

September's Song: High School Essay

This blog post was translated by Mistral.

Preface: The idea for this essay came to me on September 30th while riding the school bus home. Upon arriving home, I immediately wrote down the clear memories from my mind. It took me 10 hours to write, which is a bit slow, but the gains were significant. Although some parts are personal emotions (or complaints), the main body reflects my journey this month. Total word count: 8999. Post-writing thoughts: This is the first major piece of my life. I spoke freely and felt great. Assuming a normal reading speed of 1500 words per minute, it would take the visitor about 5 and a half minutes to read (of course, if you have plenty of time, read it slowly). I am deeply grateful. Let's improve together.

Epigraph: September's song is sometimes as passionate as a wildfire, with the setting sun dancing; sometimes as gentle as a wisp of smoke, with the setting sun in utter stillness.

A few days ago at school, I wanted to write some essays, picking up my pen freely to express the joys and sorrows in my heart and enjoy the freedom of expression. Just as written in *Beida is My Beautiful and Shy Dream*—

In a weekly journal, there is no "right" or "wrong"; it is always a world of the "true self," a world of "beauty." I only want to express pure self-feelings without caring about others' comments. Even if my writing is immature, so what? I am 16 years old, and immaturity is my right and my life characteristic.

And my "monthly journal" is the same. Let's speak freely. For this month, I will start with some keywords.

PPT

This was truly a "PPT" month. In total, I made 4 PPTs. Just today, I received another PPT assignment, but fortunately, this time it was just helping a classmate make some edits. The first PPT was for the "Yuyan Middle School Elite Class Beijing and Tsinghua Summer Camp." It took me three weekends. I had almost finished it by August 27th, but when I tried to convert the format to video for better playback (Office 2010 has awesome animation effects), my computer suddenly crashed. The next day, I took it for repair, and the diagnosis was: the hard drive was broken, and it needed to be sent back to the factory, possibly losing data. Prepare yourself mentally. Orz! Such things happen to me... In an instant, countless English learning videos, e-book reading notes, meticulously organized programming resources, and several Oscar-winning movies in 720p HD were gone. That PPT also vanished without a trace. I had promised the teacher that I would complete this PPT by the start of school, which was now impossible (the new hard drive came back two

weeks later, and I had to survive with an 80G hard drive). The first week it came back, I had to install some stuff on the 80G hard drive, including Windows 7 (I can't stand XP and can't get used to it) and Office 2010. These two expensive programs are not easy to pirate; it took me a whole weekend (slow downloads, hard to find serial numbers and cracking tools). Finally, I found some good resources; if you're interested in pirated stuff, just message me. The second weekend, I finally got serious about the PPT, hurriedly finishing the teacher's photo collection. The result was that the text on the computer was too small to be noticed. The third weekend, I completed the PPT with great satisfaction, like a torrential rain pouring onto the cracked earth. I even burned a CD for the teacher and told them frankly: Teacher, this time I brought an enhanced version. ^_~

The second PPT was to assist the speech "My Surname is Li," projecting some words to give me a hint. During the speech, I wanted to use numbers to explain that Li is the most common surname in the world, not just in China. I ended up saying, "In China, every 14 people include 1 Chinese person." Omg! A serious political mistake. Dear Communist Party, please don't shoot me. I had prepared the speech for a long time, reading it in the morning and evening for several days. However, I still peeked during the speech. I'm sorry for my unreliable memory. This PPT also had political mistakes, such as listing Li Denghui as a famous person in the Li family and projecting it on the PPT. After class, a well-informed classmate told me about Li Denghui's negative news. Today, a Google search revealed that Li Denghui visited the Yasukuni Shrine, a Japanese war criminal shrine! How could he be on Baidu Baike's list of famous people (I found the surname information on Baidu Baike)? Sigh, at such a young age, I've made so many political mistakes. If I become an official and make a mistake in a government report, it would be truly disastrous ...This speech taught me a lot. I have a bit of "pre-speech anxiety" like Teacher Li Xiaolai. By the way, Teacher Li Xiaolai wrote a book, *Make Time Your Friend*, which I think is a rare good book. Teacher Li Xiaolai uses his strong mental power to explain almost all the embarrassments we encounter in life. If you want to eliminate life's embarrassments, read his book. Teacher Li Xiaolai specifically tells you how to use your mind to win freedom. Here's an excerpt:

"...But when I suddenly realized that I could (and should) control my own brain, I felt that I could start over without dying, which is quite magical."

The third PPT was for art class, discussing Chinese architecture. Right after school started, it was my turn, along with a classmate, to give a lecture. The PPT was hastily put together, combining their Piaohuayuan, Suzhou Gardens, and summer camp PPTs to complete a 40-minute class task. That day, a classmate's return to the right path won applause. Here, I want to say sorry to the classmate. He repeatedly asked me not to infringe on his image rights, but I still did it...It felt a bit like "betrayal" and "selling out." Oh well, the classmate didn't seem to mind his photos being used, so let's just go with the flow.

The fourth PPT was used for computer class, and again, it was me. Fortunately, a classmate's eloquence often helped me out. The most "awkward" part was that the long formula couldn't be calculated by

Google. So embarrassing! And Tianwang, www.tianwang.com, you just couldn't give me a shred of dignity! Everyone, try your luck; if you can't open it, it means Tianwang has ascended to the 18th level of hell!

NOIP

NOIP stands for the National Olympiad in Informatics. This year, the preliminary round is on October 16th. I can only say, "NOIP, I'm coming, although I'm not well prepared." This month, I did my best to prepare for this long-awaited competition. Two years ago, I got into this kind of competition, around November 2008. At that time, I wrote a VB program and kept asking Teacher Duan for guidance. Teacher Duan, seeing my interest, recommended me to another teacher (who was organizing a competition class). Thus, I truly began my programming journey. Teacher, you are a talent scout! Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to pursue my interests and passions. At that time, I was obsessed with programming, reading introductory books whenever I had time, during evening self-study, breaks, lunch, in bed, and on the bus... On the first day of 2009, I wrote down my New Year's wish, hoping that my competition results this year could make it to the finals. The result was disappointing, a first-class award, but no finals. Later, the teacher said there were no finals for the junior high group. However, I knew that the first-class award was from the suburban group, meaning I was among the top 10 in Frome, Lokang, and Zengcheng. What a irony, I estimate there weren't even 20 people participating in the suburban group. My level was terrible! Even today, I still don't understand dp, graph theory, binary trees, or backtracking! Hengyang friend (a netizen, a programming genius), if you see this, please don't laugh at me.

As the competition date approached, I made a plan. Wake up at 6 am, get to class as quickly as possible, and study until 7 am. Here, I want to thank my classmate! He bought breakfast for me every day. Multiple good, helpful people ah! My breakfast was simple, I told the classmate, pick the two largest buns just fine. The teacher said, cherish the golden period of physical development, take care of nutrition. Sigh, I didn't listen again. One morning, something happened that made me feel extremely ashamed. Classmates were reading aloud (often at 6:40 the room was filled with the sound of reading), while I was reading my *C Language Program Design* (by Old Tan), I suddenly noticed the teacher entering from the back door, walking straight towards me. I thought the teacher wouldn't notice much and it wasn't 7 am yet. Unexpectedly, the teacher leaned down and told me there would be a test in the afternoon, and sighed. I looked at the clock, "7:05"! What was I doing?! It should have been the morning reading session! I must have left a bad impression on the teacher, and the teacher's slightly furrowed brow confirmed this. Recently, my Chinese scores have been poor, and the teacher talked to me after a while, saying I was weak in certain subjects and my mind wasn't on studying. Omlg!

And NOIP hasn't made much progress...

Let me give two examples related to the competition.

One is Zhu Yuanchen, the 2004 world champion of ISEF (Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, the

largest and highest-level middle school science competition in the world). If I'm not mistaken, he should be studying for a Ph.D. in computer science at Harvard. He learned English using a computer in three years and wrote his award-winning paper, *Real-Time Remeshing With Optimally Adapting Domain: A New Scheme for View-Dependent Continuous Levels-of-Detail Mesh Rendering*, in English. The content of this paper is beyond the comprehension of most middle school students, and even computer science students or experts who are not specialized in computer graphics would struggle to fully understand it. His achievements make me envious, and I want to replicate his success, even a tenth of it. Some of his learning methods are worth learning. Interested students can search for him on Baidu. In 2004, he was in his senior year of high school, and I still have more than two years. Can I achieve something in computer engineering?

Another example is Jin Bin, who, at the age of 18, won the gold medal on Topcoder, defeating numerous strong opponents. "Code" means code, and Topcoder is one of the top programming competitions. Along with ACM and IOI, it is one of the three most recognized algorithmic programming competitions in the world. In the finals, Jin Bin faced competitors who were mostly college students or even professional programmers with numerous accolades. He also started learning informatics in seventh grade, but his passion for programming led to remarkable progress in just a few years. What a role model!

When I learned about these examples, a belief suddenly arose in my heart: don't avoid complex knowledge anymore; no matter how difficult, keep learning. In fact, self-study is possible (as Zhu Yuanchen said, "Of course, when doing cutting-edge research, I had no peers to discuss with and no mentor, only relying on myself."). Sometimes, laziness defeats us first. Her motto is the best—

"You are your own enemy; only you can defeat yourself. You are your own god; only you can save yourself."

At the same time, I feel that time is running out. Time waits for no one. As the motto in Harvard's library says—

Thought is already is late, exactly is the earliest time. (When you feel it's too late, that's exactly the earliest time.)

Wake up, you, wake up quickly! Take action immediately! Yes, start today! Focus on the present, and you will achieve the success you desire!

I am 16 years old now, not young anymore. Feng Lun (Chairman of Vantone Real Estate, also known as a thinker) said to a 19-year-old young man: "You are 19 years old now. By the time you are 29, you might have three girlfriends. You have just left your teenage years, and the good times are just beginning. This is the time to take action, not to compare with others. As long as you are a little better than your peers, after 10 years of accumulation, you will be far ahead." Undoubtedly, I have also been swept up in the fast-food era, where everything needs to be instant. But as Einstein said at the age of 63, "If a person hasn't achieved their greatest scientific accomplishment by the age of 30, they never will." How many more years can I waste? Time is the fairest thing in the world; everyone has only 24 hours a day. Harvard students study 16 hours

a day, while my life is often disrupted by trivial matters…Recently, I applied to start a “Computer Lovers Club,” but now I don’t want to. Otherwise, this club will waste my time. If the return is just improving my public speaking and organizational skills, wouldn’t it be better to spend that time reading? Yes, I just want to read quietly in a corner, whether it’s the nine subjects or my favorite programming books, or Carnegie’s success bible.

Time will pass faster and faster. As Li Xiaolai said—

“For a five-year-old child, the next year is 20% of their life; for a fifty-year-old person, the next year is only 2% of their life. So, as we get older, time seems to pass faster.”

The urgency of time is like an inevitable, rising mist, blurring our past and future, forcing us to stop our thoughts.

Let’s recall the ninth period of this month (usually, most classmates are studying hard at this time). For those in Class 5 who might be wondering why I rush off every ninth period, I’m going to training because of that competition. At 4:45 pm, I quickly go to the computer room (our usual information class classroom). Often, it’s just me and a couple of classmates, enjoying an air-conditioned room, bright lights, and three computers. Thank you, Teacher Wulong, for arranging an intern teacher to replace you while you’re busy. This intern teacher is known to our class; he’s the handsome teacher who was there when I and another classmate gave a lecture. His name is Xie Dongsheng, very approachable. He is recently applying for a master’s degree; I hope the teacher succeeds in his exams next year! He will accompany us until the preliminary round; after that, he will return to school (he’s in his fourth year and commutes between the city center and the remote Lokang every week; the teacher’s kindness is unforgettable…). I often type code into the computer, hoping to see it run successfully. I calmly typed the lengthy code, programming this stuff, the predecessors’ designed language loves to use symbols like “*^%&()[]{}”, making me often press wrong, but my patience surprises even myself because I am waiting for the relief of successful execution! Unfortunately, the last three programs I typed each had at least 10 bugs! I really want to use an F-word…

Fortunately, another thing that brings me happiness is writing code on paper. I miss the days from August 27-31 when I had at least 4 hours each day to write code, “Welcoming New Activity” (the so-called first batch of Yuyan Xinjiang class) practice only needed some time in the morning. Even during short breaks, I enjoyed writing code. Each chapter of *C Program Design* has more than 10 exercises, each taking me about 30 minutes, but being able to write out a complete, satisfying code is worth it! What seems like gibberish to classmates is beautifully elegant to me. And what seems like sheet music to classmates is gibberish to me…

During the training, I met a senior because of work. This event is also one of the top ten events of the month. She broadened my horizons, especially internationally. People who are good at English have a good international perspective. An international perspective, as Zhu Yuanchen said, is about having a broad vision and comparing yourself to the world. The senior is also very innovative; I wish her ideas success.

During the training, I sometimes slacked off and browsed the internet. Kai-Fu Lee's Innovation Workshop finally launched a product, *Pods*. If you have an Android phone, go download it. It's a handy phone assistant that lets you fully enjoy your phone. It has some awesome features; install it on your desktop, connect your phone, and you can manage your contacts (especially useful if you lose your phone), text messages (send personalized messages in bulk, especially suitable for holidays), apps, and music through your computer, and you can also back up your phone data. Additionally, you can download videos from major video sites with one click. Even if you don't have an Android, don't be too disappointed; its multimedia features support all mobile devices that use SD cards, other smart or non-smart phones, MP3/MP4 players, PSPs, etc. The latest version also supports WiFi connectivity; just place your phone in the room, and with a light click on the computer, you can download videos and music to your phone without a data cable. Leaning back in bed and watching videos is such a pleasure. Here, I also wish Kai-Fu Lee success in his entrepreneurial journey. Two years ago, I got to know this outstanding talent who bridges East and West. I collected his seven open letters to Chinese students, printed them out, and brought them to school to read. During this time, his wisdom helped me overcome some traditional Chinese student problems. Thank you! Your contributions to public welfare have benefited countless people! If you're interested, you can download the open letters from 5xue.com.

Back to the topic, the wisdom of choice made me face the reality of the high school entrance exam and made me make a successful choice that I still don't regret. Now, I have used my wisdom to win what I deserve; I just need to work hard patiently. Let's reveal the story behind the choices. At that time, I wanted to go to Hua Fu, a school for comprehensive talents that had excited me for a long time. I discussed my choices with Teacher Yi Hailing. She advised me to either go to the best, Hua Fu, or stay at Yuyan. In May, the sunshine was as warm as ever, shining on Huanyue Lake, with a faint sweetness in the air. The towering sports hall stood firmly, and the circular cafeteria exuded vitality. Filling out the choices was another follow-your-heart decision. Steve Jobs (the CEO who changed the world with Apple) said:

"Most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

I listened to my heart; it told me that I love programming, I love doing research work, I loved those days when I had any free time to read Pascal. And I chose Yuyan because it would allow me to continue this passion right from the start of high school. It would also give me the most time to research what I'm interested in.

At that time, a small spark slowly ignited in my heart, eventually becoming a burning flame; an unconscious thought gradually grew into a clear will. (Later, my disciple called me several times to reconsider, but I told her my choice without hesitation.)

In front of the computer, filling out my choices, I closed my eyes and asked myself one more time: "Are

you ready?"

"Yes, I am ready!" a voice from deep within my heart answered.

I knew that at this moment, I would make the first important decision of my life.

Although the future is full of uncertainties, I still believe in the voice of my heart. I know that only by following my heart can I unleash the greatest potential within me and strive towards the next goal with all my might.

In the month since starting high school, I have truly experienced the convenience and power of habit at Yuyan. I freely roam this young campus, thinking about how to get the best return in the shortest time. I hope that this year's NOIP will give me a good return!

Learning

Learning is not simple. In junior high, I had an idea that if I couldn't balance high school studies and competitions, it would be okay to be a bit weaker in studies but better in competitions. Later, I deeply realized that this wouldn't work. A quote changed my mind—

"The study certainly is not the life complete. But, since continually life part of - studies also are unable to conquer, what but also can make?" (Studying is not the whole of life. But if you can't conquer this part of life, what can you do?)

The motto from Harvard's library made me think deeply. Yes, studying is not the whole of high school, but if you can't conquer this part of high school, what can you do?! Main subjects are still the most important.

However, this month, my main subjects have been a bit worrying. The teacher said that my ranking starting with "6" means my Chinese score. My Chinese dictation was historically the lowest in the class. A few days ago, a classmate excitedly told me, "I got a perfect score of 38 on the Chinese multiple-choice, and I got 35!" He laughed like a god. In Chinese class, the teacher said our class's highest score was only 34, while Class 6 had three students score 35. It seems that the Chinese problem has become a class-wide issue. The teacher, holding my 5-point (out of 10 perfect) dictation paper, told me, "Review everything during the National Day holiday and practice dictation well." The tone was not critical, but I also knew that if I didn't memorize all the classical texts during the holiday, the tone would change.

This month, I wasn't focused on every class. I hope to remind myself with two quotes from Teacher Li Xiaolai—

"Judging a teacher by your learning results is often not accurate."

"Don't reject learning because you dislike the teacher."

Small Discoveries

A classmate totally is learning the school exercises very quickly, very admire his physical comprehension. I also hope the sports committee can recover soon, so I don't have to lead the exercises anymore. I've been told my exercises are not very standard, which makes me feel a bit inferior.

The teacher's wisdom also benefits from Carnegie's works. He donated a book to the class library called *Human Nature's Advantages* (I was so excited to see such an inspiring book that I immediately borrowed it; I hope to finish it quickly during the National Day holiday so more people can benefit). This book must have helped the teacher develop his calm and composed ability to face life. The teacher summarized the rules of high school, which I will share (I am a typical borrower ==):

"High one is tight (because of 9 subjects), high two is active (reduced by 3 subjects), high three is intense."

This principle, I firmly believe in, let me face the club's some problems decisively.

Our "Four Approximation" dorm (504) has two street dancers, one wind instrument player, one Olympiad participant me, one early bird, and one "no sound, no sound, scare you a surprise" genius, naturally living and resting differently.

Wish Lanterns

Our class truly has team spirit, here are two examples. One is the homework notebooks; a classmate bought notebooks for everyone from the wholesale market one weekend and brought them to school. This way, the notebooks on the teacher's desk were neat and uniform. Everyone was grateful to the classmate! And cheap and beautiful notebooks ah! So everyone unanimously elected the classmate as the class monitor! Hope she leads our class to create legendary miracles! Two is the wish lanterns, a classmate's good idea. A week before the Mid-Autumn Festival, the classmate let us write down the quantity and color of the wish lanterns we wanted, and a few days later, they were delivered. On the evening before the Mid-Autumn Festival, our class held a party, hosted by a classmate, the party had several super bright spots. Classmate and classmate! A classmate's surprising answers! A classmate's killer questions! A classmate and the blackboard's hot kiss! ^_~! I laughed so hard several times. After the Mid-Autumn Festival, when we returned to school, on the third period of the evening self-study, I and a classmate came to the sandpit near the tennis court. We carefully opened the Kongming lantern (because last time it got a hole and couldn't be released; since it was lit, we had to step on the beautiful Kongming lantern. That experience made me cherish Kongming lanterns even more). We lit the candle under the Kongming lantern and released it! Yes! The red Kongming lantern floated in the night sky like a dandelion, tonight is a beautiful evening. I and the classmate lightly made our wishes. Looking forward to the wish lanterns exerting their magic!

A Complaint Free World

Last weekend, since I didn't have an "electronic library card," I went to Amazon and bought some bestsellers. One of them was: *A Complaint Free World*, or 不抱怨的世界 in Chinese, using several lunch breaks to digest the wisdom inside. Everyone, let's join the no-complaint activity! Game introduction:

American famous pastor Will Bowen initiated a "no-complaint" activity, inviting every participant to wear a special purple bracelet, and every time they realize they are complaining, they move the bracelet to the other hand, and so on, until this bracelet can be continuously worn on the same hand for 21 days.

The magical purple bracelet usage is as follows:

1. Wear the bracelet on one wrist.
2. When you realize you are complaining, gossiping, or criticizing, move the bracelet to the other wrist.
3. Keep alternating like this until you form the habit of not complaining, not gossiping, and not criticizing for 21 consecutive days.
4. Persist. The average successful time is 4~8 months.

Actually, you don't have to use a purple bracelet. Now, just put a rubber band on your hand, put a coin or small stone in your pocket, move the paperweight to the other side of the desk, or find any method that can effectively monitor yourself. Do it now. Then, when you catch yourself complaining, criticizing, or gossiping, move that thing—move the rubber band to the other hand, put the coin in the other pocket, or move the stationery to the other side of the desk. Moving that thing is very important, this action will deeply imprint in your consciousness, making you aware of your behavior. You must move it, no exceptions.

Come on! Let's create a complaint-free world together! Imagine a complaint-free world, how beautiful it would be…

Summary

Recently, in *The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking*, I found the source of the various worries expressed above, which comes from two words: focus. I really should train this aspect of my ability. I didn't memorize the ancient texts, not focused enough. NOIP, not focused enough in preparation. Studying, not focused in class. Learning exercises, one day I tried to focus, and the result was good, the rhythm and movements matched, but that was the last few sessions, the previous sessions were not focused and didn't learn well. Roosevelt's example specifically told me the key to success—

In 1912, during the Chicago convention, his headquarters were set up in the Congress Hotel. Crowds surged towards the hotel, waving flags, and shouting: "We want Teddy (Roosevelt)! We want Teddy!" The shouts of the crowd, the band's performance, the coming and going of politicians, hastily convened meetings, various consultations—this chaotic and noisy situation had already made ordinary people restless; but Roosevelt sat calmly in his room's rocking chair, forgetting all the chaos and noise, focused on reading the works

of the ancient Greek historian Herodotus. During the Brazilian wilderness trip, every evening, he would immediately find a dry spot under a big tree upon reaching the campsite, take out a small stool and his carried *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by the British historian Gibbon, quickly immersed in the book, completely forgetting the torrential rain, the noise of the camp, and the various sounds of the tropical rainforest.

If I had this kind of focus, October would be even more wonderful!