



and remembered.” Angelica’s ability to form connections with the photograph are reminiscent of her ability to turn an unfamiliar new place into a “home” for learning and to transform unfamiliar faces into influential friends, things that she described in her other essay (Chapter 7), which chronicled her multiple school transfers.

## **“Anything Goes”**

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I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COMFORTABLE WITH Tae Kwon Do, music, art, and friends. However, as a horse in Chinese astrology, I also need to explore different pursuits, and step outside of my comfort zone. This summer, I ventured beyond the pasture of my comfort zone, and participated onstage in the high school summer musical for the first time.

The biggest challenge of taking this leap was overcoming my own mental barrier—the sign that read, Jean, you have never had a dance lesson; you have no idea how to sing or act. Out of fear that I would feel uncomfortable, I believed that playing violin in the pit orchestra was my calling. However, after three years of pit orchestra experience, I longed to shine in that coveted spotlight. I did not tell my friends about how I wondered what it would feel like to act onstage in front of eight hundred people. When I saw that the title of the musical for this past summer was *Anything Goes*, I knew that no one would think worse of me for following my aspirations. Confident that my friends would encourage me, I let go of my cautious Chinese approach to life, and let the free-spirited horse within me escape.

Despite my decision to participate in the musical, I was terrified. I wondered whether I would meet any friends and if I would be able to learn to sing and dance well. My fears were intensified because I missed the first week of rehearsals while at a leadership conference in New York City. When I attended my first rehearsal, arriving directly from New York City, my fortitude kept me steady. With confidence and New York City memories in my heart, I joined the rest of the cast and reveled in the excitement. I followed my new friends with a passion for an art form that I hardly knew, but willingly embraced.

From that moment on, I was a horse freely cantering around an open meadow. I had discovered a new point of view, and the grass was



greener than it had ever seemed. Some days, I came home with new dance steps to show my parents. On other days, I drew the designs of my costumes when my descriptions at the dinner table would not suffice. The make-up artist tried three times to find the right blush, while the hair team created a different style for me each night. Having to think up a new hairstyle each time was parallel to my shifting opinion of my life and self. Although participating in the musical was initially petrifying, I discovered that taking such a risk was the optimal way to grow and change.

Now, I will not shy away from being in a musical cast because my comfort zone is expanding. Soon it will encompass the grand scope of my interests: from singing and dancing to throwing a sales pitch in front of judges; from learning how to execute precision front-flips to building my favorite piano repertoire; from designing a webpage to arranging chamber music, or developing optics technologies. Such passions will continue to define who I am and what I hope to achieve. My character is being shaped and reshaped by my learning experiences because I am an impressionable human being. As I continue to explore, I know that my interests will solidify into a cohesive whole. Until then, I seek to enrich myself with new opportunities and never look back.

### ANALYSIS

Besides being the name of the musical in which she participated, the title of Jean's essay, "Anything Goes," also captures the "free-spirited horse" within her that "ventured beyond the pasture of [her] comfort zone, and participated onstage in the high school musical for the first time." The "horse" metaphor not only captures Jean's adventurous spirit, but also ties to her Chinese heritage, as seen in her reference to the horse in Chinese astrology. Like Angelica's references to her heritage in "No Longer Invisible" (Chapter 7), Jean's mention of her zodiac sign is a creative and subtle way to introduce her culture to readers without her ethnicity becoming the core focus of the paper. Jean alludes to her heritage again at the end of the second paragraph, when she decides to "let go of [her] cautious Chinese approach to life." Some readers might take offense to this cultural stereotype; when writing about culture, it is important to be mindful of distinguishing between personal beliefs and stereotypes.

Jean's second paragraph gives us an excellent sense of her internal debates over whether or not she should take a risk and play in the pit as she swings between fear and confidence. Many successful