

RENAISSANCE

My freshman year of high school has been officially over for 15 days as I'm writing this on June 13th. And in 68 days, I'll be starting my sophomore year. Everyone around me says it's the worst. And I'm unsure whether or not to believe them. But at this point, I've learned to just count the days until my eventual ruin. Every year, I wake up, get ready, go to class, and leave. Then, the cycle repeats itself. Again. And again. And again. And again. Yet, as monotonous as it sounds, each year is (surprisingly) different. 9th grade was no exception. It was a year marked by emotional turmoil, wistful memories, and subpar cafeteria food, all tightly packed into an 8-hour schedule.

7:30 am - 8:17 am : Health Science

Even now, I don't know why I chose this elective. I told myself that if being a lawyer doesn't work out, then I might as well go into the medical field. There's a lot of money to be had in constantly being exposed to blood and death after all. But I hate blood. And I hate death. I mean, I don't even *really* want to be a lawyer. I've gaslighted myself for the past 4 years into thinking that it's what I want to do for the rest of my life, but the truth is, is it? My passion is the arts. My interest is in the humanities. I love to learn. I love to create. I just don't think I can do it well enough to justify dedicating my whole life to it. And what would my family think? My family filled with doctors, nurses, businessmen, and the like? What would I be to them? Someone new to make fun of at family gatherings? For as long as I can remember, I promised myself that I wouldn't be seen as anything less. As someone who would be easy to ridicule. I think that's why I chose this class, actually. To show them all that I *can* be great. I can be *really* great. Maybe then, everyone will see me. And, maybe then, I'll see myself too.

8:24 am - 9:11 am : Advanced Biology and 9:18 am - 10:05 am : Spanish I

Not a lot of memorable things happened within these two class periods. Then again, I could say that about most of my classes. The only significant memories I have are trying to drown the sounds out of my classmates by blasting music through my airpods. This wasn't allowed at my school, but I would sit so quietly in the corner and do my work diligently that no one bothered to notice. Sometimes I would turn my music down to listen to the conversations happening around me, and I would have the urge to join in more than once. It would've been pretty awkward if I did though. I doubt most would have anything to say about me, let alone *to* me. I guess it's my fault. I'm introverted, socially awkward, and reserved. It's weird. Especially since I turn into a completely different person once I'm comfortable. I'm loud, obnoxious, and honestly, annoying. I know this isn't healthy, and though I always say I'll work on it, I never do. I'm always too scared that I'll say the wrong thing, or too much at all. But I want that to change. I'm tired of feeling *so* lonely whenever I walk into a room filled with people. No more fear, embarrassment, or whatever the heck has been holding me back for the past 15 years. I'll make so many friends next school year, it'll make my nose bleed. You know what, maybe sophomore year *will* be the worst, considering the fact that I'm gonna have to do *a lot* more talking then.

10:12 am - 11:02 am : Physical Education

I *hate* P.E. Sports are *so* out of my league. Like, I'm a skinny, 5'2, unathletic Asian girl with asthma for crying out loud. I'm more "brainy" than I am "brawny." I can barely do push-ups or catch a ball thrown at me. I prefer to stay indoors and do an art project, write an essay, or read a book than go outside and kick a ball around in 100°F

Texan heat! Whenever I express my grievances to whoever is willing to listen, they always look at me like I'm psychotic. What I get in return is usually something along the lines of "*Really?* You'd rather do *that?*" and then I'd have to explain to them that a person *can* have hobbies that *don't* require an absurd amount of sweat. Then they'd look at me like I was even crazier. I'm used to it, though. Being seen as different is nothing new to me. And I can take the judgmental stares and wide-eyed confusion much better now. It might've bothered me a year or two ago, but a year or two ago, I also didn't win a \$150 cash prize in an art competition my school hosted. So yes, I *would* rather do this.

11:09 am - 11:57 am : Global Perspectives on Society (Social Studies)

My relationship with this class was.. complicated. On one hand, a humanities class? Right up my alley. On the other hand, I *loathed* it. Specifically, the essays. I know I said I'd prefer to write one above all else just a couple of sentences ago, yet I barely had any form of autonomy in this class to make it even remotely enjoyable. All the rubrics and word limits I had to follow made me repeat the word "WHY?" in my head constantly. I don't like being constrained when doing something I'm meant to relish in. Writing for me serves as an escape, as *freedom*. Enforcing rules on it defeats its purpose. After a long day of upholding a squeaky clean school record and staying inside the lines, you can't blame a girl for wanting to color outside of them sometimes.

12:34 pm - 1:22 pm : Advanced Algebra I

Okay, look. Math has never been my strong suit. It was always the lowest on my report card. So imagine my surprise when I seemed to ace every test I had with no less than an 80%. It was unheard of. The subject that I could barely skate by in was now the subject I was making 100's in. Next thing I knew, I was giving my friends answers to quizzes and recaps on lessons we *just* learned about five minutes ago. It kind of baffled me that I was able to understand *math* of all things in the blink of an eye. It baffled me even more so when I realized not *everyone* did.

1:29 am - 2:16 pm : Principles of Law & Public Safety

Here comes the class I took because I decided I wanted to be a lawyer. I think. Once again, not much to say about this class. It was one of the only few I had a friend in, which made it somewhat tolerable. Believe it or not, learning a bunch of vocabulary words in Latin about legislation gets a teensy bit repetitive. I'll keep this part short, as there's not a lot I can add that hasn't already been said. However, I can't exactly say the same about the next, and final, class of the day.

2:23 pm - 3:10 pm : Advanced English I

I *love* English class. And I loved it even more this year thanks to my teacher, whom I'll call Miss Doe. She helped me a bunch throughout the year. Not just with schoolwork, but with perhaps the biggest intrapersonal problem of my entire life. I frequently struggled with the feeling of being *mediocre*. I was the *better* option, not the *best*. I could get the certificate, but never the medal. There was always going to be someone who would make me second. And I thought it would stay that way forever. Until I stepped into Miss Doe's room. At first, it started with my art. When we'd have to draw a scene from a book or something like that, she would always compliment mine. She'd display everyone's at the back of the room and tell me that people would flock over and gawk at how good mine was. And when I won that art competition, she was the first to give me her congratulations. Then it was my

writing. After she was done grading an essay or a short story of mine, she'd greet me at the door and tell me that she loved reading it. One day, all those words of praise got me thinking. I *can* do this well. I can do *a lot* of things well. I'm consistently one of the leading students in my class, made the top 10% and the top ten *people* in my grade level, and did I mention I won *money*?! Why was it never enough for me, I'll honestly never know. But it was Miss Doe who made me realize that it always was.

Then I thought, "Hey, I guess I'm pretty great already." And it only took me 282 days to realize that. Better late than never, I suppose.