

Student Example One

American Literature

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"If I had my life to live over..."

CJ: Where am I? What the heck happened?

Stage manager: You suffered a horrific car crash. You were at a four way stop at midnight. You were passing through the intersection, and your driver's side door was struck by a drunk driver who was reaching maximum speeds. You died on impact... Now you are living with the dead. Look around, you may recognize some people.

CJ: Grandpa?! Grandpa O?!

Both grandpas: Hello Charles, we are deeply saddened by what had happened to you today, but now you are in a better place, indeed.

CJ: But what is so great? All I see is darkness, and all those people down there enjoying their lives and living with enthusiasm and love and passion.

Grandpa: Ah yes, life was spectacular wasn't it. Those moments, blissful and joyous, were definitely highlights of my life. But looking down, you see everything out of a different lens, and nothing up here is what it seemed to be on earth.

CJ: It can't be that different! I'm sure going back and seeing a moment in life you would realize how happy you were and how enjoyable life really was. Family, friends, and just the memories we made. I want to go back. I want to see it from a different perspective.

Grandpa O: Oh Charles no, you don't want to do that. It is far from what you think it will be.

Woman of the dead: It may seem just marvelous, but you will be miffed once you return here.

CJ: I don't care, I think you are all wrong! My life was spectacular and I just want to enjoy it at least one more time.

Grandpa: At least go to a somewhat unimportant day. Going to a day that brought an ear-to-ear smile to your face on earth might ruin the whole memory you have of it if you visit it from this perspective.

CJ : Okay fine, take me to... Hmm... Take me to a day spent at my grandma's lake house, on the shore of Lake Michigan. A day the sun was shining down with great radiance, not a cloud in the sky, and waves not reaching whitecaps until just before they crashed and fell onto the swift, sandy shore.

Stage manager: Are you sure you want to do this? It might change your memory of how wonderful life really was.

CJ: Yes, I have to see the people I loved on earth just one more time.

Stage Manager: Alright, we will go to the date of July 3, 2007. It was a perfect day, the day before our nation's Independence Day. Not a cloud in the sky, a very light breeze if there even was one, and an 85 degree, sunny day on the beach was just about to be a great one for the whole Otteman and DeWitt family.

Grandma: Alright, time for the beach!

CJ: Grandma's thick German accent was everything I remembered it was.

All the grandkids: YEAH! WOOHOO!

Aunt April: What a wonderful day.

Stage manager: Running around looking for clothes like people shopping on Black Friday, everybody at this point was getting ready. Here they come! Time for the beach! Look at that. The

rays from the sun glistening on the water, the sandy beach with light tan grains that the waves come up on and kiss just about every second. It is truly paradise.

CJ: Look there I am! Younger me, ahh those were the days. My bowl cut for my light brown hair, wearing swim trunks with fish on them, colorful and radiant, and the suit that looks just a little too big for me. My tall stature for my age made me seem kind of cocky and boastful... And a little bit bossy.

CJ (younger): Mom! I want some food and a drink!

Mom: Well you are gonna have to go up and get some stuff yourself.

CJ (younger): Come on mom, I need food and I can't get any! I'm playing in the sand!

Mom: Alright (laughing) I'll go get you some.

CJ: Wow, I was a pretty rude kid (chuckle).

Dad: CJ do you want to take a quick dip in the water with me?!

CJ (younger): Daaadd, the water is too cold!

CJ: I don't even remember this day! I can't believe I didn't swim with my dad, I would love to be that young and do that again... It's like I didn't even show any love for my dad, but he really meant the world to me.

Dad: Okay, maybe sometime later once it gets a little warmer outside you will want to.

Mom: Here you go CJ! I got your lunch!

CJ: Wow that sandwich looks delectable. My mom made the most delicious food.

CJ (younger): Thanks Mom! I'll have it in a little bit I'm not super hungry right now and I'm digging a hole.

CJ: I feel like I'm not noticing my family and friends as much as I should be. It's like I am just sitting there like I am the center of the world. I should be like a dog when his owner returns from a three day trip, delighted, thankful, and beyond joyed to see the people I loved.

Stage manager: Sometimes in life, people just don't notice everything the way you can see it from up here. Looking down, you can see how oblivious people are to their blessings and surroundings.

CJ: Look at my parents sitting there, how happy they look. And then there's me... I can't even thank my parents, just being a selfish little kid I... I... We have to go back. I can't stand seeing myself like this... Selfish, unthankful... Take me back. Take me back to my grave.

Stage manager: Are you sure you don't want to...

CJ: Yes! I am sure.

Stage manager: Alright...

*On the way back, CJ ponders in his own thoughts...*

*CJ: How could I be like that?! I should have been more thankful for everything I was blessed with, family, friends... I just wish I would have noticed it sooner...*

*Back at the cemetery with all the other people who had passed away...*

Grandpa: Well, how was it?!

CJ: It was definitely not what I thought it would be... And I am ashamed of myself. I was a terrible person, and I wish I would have noticed it sooner so I could live my extravagant life with a better attitude, open heart, and be thankful for everything I had.

Grandpa O: That's how many of us feel CJ... Ashamed, disgusted, miffed about how we were.

CJ: If I had my life to live over

I'd be more thankful and outgoing in a good way

I'd be joyful, I would notice the little things.

I would be happier than I was on my first try

I would take more chances to get to express my love

I would try to give more love

I would go on more adventures with my friends

I would try to eat more meals that my mom made that I thought looked nauseatingly vulgar

I would perhaps get myself into trouble every once in a while,

But that'd be okay because I would be trying more reckless things.

You see, I am one of those people who always lived life by the rules,

Hour after hour, day after day

Oh, I had some pretty stupid moments, and if I could do it all over again,

I'd have more of them (on purpose too).

In fact, nothing else would matter but the memories I would be creating.

Just memories,

One after another,

Instead of trying to always live life inside the box.

I've been one of those people who never really experienced life

Because I always followed the line I was supposed to, never straying away,

If I had to do it again, I would travel more,

I would run around outside more often instead of staring at a giant TV.

I would dance a little more and show my true moves I actually had.

I would be more adventurous, loving, and outgoing with my family and friends.

I would show the people I truly loved how dear they were to my heart.