



In his last paragraph, Jason reflects on what he has learned. Particularly relevant for a college admissions essay, he anticipates even fiercer challenges in college, but makes it clear that he is willing to embrace these. As readers, we are impressed by his willingness to rise up to meet challenges, while also appreciative of the vulnerabilities Jason has shared by telling us his fears before moving to Florida and his lonely lunches before he began to transform into a proactive leader.

“The House on Wellington Avenue”

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A THIN SHARD OF SUNLIGHT SLICED through the vent of the windowless, cold, and cramped one bedroom basement apartment. The apartment stood three stories high with its weight suffocating the basement. I sat on the stained carpet, alone, playing with my one and only prized Hot Wheels car. My mother was working her ten-hour shift as a minimum wage waitress and my father was nowhere to be found. My father left our family when I turned three-years old. He also left the burden of his reckless gambling debt to my mother and left us to fend for ourselves. At the time, my mother barely spoke any English, yet she had to find work in order to support us. She became occupied with work, so I was frequently isolated at home. The house on Wellington Avenue in Daly City evolved to represent all the suppression my mother and I endured. As a child, wherever I could go to be away from the cell, I went.

A few days after my eleventh birthday, I trudged home on an afternoon to discover our house robbed again, this time of my mother's savings for the following month's rent and my new “Stingray 5000” water gun. I burst into tears and cried in my mother's fragile arms. It was that moment I vowed to do something about our situation. I was tired living in that horrid house, being deprived of my mother because of her demanding work schedule, and feeling like the whole world was constantly against us. Early in my childhood, I realized that our family was financially poor, because of that, I wanted to be rich in knowledge. Every day after school, I would take the transit to the Daly City Public Library where I could be away from the miserable house and focus on



my studies. It was there that I would max out my library card to read Harry Potter novels and sit at the wide tables with my head in textbooks and magazines, searching for a better life. My mother knew the anger I had for the house, as a result, she would indirectly encourage me to channel out my negative feelings for the house into positive ones for learning by dropping by the library after work with apple juice for me. My appreciation for my mother is great because she still managed to set time aside from her work to attend to my needs. My objective was to gain all the knowledge I could, in hope of devising a plan to get us out of the Wellington Black Hole. At one point, I spent a whole Saturday looking for some sort of mathematical equation that would cure our blight. Enriching my knowledge was my naïve way of trying to improve and control our bleak situation. Fortunately, my mother's relentless effort for work allowed us to move to a better part of Daly City.

When I finally got my driver's license at the age of sixteen, after a vigorous curriculum of driver's education, driving lessons, and a driving test, the first place I drove my mother's old Toyota Camry was to the house on Wellington Avenue. The freedom of driving allowed me to explore a place where I had been trapped in for so long. Crouched on the warm cement, I glanced pass the faded wooden walls and peered through the constricting vent to see the three year old that once sat on the cold floor. As I stood with the sun shining on my back, I acknowledged that my mother and I were given a situation that we did not choose, but we ultimately became the ones who changed the course of our lives. A photo of the Wellington house sits on my bedroom window edge, casting a small shadow when sun light beams in. It serves as a painful reminder of my background, and an inspiration to continue excelling in life, even when unfavorable conditions dominate.

ANALYSIS

Jackie's essay is similar to Sarah's "Unshakable Worth," (Chapter 7) and Timothy's "Self Mind," (Chapter 7) in that it takes a family difficulty—growing up in poverty with an absentee father—and transforms it into a story of growth and personal strength. The beginning of the essay conveys an oppressive and stifling mood with its description of "The House on Wellington Avenue," a title that in itself alludes to the rich themes of immigration, coming of age, and poverty present in Sandra Cisneros' famous *The House on Mango Street*. Jackie's details are vivid and carefully chosen to evoke a sense of loneliness: the "thin