**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others. (650 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.**

**All my life, I remember always being overshadowed by my peers. At home, I was never the top achiever or the most talented sibling. In school, I was always Nicole’s friend, never just “Shana”. It was like I was townsperson B in somebody else’s story.**

**However, as my close friend and I ran through the streets of Japan, singing our hearts out to Fuyu no Hanashi, it was a sign for me to move on. The lyrics, the beat, the mood. Everything fitted like a puzzle piece. The ecstasy we felt made us feel like we were in a coming of age film. What tied it all up was the lyrics. It was screaming at me to move on, to finally close the longest chapter of my life. So, I did.**

**Now, listening to the song reminded me of a great trip, the euphoria I felt that night, and that I am the main character of my own story. 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 it to me because he thinks that I lacked the technical experience needed to play it. 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. So, instead of feeling discouraged by my teacher’s words, I became more determined to learn.**

**Week 1: Learn and memorize notes and combine them all.**

**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 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 discouragement 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. Despite the obstacle, I was persistent in my practice. 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 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 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!

I think your encounter here with the song Fuyu no Hanashi and experience in learning to play it on the guitar is great as it helped shape you. I understand that your perseverance and persistence in learning it week by week, and all the effort you’ve put in really sparked a period of personal growth in you.

I do have a few suggestions though that I think would help make it better.

1. In the paragraph-highlighted green, you mentioned how you felt overshadowed. I think if this were going to be mentioned, it would be better to give more explanation and context behind it. A few things that could be added would be:
   1. Why did you feel overshadowed?
   2. Were you shy or timid?
   3. Was there any issue that made it that way?

I think by explaining some of these details, the issue would be clearer.

1. In the paragraph-highlighted yellow, you talked about how the song Fuyu no Hanashi inspired you to move on. In my opinion, I think it’s good to include or give some parts of the lyrics that really encouraged you and elaborate a little bit on the mood and beat you felt. I think this is important because this song then stimulated you to wanting to learn it on the guitar – which this experience of you learning serves as the process of your personal growth.

It is important to show the link and relation between point no.1 and no.2 because the essence of the song was that it freed and encouraged you to move on from how you felt in point no. 1. And this became the reason why it’s significant for you to be able to play it on the guitar, as it holds an important meaning to you.

Also, I realized that it goes over the word count – but I think we could work on this after. ☺

Overall, I really like how you elaborated and shared on all the things you did, the effort you put in order to master the song – I think this would really shines on your perseverance, hard work and grit.