

River Johnson

Mrs. Walton

ENG 101

28 October 2025

Profile of a Trojan Essay: How I Changed from Freshman to Senior Year

When I look back at who I was when I started high school, I see a completely different person. Some would think we were entirely different people. Now that I'm a Senior, I have learned to focus on what I can change and ignore what I can't. I'm much more grounded, and aware of the fact that there is always a best move, no matter how bad the situation. Before, I felt as if I was a victim to my circumstances. After recovering from 3 serious brain injuries with a <1% survival chance, I've learned that accountability, initiative, skill, and knowledge are what really determine success.

In Freshman year, I felt as if I was a victim, and acted accordingly; I skipped school, stayed up late playing video games, and when it came time to face the consequences of these actions, I felt as if I was being attacked. Somehow, I didn't realize that if you don't do your work, you will receive bad grades. I didn't realize that if the system doesn't change, you have to. This lesson can help in real life situations, such as having a tough work environment, but you're in a bad financial situation. Some may take a pay cut for an easier job and have their family suffer, while others will push through until they can find another job which provides enough for their family.

Sophomore year was fairly similar, in which I spent most of my time at home playing video games. I missed over a month of school, my mind being focused solely on

having fun, and regretting it later. This is the year my anxiety got really bad, due to my bad habits. I would regularly stay up until two, three, four in the morning when I was getting up at five for the bus. I slept through most of my classes and barely scraped by, having a C average.

Then, during Junior year, my mindset changed. I realized I had two years left in high school, before I was on my own. I wanted to set myself up for the future, knowing I was smart enough for it. I began studying very hard, and earned my Apple Development with Xcode & Swift Associate Certification and the AppFire Software Development Award for 2024-2025. I also received multiple EOP certifications, along with an ACT score of 34. All of these results came from late night studying, when it's incredibly easy to give in and quit. A few times I fell asleep at my desk, and woke up disappointed in myself. It's incredibly hard to show up every single day when nobody's watching; especially in your own home, right next to your bed.

Just when I thought I had it figured out, I had an accident; A skateboarding wreck while 'hillbombing', a wreck on the way to the emergency room, and a misdiagnosis in which I was left, brain bleeding, without treatment, for hours. The doctor who cared for me thought he had killed me. I had a <1% survival chance; survival as in being a vegetable, which I requested they pulled the plug on me. It was unanimously agreed I was going to die. But, I miraculously didn't die. I was left in the ICU, waiting for the bleed to become bad enough I became a vegetable. I said bye to my family, knowing I couldn't see them for much longer. It's terrible saying goodbye to your family, their faces are still engraved in my head. After a while longer, the bleed somehow slowed down. The doctors were in complete awe. On top of it, they had said I was one-twentieth of an inch from hitting another artery which surely would have killed me (even though the current bleed was supposed to have me dead). My torn chest, and broken bones started to heal. I was

soon in a wheelchair and eventually walking on my own. After being let out, I was in a pitch black room for a month. I wasn't allowed to read, move quickly, see, or hear loud sounds.

During Senior year, when I was finally starting to gain my freedoms back (such as being allowed to read or see light), I decided not to waste my time. I started working on last year's school work as I got home from school, spending every night studying for my Chemistry 105/106 final, and completing last year's missing work. I was very disciplined in spending all of my free time studying. My parents commented on how I took initiative, and said it may have something to do with my quick recovery. Through recovering from these injuries, a switch flipped in my brain. I've learned that accountability, initiative, skill, and knowledge are what really determine success. Feeling sorry for yourself gets you nowhere. You have to hold yourself accountable, take initiative, and show up every single day. This built character, transforming me from hedonistic, and lazy, to talented, and disciplined. You aren't born with talent, you earn it.