

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2016

Massachusetts Center for the Book

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Level III Honors Award

Dear Connor Franta,

After reading *A Work In Progress*, the way I think about life has been altered beyond the simplicity of mere words. Your mother would say such supportive and reassuring things like “If you like you, that’s all that matters. If you don’t then maybe you could work out why that is” (p. 114). These words imitate those of my own mother and how accepting she is of me and all of my family members. Your experience, finding yourself and validating your identity, is so beautifully written and heartening that your words of advice penned in your memoir will stay with me forever. As a fan of your videos on YouTube for quite some time, reading *A Work In Progress* exposed a new side of your individuality not shown in any video before, and revealed many similarities between you and me.

As described in your memoir, high school is a transitional and developmental period in one’s life. For me, each day I learn more and more about myself; who I am as a person, and the person I am still becoming. High school is a time of maturing and truly becoming a young adult, one who is almost eighteen years of age with the right to vote for the President within the next year. “This is what happens in high school. We’re exposed to what’s not familiar while trying to work out who we are. We explore, make bad decisions, and learn from them” (p. 67). Your words really stuck with me because I have surely made my fair share of mistakes throughout the last couple of years. However, I feel like these unfortunate events not only happened for a reason, but also taught me some useful tools to apply to my future. I feel like everything happens for a reason, the good and the bad. In regards to your original photography featured throughout the book, the fact that you stopped to capture specific images within such crisp, beautiful pictures reflects your unique creativity and passion to inspire others with true authenticity.

The twenty-first century has brought upon amazing technological advances like smartphones and apps and even video sharing websites like YouTube. However, it was mentioned in your memoir that when you first started YouTube, it was all about the numbers; the numbers of viewers and likes on your videos was defining how you valued your art, and even yourself. You said in the book, “It’s okay to seek likes. But it’s not okay if you allow those likes to become the foundation of your self-worth, because other people might not be putting a whole lot of thought into the process of liking – or not liking – your photos or posts” (p. 121). As you declare it, being “numb to numbers,” really captures how you have to be confident in yourself, and not allow someone else to define your self-worth.

Although your book is a compilation of memories from your life, I feel so connected to your story because of its similarities to mine. When I was in middle school, coming to terms with my sexuality was the hardest thing I had ever done. Your struggles to overcome the opposition you held within yourself about your own sexuality is not only impressive but a definite source of inspiration for me and many others. Your strong words, “start living today, not tomorrow,” (p. 161) forced me to realize that no one is promised the next five years or even the next five seconds. As a result of learning your story, my motto has become “live each day as it comes and do whatever results in happiness, whether it be going for a simple walk in the park or spending all of your money”. Connor, thank you for sharing your life with me and millions of others through your revealing memoir. Reading *A Work In Progress* helped me come to terms with the fact that no one is complete, that we are all works in progress, and have much to learn along the way. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Sincerely,

Aidan

Aidan
Oxford
Grade 11