**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.**