

Abbey Cutchin
Frank W. Cox High School

Valedictory Address

This is a defining moment. Here we gather for the last time in one place before we scatter across the ends of the earth—before we embark on the next chapter of life. In the span of hours we will be celebrated for all that we have accomplished over four years, and essentially our lives. And then it will end—this moment which is so intrinsically profound will amount to no more than a few seconds in the continuum of life.

So, how can we attach such deep meaning to single moments in our lives, no matter how life-altering they may be? And our struggles and triumphs, while overwhelming in importance to us, are they not just small actions in the theater of humanity?

But if nothing matters in the grand scheme of the universe, what exactly are we doing here, in this moment, in this life? I can no more answer this question than the millions of human beings who have struggled with it since the dawn of time. All I can say is that it is YOUR question, and it will define who you become.

We will never again be where we are today. For time has a way of propelling life forward, never backwards, as it compels us through its brevity to act, but through its longevity to do. Moments that pass are gone forever, lost inevitably to the universe. And while it may seem that our profound lack of time on this planet is a universal tragedy, I argue that it is man's most precious gift. We have the power of reinvention simply because time exists. There is nothing we can do that cannot be corrected, and there is always the ability to change for the better. Time passes; and so, we cannot fail.

What then do we have to fear? Here we sit in this solitary moment together awaiting the future, and within each of us resides a power to do something extraordinary. Can you feel it? The anticipation for this next stage in our lives is palpable; we can do and become anything in this world. So we must ask ourselves, in our time on this earth, what will our lives become?

We are truly nothing more than singular moments, strewn miraculously together to form a life—which is all together beautiful and rare and joyous. As Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese poet, once said, "I existed from all eternity and, behold, I am here; and I shall exist till the end of time, for my being has no end." In that way, we are a part of the fabric of humanity that has stretched for hundreds of generations, something so much grander than ourselves. And while time has a way of making us anonymous to the generations ahead, I can tell you that it does not matter. Whatever you make of your life will be significant, simply because you have done it—you have consciously chosen your life and lived it.

So go forth into this world, freely and armed with the knowledge that you cannot fail. You have just enough time, but not too much. We are moments. We are infinite. We are individuals foraging for knowledge, and we are mere notes within the resounding symphony of life. But what remains is that we are—we exist, for however long or brief a time. And the world will be a better place because we have lived. Congratulations Class of 2013, we did it!