Good morning students, faculty, staff, and Mr.Abbot.

Thanksgiving has always meant a lot to me. I've always loved spending time with family, the traditions, and the food. Yet, there seemed to be something deeper that I couldn't quite figure out. During a thought-provoking BioEthics class this year, it all started to make sense. We delved into intense debates about what shapes our identity and the nature of free will. Our discussions revolved around how genetics, external factors, and past experiences shape our personality and decisions. After a week of engaging in sometimes heated debates, we were left with a profound final question on our test: 'Who are you?'

My answer, a blend of biological factors and life experiences, brought into focus why Thanksgiving resonates so deeply with me. It's not just a time for hanging out and feasting but a moment of reflection on those who have significantly molded me. If my classroom conclusion holds any truth, no one has shaped my past experiences more than my family and close friends. So, the Thanksgiving table isn't just surrounded by loved ones; it’s a literal representation of nature and nurture.

Thanksgiving at the Petite House exemplifies this realization. It's always a nice blend of familiar scenes and faces, a comforting constant year after year. Our cast is a blend of family - my parents and my siblings, often joined by our grandparents and sometimes by aunts, uncles, and cousins. It's also not unusual for a few family friends to find their way to our Thanksgiving table, each adding interesting elements to our usual family dynamics.

Our day begins in a somewhat uncommon way, with a neighborhood gathering in Forest Park for ice skating. This tradition, set against a brisk fall morning backdrop, always strikes me as a perfect start. Something about the cold air against our cheeks and the sound of blades cutting across the ice gets you ready for the warmth of a Thanksgiving meal.

Once we return, the house transitions into a hub of activity. Time seems to slow as the day is filled with games, laughter, and the slow build-up of aromas from the kitchen. It's a day where the cooking process, the banter over board games, and the constant hum of conversation blend into an atmosphere unique to us.

As the day unfolds, I'm captivated by the surreal experience of seeing my family in a different light. Watching my mom laugh and reminisce with her siblings reminds me that she actually existed before I was born. She had a whole life filled with experiences similar to mine. These moments underscore a broader truth that seems obvious but is often overlooked: our parents and relatives have their own rich histories. They, too, once gathered just as we do now, sharing stories and laughter. This realization deepens my sense of connection, reminding me that the heart of the family – its laughter, stories, and unspoken bonds – is ever-present and unchanging.

All of this, of course, leads up to the most important part: **the food.** Everyone squeezes into our dining room, sorting ourselves into kid's and adult's tables. We scramble to get our share of the feast before settling back into our seats. This is when one of my favorite conflicts arises: the fight between wanting to eat without stopping and the urge to talk to everyone. The food usually ends up winning the battle for me, but I'm more of a listener anyway. Thanksgiving conversations are always fun, telling old stories we've heard hundreds of times before but still love hearing and catching up on what everyone has been up to. It's a time when everyone talks and listens; it's a time when everyone's in on the jokes, and it's a time when you don't have to worry about how much you're eating because, well, it's Thanksgiving.

From my seat at the kids' table, I can see all those who have shaped me. There's Emma, my sister, who instilled in me an unwavering sense of justice and drive to fight for it. My mom is right there, too, who showed me how to deeply love amidst life's relentless responsibilities. Then there's my dad, who passed on to me both a thirst for knowledge and, just as importantly, an undying passion for the Steelers. Sammi, my other sister, nurtured my love for music and taught me the value of bringing people together. My brother Jack, with his easy-going nature, showed me how to not take things too seriously while still caring about what matters. Kevin, my other brother, instilled a deep love for nature in me and taught me to appreciate the rich narratives in books and movies. It's not just them; my aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and friends also surround me, each gifting me little pieces of their identities that I now proudly claim as part of my own.

*So,* if all my mornings in BioEthics have taught me anything, it is to appreciate the intricate tapestry of people and experiences that define me; to appreciate how deeply intertwined we are with those around us. The question 'Who are you?' from our discussions isn't just theoretical; it finds its answer around the ***Thanksgiving table.***

Today, surrounded by the faces that have shaped me, I am filled with gratitude - for each person who has contributed to my story, my classmates who chose me to speak today, and the invaluable lessons that have brought us all together. In this auditorium, I see not just family and friends but the living narrative of who I am and who we all are, a narrative for which I am profoundly grateful. Thank you and happy Thanksgiving.