**The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?**

Exhausted, I simply felt like giving up and “accidentally” disconnecting my home Internet connection. I had lost my first two debates and my morale to finish off my last debate was nearing zero. The stress that online debate competitions put on me was honestly almost the same as that of actual in-person debates. Winning debates filled me with such an intense drive to win my next few debates while losing slowly drained me. Somehow, I had managed to lose the debates with motions that seemed to be on my side’s favor. That’s the thing with Asian Parliamentary debates, however: the outcomes are almost always as unpredictable as the weather because of the incredible amount of details that the adjudicators must consider for scoring. However, I digress. My teammates and I were partly desperate to win this last debate, but at the same time, we felt demotivated to even join this last debate because of our previous losses. At this point, we were simply hoping for a motion that was debatable. I held my breath as I anticipated this final debate motion. “This House regrets the popular saying that “semua orang punya rezekinya masing-masing'', the motion read. For context, the Indonesian phrase in that motion directly translates to “everyone has their own fortunes”. While it seemed viable at first to debate this motion, my teammates and I then realized how small the scope of the motion was and how difficult it would be to formulate seven-minute arguments. Not only did this motion seem weird, it also only applied to daily life, so making connections to economics and politics with this motion would be virtually impossible. Attempting to build a case supporting this motion was like squeezing tiny droplets of juice out of an almost dry apple.

The biggest difference between this motion and most of the other motions I have previously debated on was that, in order to form arguments, I had to widen the scope of this motion. Most of the other motions I have previously debated on have featured broad and renowned topics; in order to build cases for or against these motions, all I had to do was narrow down the spectrum and figure out how said problem would affect various areas of life. I had to work the other way around with this motion; broadening its narrow scope would be the only way my team could form a solid case. Considering different perspectives would be the default way to achieve this, but we were stuck at a roadblock for a good ten minutes. As time ticked, the pressure to build our case exponentially increased. Thankfully, the amount of pressure was directly proportional to our casebuilding speed, and we were able to come up with the generalization that this saying left people to rely solely on their destinies; this was the base for most of the other arguments we made afterward.

With so little substance to work with, I was unluckily unable to squeeze a seven minute speech out of the arguments I had made. Later on, I realized how ironic it was that simple motions such as this one were some of the hardest to debate because they focus on such a narrow spectrum. Looking back at the slightly disorganized Google Document that my teammates and I shared during this debate, I realized how more constructive and longer my arguments would be if they had more depth. Even though this last debate was overwhelming for me, learning how to scrutinize this motion from various different angles did not go to any waste. While this motion was incredibly simple, it still bit me hard, but the skills I learned from it could go a long way.

Dear Evangeline,

Well done on your first draft! I really enjoy reading your essay, as I can relate to your debating experience with mine a while back haha. I am especially impressed with your use of descriptive techniques, which made your experience an interesting and engaging narrative to read. Your use of sensory details in the essay also kept me occupied.

However, as you can see from the comments I left above, I think you will need to provide better clarity as to what the actual challenge is for you. Was it the loss and you battling your desire to give up, or was it the challenging debate motion? Providing clarity in this area would help you in the following paragraphs to explain how the challenge has affected you and what you learned from it. Which I think was less of the focus of your essay.

I also think that you could explore what you learned from this experience by sharing how that encounter has shaped you today. How has it changed your mindset? Do you still go to other debate competitions? If so, how has that “failure” you experienced motivated you to do differently in the competitions you joined after that? Were you able to apply what you learned in other areas?

All the best with your essay and application!

Best wishes,

Johana