**Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it (500-700 words).**

1:54 - 2:11, a time interval I would never forget. With my guitar in hand, I rewound the song to 1:54 for the thousandth time. It has been months since I first started practicing this song, and I still couldn’t play these 17 seconds. I was getting frustrated. My fingertips were sore from the sliding and indenting on the steel strings. My shoulders ache from the weight of my guitar strapped over it, but I refused to give up.

Fuyu no Hanashi is a song my close friend and I sang our hearts out to as we ran through the streets of Japan to get back to our hotel. It was the last night of what had been a wonderful trip, and we wanted to make the most out of it. The combination of the beat and mood of the song made us truly felt like we were main characters of a movie — it was perfect. Now, listening to the song, it reminded me of the ecstasy we felt that night, the closing of an amazing trip and the friendship we shared. It became one of my sentimental values and mastering it on the guitar became my goal.

Little did I know, mastering it will not just make the song more meaningful but it will also teach me a new value.

When I showed the song to my teacher, he said he didn’t want to teach me it. He said I lacked experience. I was in disbelief. How could he assume something was impossible without trying it? However, I wasn’t fazed. I didn’t want to let unproven words get in the way of my goal, I was determined to learn the song no matter how much effort it needed. So, instead of feeling discouraged from my teacher’s words, I became more determined to learn it.

Week 1: Learn and memorize notes and combine them altogether.

Week 2: Play the song at 1/2 speed — make playing the notes muscle memory, PRACTICE A LOT.

Week 3: Play the song at 3/4 speed — slowly build up speed after successfully playing at 1/2 speed.

I wrote down my weekly goals in my planner.

Week 1: Learned and memorized notes.

Week 2: Can’t play at 1/2 speed.

Week 3: Still can’t play at 1/2 speed.

Those were my reality. Without the proper guidance, I was lost in the fast tempo and unfamiliar chords. I stumbled over the same notes, plucked the wrong strings. My fingers and shoulders ache from how much I practiced. It discouraged me to know all my efforts had led to this — just a series of jumbled notes and physical pain.

But I continued.

Week 17: Successfully played at full speed.

I smiled.

For 17 weeks, I ignored the feelings of discourage, and kept practicing. I developed a strategy where I recorded myself playing the whole song every Monday and compared myself one week with the week before. They made me notice the mistakes I frequently made and how it affected my playing. From small details such as long nails to something more significant like wrong timing, I’d correct it and see where it takes me. In addition to that, to keep my motivation high, I’d watch these videos. Seeing how much I improved in a few weeks made me want to keep going. I was persistent in my practice, despite the obstacles. And finally, I was able to reach my goal.

As I progressed into learning the song, Fuyu no Hanashi started to become something more than just a sentimental value, it made me learn something valuable — it taught me to not quit no matter the challenges.

Before I learned this song, I wasn’t patient with my work. If I were to reach a dead end in a math problems or an anomaly in chemistry practicals, I would get easily frustrated and give up. But today, when I come face to face with a challenge and feel doubt creeping back up, I’ll look back on this journey and grit my teeth — I won’t let a difficulty get in the way of my goals because I know that the outcome from resilience and effort will not disappoint. Learning Fuyu no Hayashi taught me to take the first step and keep going despite all the hardships, because it may progress into something even greater than I expected.

Fuyu no Hanashi is a song my close friend and I sang on the way back to the hotel, a song that symbolizes our friendship and our time in Japan, a song I’d play to remind myself I can face any challenges, and most importantly a song that is a constant reminder of my rediscovered values.

*Hi Shana!*

*First of all, let me just say that I’m impressed by how easy to follow your piece was, because every once in a while there will be applicants who try too hard with their sentence structuring and ended up confusing themselves. I think the weekly journal entries you put up there is really smart and speaks of your attentive personality and how you take every little thing to heart.*

*On the flip side, I’m afraid that the admissions committee may find your streamlined response structure as a little lackluster. Telling your journey of becoming more resilient and having that “never giving up” spirit through music is OK, but the reasoning behind* ***why*** *you wanted to learn the song to me comes off as a little too vague. Please see the annotated comments I have pointed out above and I look forward to seeing a deeper, more intimate scoop of your story. Keep on exploring!*

*- Matthew*