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AP Lang/ American Lit

Dr. Gingrich

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Advantageous Alpharetta to the Wonderful Wildlife

Dearest Tori,

After learning about your plans to permanently depart Alpharetta and its so called “confinement of the bourgeoisie values shopping mall, suburban lawns, and meaningless instruction of formal education” at age 16, I cannot help but write you in hopes of changing your mind in the matter. You claim that what you desire most is venturing out on your own to go on the adventure of a lifetime. I certainly understand where you are coming from, dear friend, but there are many benefits to staying in this community for a while, and the ramifications of you leaving here immediately simply outweigh any pros! You should stay in Alpharetta for perhaps six or seven years, but later travel to other places from time to time, if you still want to.

Take a moment to close your eyes, and imagine yourself packing your bags and leaving Alpharetta forever. You hitch hike until you arrive in your desolate, unpopulated destination, where all you hear is the great outdoors around you. Alone in the wild, you spend the days surviving, and plan to continue living alone permanently. While this may sound appealing to you, completing this action at such a young age would inhibit your ability to go to college. You may be laughing at my insistence on college, and many graduates similar to you are wondering the same thing: why, with all of its strenuous workload and costs, should I waste time, money, and energy on college? Jeff McGuire, author of several college-themed articles, believes that college is valuable and worth attending because students get to “learn more about intriguing

subjects and spend lots of time with your friends.” Unfortunately, neither of these activities can be done alone in the wild. While you may be able to carry a few books with you on your adventures, there isn’t a likelihood of you becoming nearly as knowledgeable about a subject as you would in a college course, and there certainly won’t be many people around to befriend. College allows for you to explore in great depth the topics that appeal to your interests, such as biochemistry or psychology. Also, there will be plenty of interesting and diverse people to spend time with at college. You will be able to hear their views on things and have valuable discussions with them, broadening your understanding of others and why people do what they do. With an educated mind, you can drastically improve your whole viewpoint of life since you will know more about the world and have had plenty of practice in analyzing and exploring the people and things within it.

Staying here in Alpharetta and attending a university will not only improve your outlook on life, but will give you the skills and knowledge to acquire a job. Of course, jobs pay its employees money. Tori, I know that you may be opposed to the desire for money since most people waste their cash on pointless shopping for unnecessary, excessive items. An example of such a purchase is a flat screen television, which is often completely unnecessary since plenty of people in our society buy one in addition to other working televisions. In that regard, I really do empathize with where you are coming from concerning money. However, have you ever considered saving up that money in order to buy supplies and transportation for a trip somewhere? Then, the money wouldn’t be wasted on frivolous items; instead it could be a gateway to an exotic place! You will be able to purchase the food, tent, tools, and plane tickets or bus fares needed for a safe journey. Thinking beyond the obvious monetary benefit of a job, employees can also obtain knowledge about the world and how it works that will be useful on a

trip. For example, if you work as a biology teacher, you will know about various plants and animals. This would be useful when alone in the wild, of course. But even if you become a professional lawyer, which is a job that appears to be less correlated to survival, you will learn how to defend someone else using evidence and logic. This practice of logical thinking and defensive skills can certainly be applied in nature. For example, Jon Krakauer, author of *Into the Wild*, attempts to climb the ice encrusted Alaskan mountain called the Devil's Thumb. At one point, he has a choice between climbing an easier path or a shorter but more challenging path. Krakauer concludes that since he doesn't know how much longer the weather would stay reasonable, he should climb the quicker path to the top of the mountain. He had to survey his surroundings and then weigh the pros and cons of traveling on either path. Fortunately, his choice was a good one, and soon Krakauer felt his "cracked lips stretch into a painful smile" as he realized his victory in reaching the top of the Devil's Thumb (Krakauer 153). As a matter of fact, Krakauer was a man of many talents; before he committed all his time to rock climbing and writing, he worked as a carpenter and a commercial salmon fisherman. Such jobs probably taught him several of what Steve Tobak feels that jobs teach its workers, including "how to focus, prioritize, multitask, problem solve, manage stress, and a host of other practical concepts that will serve you well when you're on your own." As you can see, jobs give its workers money and real-world experience, both of which can assist you in a dream adventure later in life, and in a safer and well-planned manner.

Alpharetta is considered to be a very well off area in perspective with the rest of the world. We live in multistory homes, eat a variety of food, and generally, in comparison with the rest of the world, earn lots of money. Some aspects of the area may frustrate you, and understandably so. However, due to the affluence of the area, meaning its wealth and proximity

of stores and jobs, many of the people who live here have time to explore their interests and learn new things in their free time, instead of struggle for survival day in and day out as you will be doing when you depart for your trip. In other places, such as Fond-de-Blancs, Haiti, people spend hours daily fetching clean water to drink, maintaining their homes, and cooking meals over fires. They don't always have the opportunities or time to play sports, or even go to school! The people of Alpharetta, on the other hand, have an abundance of time to hold meaningful conversations and typically enough money for activities that suit their interests. Perhaps you should take advantage of living in such an opportunity-filled environment and expand your skills before you decide to abandon Alpharetta and civilization entirely. If you were to leave forever, every day you would be struggling to survive, and there wouldn't be the time or chances to explore your interests the way Alpharetta allows you to do.

Once you do spend enough time in the area, and have taken advantage of the opportunities in Alpharetta, I definitely feel that you should go on an adventure of a lifetime, if that is what you desire. Chris McCandless followed a similar path that I'm encouraging you to follow; first he went to college at Emory and held a number of jobs, such as his job at a grain elevator. Then, he left for Alaska afterwards. In his letter to a close friend, Ron Franz, he urges Franz to depart on a voyage, explaining that "the basic core of a man's spirit is in his passion for adventures" (Kraukauer 57). Later on in the letter, he tells Ron that he will also be able to see some of the "great work God has done here in the American west," referring the beauty of nature (Kraukauer 58). So, according to McCandless, adventuring into the unknown wilderness will permit you to know yourself better after following your passion for adventures, and will allow you to witness the breathtaking creation of God.

Unfortunately, McCandless died after four months due to starvation. So while you and Chris have your similarities, there must be a distinguishable difference between Tori Perkins and Chris McCandless: you must be wiser in your preparations for the trip! And by staying in Alpharetta longer and then traveling sometime later in life, college will broaden your knowledge of the world and its people, a job will give you money and world experience, and the opportunities that Alpharetta has to offer will not be wasted. Since you will have gone to college and held a job, my hope is that you will have plenty of common sense to know that you should first learn in detail about the vegetation and animal life in the ecosystem you travel to. Also, you will be wise enough to remember a map and compass, two items which McCandless failed to bring with him. Once you depart for an adventure, you will be able to find develop and find yourself in a new way, and experience the beauty of nature. Eventually, you will be a well-educated, well rounded, and adventurous woman. Who could ask for anything more?

Sincerely,

Your Friend, Maggie

Works Cited

McGuire, Jeff. "The Benefits of Having a College Education." *Articles Advice*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Sept. 2014.

Tobak, Steve. "7 Things Your Day Job Can Teach You About Entrepreneurship." *Inc.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Sept. 2014.