***Tuesdays with Morrie*: My Mentor Essay**

**Who has made a difference in my life?**

**Overview**

In *Tuesdays with Morrie*, famed sportswriter Mitch Albom explores his relationship with his former college professor, Morrie Schwartz, who is dying of Lou Gehrig’s disease. You have undoubtedly had adults or other young people who have made a difference in your life. **This assignment calls on you to write about your relationship in a five-paragraph essay.**

*Note: This assignment asks for you to write something positive about someone who you admire. However, if you can’t think of anyone who has made a difference in your life, imagine what your ideal mentor would be like. Take this opportunity to do some creative writing.*

**Assignment Guidelines:**

* Each paragraph must have **at least 5 sentences**.
* As this is a personal essay, you will not have any sources to cite.
* Use MLA format for the paper, including a heading, header, spacing and acceptable font styles and sizes.
* As this is an informal, personal essay, you may (and must) use personal pronouns such as “I.”
* Edit a peer’s essay
* Essay due: TBD

Include transitions

1. **Introduction**

* Topic sentence should reveal the name of your character and the setting.
* Write a thesis statement about the effect of your mentor on your life.
* How did you meet or get close?
* Describe what you were like before you knew this person, or before this person had an effect on you.
* Include a transition sentence.

1. **Character**

Describe your character vividly with the most precise words and phrases you can. Do **not** use clichéd phrases such as “her voice was sweeter than candy.” Consider answering the following or similar questions:

* Describe the setting in which you met the person. Was it at school? At a sport or activity? In a religious setting? Was it someone you knew for as long as you can remember?
* What does the person look like? Examples: Is s/he tall? Short? Covered in make-up? A fan of ripped up jeans? Choose your own details.
* What does this person act like? Is s/he serious? Funny? Is s/he loud? Quiet
  1. **Story**

Tell a story of a time this person was there for you, helped you out or challenged you.

Tell the story in the order that it took place with an exposition, rising action, turning point or climax, and resolution.

Be descriptive: Include at least four adjectives or adverbs in your story.

Include an exchange of dialogue to reveal your character and your mentor’s character

What was the outcome?

* How would your life be different had you never met this person?
* Create mood as you sequence: a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, humor or resolution

1. **Conclusion**

* Restate thesis
* What was your mentor’s effect on you?
* Explain this person’s continued presence in your life, or why he or she is not present.
* Tie in all of your main points from the other paragraphs.

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English 11-7

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Acquired Tastes

In my life of nearly thirty years, I have had several mentors, but none of them were more influential than my high school newspaper adviser, Mrs. Stevens. Her role was more that of a coach than of a teacher. Back when I was fifteen, I had high self-esteem in terms of loving myself for who I was, but low self-confidence in terms of what I could do with my abilities. My grades were always okay, but I knew “okay” wouldn’t get me to where I needed to be in life. My high school newspaper adviser, Mrs. Stevens, taught me to bring out all of my strengths – even the ones that I didn’t think mattered – to become the best version of myself I could be.

Mrs. Stevens was in her early thirties when I entered her newspaper class. She was short of height and known for being short of temperament, but she would say something hilarious just seconds after yelling at someone. She probably spent more time on her hair, makeup and clothes than any other teachers, but she also looked the most professional. She tended to zip around the room like a fly from computer to computer as she supervised our work. She developed a great rapport with most of her students, but this was not at all instantaneous: she was an acquired taste. In so many ways, she was the opposite of me when I entered her class, as I wore no makeup, preferred wrinkled old t-shirts to the fluttery blouses of the other girls in my class, and moved lethargically about any space because I subsided mostly on pizza, nachos, ice cream and candy in those days. The primary exception to our many differences is that I, too, am an acquired taste: people rarely like me when they first encounter me.

Early in the semester, I was in an accident that resulted in a major injury for me: I broke both the bones in the forearm of my writing hand. I couldn’t use the hand for over a month, which seriously slowed me down in my coursework. Furthermore, I wasn’t at my sharpest mentally because I was taking some serious pain medication. In other classes, I gave my friends carbon paper on which they could take notes for both of us at the same time, and some of my teachers gave me extra time to work on assignments that involved the use of my hand. A few even reduced the amount of work that was due. I was reluctant to ask Mrs. Stevens for an extension because I knew she was a tough cookie and at only two months into the school year, I was not quite comfortable with her. Part of the way through my first deadline since I returned from the hospital, I realized that I wasn’t going to get finished by the end of the class period.

“May I have an extension on the deadline?” I quietly asked Mrs. Stevens about one of my article assignments. On my first day back, I’d realized that I’d gone from the fastest typist in the class to the slowest. Mrs. Stevens didn’t coddle me. “No,” she said flatly, without bothering to explain. I had to eat my lunch in her classroom as I finished the article by the end of the day. At the time, it seemed she was inconsiderate and uncaring about my difficult situation, and I admit that I held it against her for a little while. When I look back on the events now, though, I realize that she was right: the newspaper needed my article on time whether I was ready for it or not, the real world doesn’t slow down for me when I have had health problems as an adult, and all it look was a little extra time and effort for me to get beyond the difficulty and get the article finished on time. A broken arm was a terrible thing to have happened to me, but pushing through the slow progress and the pain helped make me the professional I am today. From that point on, I had respect for the way Mrs. Stevens for not giving in to my request for an extension like all of my other teachers. At work now, I always meet my deadlines and wouldn’t dream of asking for an extension. Mrs. Stevens’ simple “no” taught me all that. Had I never met her, I may have learned that lesson when more important things were at stake, or I might not have learned it at all.

By the end of that year, I had gained a reputation as a good editor. By the following year, I was the best proofreader on the newspaper, and Mrs. Stevens asked me to be Editor-in-Chief for my senior year. That was the biggest honor I’d had in my entire life. As Editor, I furthered my writing skills and got to know Mrs. Stevens better because I spent so much more time in her classroom. She made teaching seem fun, and that is a big part of the reason I went into the field of education. In her classroom I learned how I could use my best assets – my eye for detail and sense of humor – to my advantage. By my second year on the newspaper, Mrs. Stevens and I knew enough about each other to appreciate each other’s company, and I loved feeling comfortable enough with her and her other students to be myself. The first time I ever felt confident being myself was in her classroom, and it’s the feeling I try to replicate in every situation. At the end of my senior year, I told her she was my favorite teacher, and she said I was the most unique student she ever had and that she would truly miss me. We are Facebook friends and don’t keep in touch directly now, but that’s okay. I know she is busy helping many dozens of students grow, shine and meet deadlines now that she is finished helping me become the best “me” I could be.