because she had taken care of my brother and me for most of our lives. When she died, I became devastated and started doing really bad and stupid things. After my grandma died, I was diagnosed with severe depression, and I was doing drugs until my senior year. I ran away from home my sophomore year, and I ended up in the hospital that same day for a month for threatening to commit suicide. I cut myself a lot because I was very sensitive, and I did it when something bad happened in a relationship or at home. I let my grades drop every year because something bad always happened, and I always ended up hanging out with the wrong people. During my senior year, my mom and youngest brother moved in with my grandpa, my other brother, and me. I started the year off poorly, but my mom went into the hospital at the end of March, and we almost lost her. That was my turning point.

Another theme in the book deals with decision making. I made the decision to turn things around. I only had a little time to bring my grades up in school, but I managed to do it. I had applied to three different colleges: University of Cincinnati, Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and Northern Kentucky University. I heard from all of these colleges on the same day. I got two emails while I was at school, one from UC and one from Christ College. Both emails told me that I had been turned down. I went home with tears rolling down my face. When I got home, I had letters from all three colleges, and I already knew what two of them said. I assumed the third would say the same, so I was shocked when I opened it and it said, “Congratulations!”

The two Wes Moores had differing degrees of motivation. I had little motivation after my grandma died, but I knew what she wanted me to do with my life. She wanted me to succeed, be a good person, and all the other normal things parents or grandparents want for their children or grandchildren. I always wanted to follow in her footsteps and be the strong woman she was. I am planning on going into a nursing career because my grandma was a nurse, and I want to help people like she helped people.

Finally, both Wes Moores struggled with choices and consequences. They both dealt with breaking the law and handling drugs in some way or another. The other Wes Moore is now serving life in prison because he and three other men robbed a jewelry store and murdered a cop. He was into selling drugs as a kid because he wanted to make money. He wanted to be like his older brother, Tony. Tony would try to tell Wes to “do as I say, not as I do,” but Wes ignored him and did exactly the opposite (27). Wes Moore (the author) struggled with school as a kid but now lives a happy and healthy life. His mother putting him in military school caused him to really think about what he could do with his life.

A quote from the book that I feel really connects me to Wes Moore is, “As I started to think seriously about how I could become the person I wanted to be, I looked around at some of the people who’d had the biggest impact
on my life” (132). I have done exactly that in the past year. My family and friends have made such an impact on the person I have become, and they still teach me every single day that I have a lot to live for and that I have such a bright future. ❖

Writer’s Statement

I felt an essay would be a great way for me to connect myself to the Wes Moores because I am not a very creative person. In fact, I used to be very creative, but I have lost my talents of creativity over the years because I tend to give up when I am down. I explain myself better when I write an essay. Writing is one strength and creative ability I have managed to keep. As I was writing my essay, I realized I was able to connect myself to the Wes Moores more than I first thought I could.

My essay tells about my struggles and successes as well as both Wes Moores' struggles and successes. Personally, a lot has happened to me in just the past four years, and I have changed a lot because of those happenings. I am proud of my successes and don’t necessarily regret my failures because I wouldn’t be who I am today without both my failures and successes. I have shown to be a strong and determined young woman, and I have made many people proud, but some can’t get over my past struggles to see the woman I am turning out to be.

Connected judges said:

“The vulnerability in this essay is its strength. The writer directly and specifically links her own personal life to themes in The Other Wes Moore. On the people who greatly affected her life, she writes: ‘I always wanted to follow in [my grandma’s] footsteps and be the strong woman she was. […] I want to help people like she helped people.’"
The Choices of Today

Each decision that a person makes can change the outcome of his or her future. The book, The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates, is a prime example of this. Two children had similar childhoods and lived blocks away from one another. While they both made many bad decisions, they grew up to be two completely different adults. One accomplished many great things, including being a Rhodes Scholar, while the other ended up serving a life sentence for being convicted for murder. Everyone chooses his or her own fate. Everyone makes choices, good and bad, and the choices that each person makes will affect his or her future. It is important to understand the consequences of the choices that one makes today and to understand how those choices affect one’s future.

As for myself, I have made many choices throughout my life that have allowed me to be where I am today. I have made very important choices that are similar to some of the choices that each of the Wes Moores had to make. The three of us all had to make choices about school, friends, and role models. I may have grown up in a completely different way, but people have to make very similar choices every day. Every choice that I have made in life, like both Wes Moores, has had its consequences, but it is helping to determine my fate.

One major choice that I made in my life is making school a priority. Throughout grade school and high school, I always put forth a lot of effort into my schoolwork. Doing every assignment that I was given allowed me to do well and earn high grades. Because I chose to make school a priority, I was able to become more involved in school, not only with academics, but with extracurricular activities as well. This choice eventually led me to further my education at Northern Kentucky University. One’s decision to put school first is one of the most important decisions that a person can make in order to go down the “right path.” Wes Moore (the author) made the choice to make school a priority once he went to military school. Although he did not care about school in his early years, he made the change that was needed and became more involved in his academics. This decision eventually led Wes to becoming a Rhodes Scholar, and from there he moved on to many bigger and better things. The other Wes Moore did not make school a priority in any matter. He did not even try to finish school. Dropping out of school at such an early age is such a dangerous choice. It leaves one with nowhere to go, making it difficult to avoid trouble. Dropping out of school is what caused the other Wes Moore to have no protection against being caught up in trouble. His choice to drop out of school was one of the factors that contributed to his being in the
streets, which would eventually lead to his fate in prison. Although the two Wes Moores and I had to make this choice in different situations, it was still the same choice: whether or not to make school a priority. This is a major choice that led to our different fates.

A second major choice that has affected my life is who my friends are. I have chosen my friends wisely, and I have avoided making friends who I know are not good for me. I like to surround myself with positive influences that help me to better myself. My friends have pushed me to do well in school, to be more involved, and to be a better person. My friends have always been very supportive and have helped me through everything. A person’s choice of friends is very crucial to who that person becomes. In his early years, Wes Moore (the author) did not choose the friends that would be good for him, but once he got to military school, he was able to see that he could have different friends. The friends that Wes made in military school were able to help him through his struggles and become a better person than he had been. In contrast, the other Wes Moore surrounded himself with people who had no interest in things that were good. This choice of friends might have influenced this Wes to do some of the things that he did, thus contributing to his fate. Friends are a huge influence in everyone’s life, and choosing who one’s friends are will be a factor in where one ends up in his or her future.

A third choice that has contributed to my fate was the people that I chose to look up to. The role models that I have chosen in my life are the people that have definitely helped to make me the person that I am today. I look up to my mother and my grandparents. My mother has been through so much in her life, and she has shown me that it is possible to overcome those struggles. She, like both Wes’s mothers, had me at an early age and raised me on her own during my early years. She did everything that she could to provide my sisters and me with everything that we needed in life. My grandparents have shown me how to be a great person. They are so caring and are willing to do anything for anyone. I am so thankful that I have had them there to show me the type of person that I want to grow up to be. Wes Moore (the author) also looked up to his mother and his grandparents for many similar reasons. His mother was a lot like my mother, trying to do whatever she could to provide for her children. His grandparents showed a lot of the same loving qualities that my grandparents have shown me. The other Wes Moore chose to look up to his brother Tony. Tony was such a bad influence on Wes, but Wes still chose to look up to him. Tony did not want Wes to be anything like him. Wes had other people in his life that he could have looked up to, like his hard-working mother, yet he still wanted to be like Tony. Everyone has to choose who he or she wants to look up to in life. It is crucial to make sure that one is looking up to someone who is going to help him or her do the right thing. No matter how much one may love someone (like Wes’s love for Tony), a person needs to have positive role models.

These three choices are a few that have led to all of our fates. I made school a priority, I had positive friends, and I had great role models. All of the choices that I have made may not have been the “right” choices, but they have still made me who I am today. These
choices have led me to becoming a student at Northern Kentucky University, becoming a member of Delta Zeta’s Kappa Beta chapter, and many more things to come. I would not have made it to this point in my life if I had not made those choices. Wes Moore (the author) chose to make school a priority, to change who his friends were, and to look up to the positive role models in his life. These similar choices led him to completing school and becoming a Rhodes Scholar, becoming a decorated veteran, and accomplishing many more great things. The other Wes Moore made the decisions not to care about school, to surround himself with people who were bad influences, and to look up to people who were bad influences. These are a few choices that led to his fate in prison.

Some may think that one has no other choice in life, and that is why one makes the decisions that he or she does. This is not true; anyone can choose his or her own fate. Everyone has the ability to make crucial choices in his or her life, and it is important to understand the consequences of those choices. It is important for people to make decisions that will cause them to become the best versions of themselves.

I chose to write this paper because I wanted to show that many people in the world make many similar choices to one another. I wanted to show that three people (both Wes Moores and I) could make the same choice in three totally different ways. I also wrote this paper to reflect on some of the choices that I have made in my life and how those choices have gotten me to where I am today. I wanted to show that everyone makes choices, and everyone can choose his or her own fate.

**Connected judges said:**

“This essay is a well-composed examination of personal choices that lead to self-determined pathways. The writer linked experience with the themes in the book, wisely selecting the first words: ‘Each decision that a person makes can change the outcome of his or her future.’ The essay begins here, with a sure statement, and flows through various life choices, including the selection of good friends and role models, through the assertion that anyone can choose to ‘become the best versions of themselves.’”
When I first received *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates* at the end of my orientation weekend, I thought it would be an easy read and that by the end of the car trip home I would be at least halfway through it. I mean, how deep could the story be, right? Very quickly I discovered I was wrong! It not only took me a long time to finish this book, but it also took me a while to realize that Wes Moore wasn’t just a city boy living in Baltimore, nor was he just extremely lucky. This book was about more than two people whose names just so happen to be “Wes Moore.” When I read this book, I saw myself. I saw my life written out on paper. I was able to connect with the death and the poverty that surrounded the city. Even the consequences that both of the Wes Moores faced were similar to ones that I’ve seen in my life.

For nearly twelve years of my life, what I would call home, the upper middle class of Louisville, Kentucky, was referred to as “The West End” and even better acknowledged as “the ghetto.” There was nothing too fancy about the house where I lived. We only had one window, which was barred off for our protection, and we had to walk all the way to the end of our street to wash our clothes. Inside of our mini complex, there were only two rooms; my brother, sister and I all shared one bed, while my mom and soon-to-be dad had the other. For the earlier part of my life, my mom, starting at only 17, raised all three of her children and even my stepbrother on her own. She knew the streets like the back of her hand and did everything in her power to protect us from their dangers. She was the only parent standing at my bus stop thirty minutes early just to make sure we got off safely. At one point, she even volunteered at our school just to check in on us. But that didn’t stop the drug and gang violence all around us. There was no way she could keep us from seeing strung out homeless people in the alley as we walked to the laundromat, and there was no way she could keep us from seeing the ladies walking around in extremely little clothes on the walk to the bus stop, and there was definitely no way she could keep us from hearing the cuss words and foul gestures tossed around by even the younger kids on the bus ride to school.

But despite all the poverty that surrounded us, we were still happy, and I made a lot of lifelong friends, friends that I talk to still to this day. Much like Wes and Woody, there were days when I would do nothing but hang with my buddies. I remember going outside with our glass jars and catching lightning bugs, and wondering, if I ate one, would I glow too?

It wasn’t until my eighth grade year that my parents finally got married and had another son. Not too long afterward, we moved into our very first
home! Unfortunately for my brother, sister, and me, that meant we had to move away from all of our old friends. We were not too happy about it, but we did not have much of a say in the matter. My parents decided that they wanted us to experience an entirely different atmosphere of the city than where we had grown up in, so we moved into what was considered the “suburbs.” When we first arrived there, it wasn’t hard to see that we were the only family of our race in the subdivision. Not many kids played with us, and we weren’t exactly eager to play with them. It was a completely different atmosphere than what we were used to. When school started, there still wasn’t much of a difference. It was a predominately white school, and people of my race were very scarce and the ones who were there didn’t seem to want to be bothered. Much like for Wes Moore, school didn’t seem as important to me as it should have. I slacked off, talked back, and signed my name on more detentions than homework papers. My rebellion at school began to embarrass my parents. They constantly set up conferences with my teachers, and I constantly caused trouble. It wasn’t until I met my boyfriend that things began to change.

Much like any other romantic story, ours was one that couldn’t have played out any better. I was at a track meet, holding my position and awaiting the gun to start my 100 meter dash. I ran and, of course, I ended up in first place. At the end of my meet, he approached me, and it seemed to be love at first sight. At this time I was 16, and he was 20. This was an age difference that was shunned by many people, even my parents, but we were inseparable. He showed up to every practice I had after that meet, even attended all of my other meets, and when I played volleyball, I expected nothing less. He would pick me up from school and take me out to eat. We became thicker than blood. He had a son, and in order to continue to support his family, he enlisted in the Navy in 2011; however, even distance couldn’t separate us. He would send me letters constantly, and I would reply.

After a year in the Navy he got into a huge car accident and was allowed to come home to recover. I knew it would be a few hours until he got home, so I decided to pick up a few hours at work. When he arrived back in Louisville, I had planned to meet him at his house, but I ended up stuck at work later than I expected. After I finished work, I tried to call him several times, but the phone seemed to just ring for hours. It wasn’t until I reluctantly drove back home that I received an unusual phone call from his mother. She told me that a few hours before, while playing the real version of Russian roulette, he died. Nothing seemed to make sense. I couldn’t seem to hear anything else she said. I had just spoken to him before work. His death tore everything in me, similar to Wes Moore’s having to watch his father die—not understanding it and not knowing what to say. So many questions flooded my mind and so many memories played on a continuous loop.

One thing that still haunts me is that it could have been me. If I had not chosen to pick up that shift, there is no doubt in my mind that I would have found myself participating in the game, or if I didn’t play and just watched, I would have had to witness him take his life. And most importantly, what if I could have stopped him from playing the game? Would he still be here with me today? The choice I made to go
to work the night of January 29, 2012, consequently saved my life. These incidents are only a few of the things that have made me into who I am now. I believe if these things had not happened to me, I would not be able to share my story like Wes Moore shared his.

Writer’s Statement

In this piece, I wanted to connect with the author of The Other Wes Moore in several different ways. I wanted to show a side of me that could never be guessed. I wanted to connect the death of my best friend/boyfriend to the death of Wes Moore’s father. I wanted to connect the consequences of the Wes Moores’ decisions to the choice I made to go to work instead of hanging out with my boyfriend: a choice that both spared my life and stopped his. I also wanted to express the similarities that I have with Wes Moore when he talked of growing up in poverty and the living conditions that existed while they lived there. My purpose was to create a piece that compares my life to the lives of the Wes Moores. My means of making these connections were the stories that I tied in with the themes (i.e., my boyfriend’s death, getting constant detentions in school, and moving into a new neighborhood). I hope that after reading my essay, you can see another Wes Moore within me because Wes Moore’s story is about more than just two people—it is about society and the struggle that everyone goes through.

Connected judges said:

“What impressed us most about this piece is the bravery demonstrated in sharing emotional, personal experiences. It is a lovely piece of memoir. The work connects to The Other Wes Moore via a story of loss, and self-discovery through meditation on the book. The writer states: ‘When I read this book, I saw me, I saw my life written out on paper.’ There’s an examination of the fragility of life, and the way even a single choice can end a life, and we thank this writer for trusting us with this story.”
In the book, *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*, there are two people with the same name who grew up on identical streets. However, they chose different paths, which led one to being incarcerated for life and the other to becoming an author. When reading this book and writing this essay, I tried to put myself in the shoes of the two Wes Moores and thought about whether I would have chosen the same paths, given their environments. The themes that I discuss in this essay are choices, determination, and risks. In my life, I have had to make choices that affect me even to this day. When I had to make those choices, I knew that there was a risk in doing so, and there was no turning back. I still live with the choices that I made, and (for the most part) I am happy with my choices.

Both of the Wes Moores had choices in their lives. The author, for instance, chose to stay in school and not get into drugs. He made those choices because his mother was his influence for most of his life. His dad was there, but he died when Wes was very young. Because of his father’s death, Wes’s life was forever changed, which forced him to grow up faster than other children at the time. This made him a stronger individual and a better choice maker. But his driving force was his mother. She put a huge stress on school and made Wes determined to achieve his goals, which would one day pay off.

The other Wes Moore, however, was almost forced into a life of crime. He was also brought up by a single mom and was influenced by her and the other kids who lived on the street at the time. His mother did drugs, which made him think that drugs were suitable if he was going to live there. Since his mother was always on drugs, Wes had to be around his friends on the street and his brother, Tony. Tony was also into drugs and was on the street full time selling them, which brought in a lot of cash. Wes’s choice making was influenced by his participation in the drug game and also whether it would benefit his brother’s operation. When Wes chose to start his own drug operation, it was hard for him to get back out of it. He had tried to get a job and leave all of it behind him, but upon his return, he was right back into drugs. Once he had made that choice, it was hard for him to just stop the process. The choices of the two Wes Moores have affected them greatly and still do to this day.

In the book, Wes Moore, the drug dealer, lived his life thinking that there was only one way to go. He got involved in drugs and violence at a very young age. He operated with the thought that he would never get out. When he got a job, he was away from streets. As...
I was reading the book, I thought that when he returned from his job, he had changed his ways. However, he did drugs all over again. He didn’t have the knowledge that there was something more than just doing drugs for the rest of his life. He lacked the perception to see that there was any other choice. He simply accepted what was in front of him, which was the fact that his brother was a drug dealer; therefore, he too, would become a drug dealer. He also lacked the insight to see down the road and how it would affect him.

In contrast, when the author, Wes Moore, was caught in the act of spray painting a wall as young child, his mother sent him to a military school. This experience gave him the knowledge that there was more to life than growing up on the streets of Baltimore. This insight gave him the determination to set goals and achieve them. Even though the author, Wes Moore, made some poor choices early on, he was able to look down the road and see where his life could end up.

Like the two Wes Moores, I have made choices that shape the way I behave and how I look at things. When I was in grade school, I was made fun of for being overweight, wearing glasses, and stuttering. From second grade to eighth grade, I was tortured by fellow classmates. They would call me names, hit me, and ostracize me. I had to endure this with no one to help me but myself. When I told my parents, however, they put me in Tae Kwon Do. When I was enrolled at the age of ten, I learned moves that could be harmful to other people if used in the improper way. With these teachings, I also learned how to control myself. The tenets, or guidelines, of Tae Kwon Do are courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit. That being said, I still had to continue to go to school and face those kids who made fun of me. I had a choice to make. Was I going to fight back and teach them not to mess with me, or was I going to just shrug it off and let them say what they wanted to say? I chose to not let them get to me and focus on my goals. I was determined to not let what they said to me define me as a person. I knew that I couldn’t just throw out my newfound values and give in to who they said I was. I was determined to be my own person and stop being the target. I knew there was a risk that maybe I wasn’t strong enough. The only way I was going to find out was if I tried.

The fact of the matter is that we all have many choices to make every single day. Most of these choices are not going to have far reaching results. Some, however, might indeed have a far reaching result. When you are faced with a tough choice, you have to remember to consider the result of that choice and make the choice that keeps you moving forward towards your life goals.

Everyone will mess up at some point in their life, probably many times. What keeps you on the right path is realizing your mistake, making the corrections, and then moving forward.
For this project, I wrote an essay. I like writing, and it’s the best way I know to express myself. The themes that I talked about were choices, determination, and risks. These themes, for me, were not hard to relate to. I chose these topics because when reading this book, I put myself in the shoes of the two Wes Moores and related their experiences to my own life.

My message is to follow the right path. Every choice you make can determine what path your life takes. You will make the wrong choice sometimes, but you have to learn from it. I wrote this essay to inspire hope and show that while people are different, they are also alike in many ways, much like the two Wes Moores.

**Connected judges said:**

“The strength in this piece lies in its personal comparisons to *The Other Wes Moore*. We were most impressed by the self-empowerment in the essay via the teachings of Tae Kwon Do. Through difficult experiences, the writer learned that sometimes power lies in not doing, in avoiding physical altercation by choosing mental strength of character and self-definition.”
One Life, Many Paths
There are many paths that one can take in life that lead to different futures, yet each path depends on the choices he or she makes in crucial circumstances. This project is my take on the outcomes that were very possible, depending on my choices. In high school, I did terrible with my grades. It took several failing classes, summer school, and the wisdom of my parents to make me realize that if I did not do better in school, I would end up working for minimum wage at a fast food restaurant as my career. So I put the pedal to the metal and grinded down on my grades. Since I started doing better in high school, I was successfully accepted to NKU to pursue my career.

Connected judges said:

“This comic style illustration deals with the artist's personal choices and past difficulties with focus. The vibrant colors and streamlined drawings speak to a fairly clear narrative with very little use of text. The message is clear, the story is personal, and the execution is playful.”
His eyes were vibrant hazel, bright and welcoming, yet all the beauty that they held couldn't seem to contain the bitterness and pain that crept its way out of his soul that night, finding a home in the bags beneath his eyes. I watched as he clenched his fists, partially in anger, but mostly to hold back the tears. He longed, even ached, to feel the way he had merely seven years ago. He desperately wanted back those times of beating old Super Nintendo games and watching whole seasons of Superman together, but it was painstakingly clear that those times were gone forever.

He made eye contact with me momentarily, but said no words; he didn't have to. I'd seen those eyes before, but this time it was different. As he looked at me for the last time, he momentarily lost his focus, and one tear slipped out of his grasp down his rosy cheeks. He waved his free hand to say goodbye, but to me, he was raising the white flag of surrender. I knew his once untouchable spirit was depleted beyond repair, and as I watched him go, I realized that this would be the last time we would see each other for many years.

If I learned anything from reading The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates and from being privileged to hear Mr. Wes Moore speak, it’s that we all only have one life, and as hard as it is to realize, there are “others” all around us. The “others” are simply those who live lives parallel to ours, but at some point, take drastic turns that lead them to a seemingly different world. For Wes Moore, his “other” was a boy that shared his name, his neighborhood, but sadly, not his fate. The very idea of having an “other” was foreign to me, but as I listened to Wes Moore’s story, I realized that I too have an other: an other named Cole.

Cole and I were born three months and a week apart, exactly. While Wes and his other shared strikingly similar beginnings, Cole and I are unique in that we share the same story for the early portion of our lives up until the year of 2002.

Cole and I were known as the “twins separated at birth.” We were more than cousins; we were best friends who spent every day of our childhood together and knew one another even better than our own mothers did, or so we liked to believe. Wes Moore never truly knew the other Wes Moore until he wrote a letter asking a few simple questions after their individual paths had long diverged. I often struggle to justify my story at times because Cole was my other half as I grew up.

I remember one afternoon when we were racing out to our Nana’s pool to see our sisters after having lunch...
on the town. As we neared the siding of the pool, I took a misstep and fell in with my shoes and clothes on. It wasn’t but a second after I tripped that Cole cannon balled in after me with his clothes on too, just so I wouldn’t be embarrassed, and we could laugh about the whole thing together. It seems like a small moment in time, but that story summarizes who we were to each other better than any series of words could. Cole was the brother I never had, the best friend that faithfully stood by my side, and the carrier of a part of my heart that is still absent today.

I never thought Cole and I would go the same directions in life entirely, but I also never thought I would lose him. Cole’s father, Jason, was always his hero in life, but in the end, that relationship was the ‘dynamite factor’ that sent us on two diverging paths far from one another.

In the span of four years, Cole’s parents divorced and the father he loved and looked up to as his own personal Clark Kent had turned into an abusive drug addict who was convicted of a felony with over five years in prison for possession of drugs and beating a sixth-month-old baby nearly to death while being under the influence of heroin. Four years were all it took to morph the best friend I knew and loved into an unrecognizable, angry beast. Four years were all it took to form his once warm heart into a stone-cold fortress filled to the brim with bitterness. Within the short span of four years, I came to realize that who Cole and I were to each other would continually adapt to his unspoken terms, not mine.

Through the years, our relationship altered but never faded. Cole was unrecognizable in many ways, but he knew that I saw who he was beneath the grief. He never could seem to let go of who he remembered his Dad was years before the divorce. Despite the brutal reality of who his father truly was, which was stalking him through each and every day, Cole’s memories were what carried him through the seconds, minutes, hours, and slowly, the days.

Jason was released from prison in December 2011, leaving Cole doomed to face the man he had grown to hate. Everyone joined together for Christmas that weekend in hopes to celebrate our once again united family. Initially, the situation seemed to be going well. Cole was quiet but not angry, and Jason beamed with joy at the sheer sight of his children. The night ended as Jason and Cole retired to the small cabin that lay merely a few feet past my grandparents’ home where they planned to spend the next two days together doing what they loved most: beating those old Super Nintendo games and watching seasons of Superman.

Less than an hour later, Cole was pulling out of my grandparents’ driveway and heading home. That was the last time I saw him. Plagued by an image that his father couldn’t live up to any longer, Cole gave up after overhearing the man he wanted to love so much whisper to his girlfriend of three days over the phone that he’d be coming over as soon as he thought Cole was asleep. Apart from watching his red Chevrolet’s tail lights disappear into the needles of the pine trees that night, all I know about Cole is that he is currently completing his senior year of high school and is living with his mother’s boyfriend.

Through reading the memoir and listening to Wes Moore speak, I’ve fallen in love with this quote from the last page of the epilogue: “The chilling truth
is that his story could have been mine; the tragedy is that my story could have been his." After reading the book, there have been many moments when I’ve sat and wondered what Cole would be like today if he had a dad like mine. Wes’s words remain true for my life too, but the beauty of Cole’s story and mine is that they’re both still being written.

While speaking in the ballroom of NKU, Wes quoted the other Wes Moore from one of their many conversations in which he said, “I don’t believe we’re products of our environments; we’re products of our expectations.” There is great wisdom and truth in this statement. Furthermore, I believe the underlying heart of Wes’s book and speech lies in this challenge that complements the imprisoned Wes’s statement: “Don’t allow your environment to define your expectations; rather, redefine your environment through your relentless pursuit of your expectations for yourself.”

In his book, Wes Moore tells two parallel stories. Shame on you if you read through this book and all you walk away with is a sad tale. You’d be better off to not even have read it if the only thing evoked in you is empathy. Wes didn’t write his book to make anyone feel sorry for either man; the book was written to help a blind world see. The book was written to help men and women just like you and me look around to see that “the others” are all around us. And most importantly, the book was written as a reminder that we only get one chance at this life we’re living, so we should live it well.

After engaging in this experience, my heart has been stirred with a greater sense of passion to live a life that will leave a legacy for those following me. While I cannot change Cole’s story, I can vow to set very high expectations for myself with the mission to create a legacy and choose to do everything I can to make this a world where it’s more and more difficult for the “others” to successfully exist.

❖

Writer’s Statement

My ENG 151 September 27, 2012 journal response was initially created for an assignment given to our class by my professor following the reading of the memoir The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates and actively listening to Wes Moore speak in NKU’s Student Union Ball Room. While I intended for this piece to be a stereotypical journal entry that would waste no more than twenty minutes of my time, it rapidly evolved into a deep inward journey that led me to not only empathize with Wes’s story, but to find forsaken memories from my own life hiding in the shadows of the book’s pages.

Like many readers of The Other Wes Moore, I have never known the perils of living in a single parent household with a drug war dominating every square inch of my neighborhood. I don’t know what it feels like to see the inside of a cop car with handcuffs fastened so tightly around my wrists that I think my hands might fall off. I don’t know the heartbreak of seeing friends and family members fall as victims to gang violence, but I do know what it feels like to live in a world with “others.” I have one goal for this piece, and that is simply to give sight to the many blind readers whose eyes will whisk across the pages of my story. It is my desire that they may then return
to their individual worlds and take up my cause to make this a world where it is nearly impossible for “others” to exist, and be stirred to leave legacies that our children may follow in years to come.

**Connected judges said:**

“A touching and emotionally impactful essay for us, this piece of writing demonstrates not only a connection to the story, but also a deep reflective analysis of the writer’s own life challenges. It compelled us, as readers, to want to know more, to see more of the fresh and descriptive language within.”
Dear Kiddo,

In “A Call to Action” at the end of Wes Moore’s book *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*, Tavis Smiley writes, “The choices we make about the lives we live determine the kinds of legacies we leave.” If you are reading this now, it is because something crucial in your life is going on. Whether it is a problem with a relationship, school, or sports, you need to know that your choices affect the lives of not just you, but also the people around you.

Read over the following example and apply it to your case right now.

When I was a junior in high school, I ran cross country for my school, Covington Catholic. In the previous year, we had finished runner-up at the state competition, and our team had graduated seven of our top ten runners. I was number twelve on the team; it was my turn to pick up some of the talent that we had lost. The season started with more of a whimper than the bang that I had hoped for. I ran myself off of the varsity squad and was back to the junior varsity spot in which I had ended my sophomore season. To make things worse, I injured my left foot in the sixth race of the year. At this point, there were only about five regular season meets left until it was post-season time. I remember the feeling like it was yesterday; I was down on myself, and at one point, I contemplated hanging up the cleats for the season and resting up for baseball. I was not used to this because I try not to be a quitter, and I knew that if I would just blow the season off, I was not just cutting myself short, but the team as well. After a talk with my dad, he told me that the final decision was going to be mine, but I could see it in his face that he just wanted me to try to grind out the rest of the season. After I talked with the team doctor, he cleared me to run after a week break.

This next race involved an overnight trip down to one of the largest meets in Kentucky, the St. Xavier Louisville meet. Being one of the better junior varsity runners and having some varsity experience, I was chosen to go on the trip with the team; this showed me that my team still had some faith in me. This extra motivation helped me on a streak of four great races including two top finishes, a third place finish, and a top 30 finish in a field of 300 runners. All of these were junior varsity races, but against good competition and, little did I know, I was getting better times than some of the varsity runners on my team.

It came down to one race for the final varsity spot. It was between the constant third man on junior varsity and the inconsistent, hot runner: me. It was...
the junior varsity championship, and I have to say that my teammate had a slight edge over me in my coach’s mind. Before the race, the senior captain came up to me and said, “Rudy [that was my nickname], go out there loose and run your best, because I want you in my line-up come postseason.” That was all I needed to hear, because after the start of the race, I never looked back. I won the race, and I also won back the minds of my coaches.

The story does not end here, though; I made the post-season roster and was not satisfied yet. I had one race and two weeks of practices to prove to my coaches that I belonged in the line-up come region and state time. Needless to say, I made my way into the line-up for both races. I did not just provide an inspirational lift for my team, but I put confidence and a sense of relaxation in all of us. We were huge underdogs in a win at the region, and I was named to the First-Team All Ninth Region. After that, we placed third in the State Meet for Kentucky, and I was named to the All-State Honorable Mention Team.

Look at this, a decision to quit when I was down would have taken all of this away and possibly could have taken it away from my teammates as well. Your choices do affect everyone around you. But also know that I will always back your choice, right or wrong. Just know that if you need help, your mother and I can lead you in the right path.

To leave you with an inspiring quote, Richard Cardinal Cushing says, “And when I finish the final inning, I ask for no laurels; all I want is to believe in my heart, I played as well as I could and that I didn’t let you down.”

Love,
Dad

Writer's Statement

I came up with the idea for this essay when after reading The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates, I thought about how Wes Moore’s decisions affected his life and the lives of others around him. In the future, I want my kid to see that small decisions can affect all we do, and we need to be at our best every day. Now I want the audience to see that I can relate to Wes's decisions and show that good can come out of any situation, no matter how bleak it may look.

Connected judges said:

“A decision to quit when I was down would have taken all of this [success] away. This piece tells us to persist, even through hardship, because you never know what's waiting on the other side. We were drawn into the writing by the quotations that serve as bookends, and an overall sense of community as interlaced—our choices affect us, and also the people around us.”
Two Fates and Only One Name

Two fates and only one name
Life as a child is only a game.
Grow up avoiding the things that seem lame
And indulge upon things that bring social fame.
It’s normal, they say, all kids are the same,
Nothing’s their fault and someone else is to blame.
It’s just an excuse, a popular claim,
Your life is blank paper inside of a frame.
To throw it away would be such a shame,
Two fates and only one name.

The ocean is huge; it’s time you set sail.
If you live in the right, you are sure to prevail.
A life of crime will just promote you to fail.
Stuck in one place; a train with no rail,
Forever convicted, locked in a jail.
Spread your wings wide and fly like a quail.
Stand out in the world! Be the alpha male!
Don’t be worthless, a bottomless pail.
Swing with accuracy and hit every nail.
Your future is coming, it’s priority mail.

Be the light of the sun, not its shadowy cast!
You must do it now—for your time, it goes fast.
Someday you’ll be old, looking back at your past.
Are you proud of your life? You’ll surely be asked.
Were you number one or second to last?
When you are gone, will your memory outlast?
Were you the best you could be? Was your life unsurpassed?
With so much in this world, your options are vast.
You’re in control—don’t always be massed.
Be the light of the sun, not its shadowy cast.
Many people have gone and then came,
Many of them lived lives filled with shame.
Hearts dark and cold, lacking a flame,
Only themselves do they have to blame.
You will be different; let success be your claim.
The shot is clear, and it’s time to take aim.
You are the beast, unable to tame,
You stand above, far from the same.
It’s not all about who wins the game,
You’ve only two fates and only one name.

writer’s statement

The project, at first, brought me no interest. I enjoyed reading the book, but with a busy life, a project wasn’t exactly something I was looking forward to. With so many options, I had no idea what to do or where to begin. It wasn’t until a week after the assignment was introduced that I found my solution. As I was playing guitar one evening and running through some old songs, the idea of a poem hit me. It has been a while since I’ve let a poem come my through my pen, so I chose this as my solution. For me, it was a quick and easy way around a lot of effort, but once I began, I found myself infatuated with my work.

I wanted to have the poem centered on the message in the book. Therefore, I took a look at each fate the boys would grow into, and I wrote the comparison throughout the poem, rhyming every line. With my being so far from perfect and having the beliefs that I do, my opinions on life choices and responsibility connect almost like a puzzle to the message in the book. I wanted the best path to be obvious, so I focused on it most, but I also made sure I had plenty of characteristics that a bad fate would have. Using a role-model train of thought, everything was much more simply said. I enjoyed doing this project because not only could I do it about a book I enjoyed, but I could also reflect my own opinions as well. I feel that my work is a success, and I know I put my heart into it. I hope the people reading my poem will think twice about who they are and where they are headed.

connected judges said:

“This piece makes use of a strong voice to explore both positive and negative ways to approach life. It serves as a symbolic representation of themes in The Other Wes Moore. ‘Two Fates and Only One Name’ makes for a sort of theme song for Wes Moore’s book.”
Dear future daughter/son,

Words cannot explain how deep my love is for you. That is why I am writing this letter for you. The choices you make will define you for the rest of your life. Whether the choices you make are about school, work, your personal life, or about the things you put on social media sites, never be afraid to stand up for something that you believe in, even if that means you are alone.

During my last two years in high school, I was the one who usually caused trouble with the teachers and principal. These “respected” teachers often made remarks that were inaccurate and could even be considered condescending. I personally lived through a loved one choosing to go a different way in life because of these remarks. I spent a year being angry and frustrated, and I eventually got to a point where I decided that I was going to stand up to these people. That entire year I was challenged both personally and religiously in my beliefs; but not once did I ever let these teachers make another condescending or arrogant remark toward others. Teachers who I had built a relationship with no longer wanted to talk to me, and some old friends thought I was turning my back on my faith. My parents also spent every night with me covering my material for my meetings with the principal and board members. They sacrificed so much of their time for me; I wanted to make them proud.

I even had to fight with the church and the schools to allow us to do certain things at prom. I had friends who believed in what I was doing, but they were too afraid to stand up to people who would control their next two years at school. I was alone, again. This was not going to stop me; I wanted something, and I was going to accomplish something that had never been done before. After six months, I accomplished my goal. After everything was said and done, I had more people coming alongside me and thanking me for what I had done. Through the whole thing, I learned that even though the task you want to accomplish might seem impossible, there is always a way to eventually accomplish it. And even though it might seem like you are alone, you really are not. There will be people who agree with you and want to accomplish the same things you do but are too scared to actually do so.

After reading The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates, I realized the lesson I had learned through this simple situation was the same lesson Wes Moore learned from his mother while he was at military school. He had become unruly in school and on the streets of New York. His mother decided that her only other option was to send Wes to military school. After one week, Wes had tried to run away multiple times.
After one last attempt, his headmaster allowed him to call his mother to try to straighten his head out. He begged and pleaded with his mother, but she stood firm in her decision. Many people had made significant sacrifices for him to attend this school, and she was not going to allow him to give up so quickly. He was so mad at his mother; however, at the end of the day, he knew he was stuck. He eventually became one of the most successful students on the campus, enlisted into the military, and eventually became an author.

His mother was not going to allow her son to become a prisoner; she was willing to do anything to make sure he became a functioning member of society. Wes was her life. Sending him away was the hardest thing she had ever done, but she knew it had to be done. When Wes called to come home, she had to stand firm in her decision. She talked to the headmaster to ask if a mentor could be assigned to him. She was still trying to be involved in her son’s life while being a good mother. Other parents could not believe she sent him off, considering how expensive it was. Most parents just allowed their children to do as they pleased until they eventually got arrested. Even though a task may be difficult, if you set your mind to something, you can accomplish it. You can even become the best at it if you try hard enough, just like Wes did.

Friends can also be a powerful influence on you. Peer pressure from friends can cause you to participate in things that might not be the best for you to do. Wes learned this when he was arrested with his friend Shea for tagging a wall. Following Shea landed him in the back of a police officer’s car. Similarly, my own friends tried to convince me that going to a private college was the best thing for me to do. They believed it would be a “safer” environment, and I would grow more as a person more than if I went to public university. However, I had no interest in going to a private college. So I just stopped listening to my friends and made my decision to attend Northern Kentucky University. After one semester, I grew so much as a person. I faced so many difficult obstacles—obstacles I had never faced before. And through all of it, I became a stronger person. I had to listen to myself and my parents to make my decision—not my friends. Friends might think they are helping, but at the end of the day, no one knows you better than your parents and yourself.

All I want for you is to be a strong and confident young woman or man. Never allow anyone else to decide your future for you. Always do your best, no matter how impossible the task might seem. Also, never be afraid to stand up for yourself, even if that means you have to hold your ground with a friend or a family member. If you happen to be standing alone on an issue, hold your ground and do not back down, even if it gets difficult. You will be so proud of yourself when the whole thing is over if you stand up for what you believe in.

Love Always,
Mom
For my project I decided to write a letter to my future son or daughter. I decided to do this because I went through issues when I was younger that no one could really help me get through. I felt like none of my friends at the time could relate to the situation. I wanted to tell my future child that he or she will not be alone, and that I will always be there.

I first started to brainstorm ideas to write about. I chose two big events that stuck out to me and found that they were similar in meaning to what happened to Wes in *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*. Once I got ideas and the different themes in the book laid out, I proceeded to write my letter. I wanted the letter to be conversational. I did not want it to come off as my trying to tell my future child how to handle a situation. I wanted to convey that he or she will not be alone, even if it might feel like it sometimes.

The ideas that I wanted to convey consisted of the themes: never be afraid to stand up for what you believe is right, make the best of a situation, and never give into peer pressure, even if people in authority over you are telling you this is the best thing for you to do. I feel these themes can really help a child mature into adulthood.

Through this project, I hope the audience understands the importance of staying true to who are you as a person. When you allow someone else to define who you are, you lose who you were meant to be in this world. I also hope this opens people’s eyes to the world that our children live in now. For example, drugs can be a powerful force in young children’s lives, and we need to raise our children to be strong enough to stand up and not become involved in drugs as well as the drug business.

**Connected judges said:**

“*Never be afraid to stand up for something you believe in, even if that means you are alone […] Never allow anyone else to decide your future for you.*” These words are written to a future child in this letter. The uncompromising message of this piece impressed us. *Never be afraid—decide your own future. There’s so much power in that.*
The Choice Is Yours

Dear future son/daughter,

I am writing this letter to you in order to inform you of what might lie ahead. There are two roads that you can take. One road leads to potential success, happiness, and being content with life. The other, darker, road leads to disappointment and failure. Each person only has one life to live.

Children have different situations growing up. There are many scenarios that could take place. Children could be raised by their real parents, parents who adopted them, grandparents, aunt or uncles, and so on. Children may grow up in families with lots of money, an average amount of money, or may live in poverty. Different environments and surroundings can also have significant effects on children as they grow up. There are so many things that children cannot choose for themselves. It seems as if they may be stuck where they are in life forever.

No matter how unfortunate a situation growing up may be, a person can always change. Change is a natural part of life, whether it happens on purpose or by accident. There is good change and bad change. As people become of age, they are able to make their own decisions. The decisions that they make determine which road they travel on. All of the choices that are made have consequences that come with them, good or bad. One must accept and own up to the consequences for each choice made. Every choice creates change and leads another step down either road. People must come to understand that each choice affects who they are as a person. They must make choices based on who they want to be in life. People can decide to be lazy in school and drop out. People can choose to push themselves, make good grades, and go to college and earn a degree. People can choose to make money in an honest job or by selling drugs. Life is full of choices. It is up to you who you want to be and what choices you will make to become that person.

The most difficult part of life is knowing who you want to become, not who other people want you to be. Find people you can relate to and follow their examples. Find a reason for life. Find a purpose that you can be truly passionate about. Also, be passionate about yourself. Realize that you can better yourself with every decision you make, which can lead you to success, happiness, and contentment. Set goals you want to accomplish in life.

The most important investment you can make is in yourself. You always have yourself. You might as well do something productive and meaningful...
rather than being miserable and unhappy. Make choices that will better yourself in life, as well as make you happy and content. Become the person you always wanted to be. Do what you want to do and don’t let people tell you how to live your life. It’s yours for a reason. Make the most out of it.

Sincerely,
Dad

Writer’s Statement

In this letter, I try to get across several very important points to my audience. To start, I mention how there are two paths that people travel on. One leads to success, happiness, and contentment. The other leads to disappointment and failure. In my mind, that is the guideline.

Second, I mention that no matter what type of situation someone grows up in, there is always a way around a rough start. The people who have a desire to change and adapt are those who are successful at going down the road leading to contentment.

Third, choices are what determine the road on which a person travels. Each choice is another step that defines an individual to the core.

Finally, I mention that being content and happy with oneself is a very important step. If a person can do that, then they are able to become the person they want to be. Other people cannot control how another lives their life.

Connected judges said:

“Find a purpose that you can be truly passionate about. Also, be passionate about yourself. There’s a sense of attention to themes in this piece—this writer is aware of the facets that make up identity, how people come to situations that may vary depending on their point of view, familial relationships, financial standing, and upbringing. It stresses the importance of individual choices despite everything else we deal with in the everyday. Ultimately, we’re reminded to find passion and hold onto it.”
Author Kelsey Timmerman’s book *Where Am I Wearing?* is the 2013-2014 Book Connection selection. Visiting garment factories in Asia and Latin America, Kelsey Timmerman shares the stories of the people who make our clothes, humanizing the issues of globalization and provoking readers to check their tags and think about where their clothing is made. **Learn more at bookconnection.nku.edu.**
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