

## *This iBelieve Essays*

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### [Mis]Fortune

by Jack Adam

My family has never been one to order Chinese takeout. When we did, however, we went all in: from the first tear of a duck sauce packet to the announcement of the wisdom of the fortune cookie. By the age of ten, I had become somewhat accustomed to the language of the obscure and often outlandish fortunes that marked the closing ceremony of our high-MSG meals. It was around this time that I received a fortune that was actually applicable to my life. It read: *If you understand what you're doing, you're not learning anything.* This fortune came at the peak of my pre-tween angst, somewhere around the end of the fourth grade. I was your classic know-it-all Teacher's Pet, always looking for a challenge in the classroom and I found a connection to this mantra.

But today, I want to teach. Let's sit down for a mini-lesson. Learning, I believe, is incredibly similar to the concepts of physics. For example, velocity, as it is defined, is just your speed. Now, acceleration is a measure of the change in your velocity *per second*. When you learn, you begin to accelerate; you move rapidly uphill as you gain knowledge and understanding of a topic. Once you have reached full comprehension, you are no longer learning and you begin to coast along a flat line. The learning process does not allow you to decelerate, rather you continue moving at a constant velocity. As Einstein said, if an object is moving at a constant velocity—it is almost as if it is not moving at all. This being said, when I knew that I had reached a point at which I understood everything we were doing in class, I began to kick back and coast.

My newfound Bueller-esque persona was quickly aroused by the very name of our new and nearing English assignment. The Independent Writing Project, or IWP, quickly became my favorite assignment during elementary school. I took it upon myself to go all out; I committed myself to quantity over quality. I believed that if I could fill a certain page quota—say, 100 pages—I would take my education to the next level. I had been, at this point, feeling quite stuck for some time. I knew that alone I could not progress any further in school, specifically in writing, without the proper guidance and prompting. So, without hesitation, I began to write fervently and carried my flash-drive everywhere I went—both in and out of school. Not only did I miss the intrinsic value of class instruction, but also the precious opportunities to sit crisscross applesauce on my section of the flat, crusty rug that was the center of the public school experience. More importantly, my ostensible mastery of a completely open-ended assignment gave me infinite, blind courage in my comprehension of English language arts.

I was never actually able to decide on a title for my “novel.” Come to think of it, it did not really have a plot either. I probably missed the lesson in which we learned that all stories must have character development; the main character always experiences a momentous change by the end of the story. Thankfully, I was able to realize my own foolishness and to push forward my own

character development—making sure I wasn't left unchanged and stubborn in my ways. I was only ten; by no means did I need to be contacting publishing companies. However, I still believe in my fortune cookie. As it said: *If you understand what you're doing, you're not learning anything.*