

Press Rewind
By: Jillian Murphy

Every moment within the past four years has lead up to this – our final days as high school students. From cliché Instagram posts to tweets about these last few weeks we will spend together before moving on...before moving away from this place we've called home for thirteen years, I walk the halls with my head hanging low, attempting to take all of this in.

Nostalgia. The word takes hold of my throat with two hands, taking every last bit of air out of my lungs until I feel engulfed in nothing but memories...memories that play on the big screen in my head like America's Number One Film. A movie reel, made up of pictures and videos, a soundtrack of crazy, laughter, wailing sobs, and excited screams that is constantly playing throughout the walls of my mind. Moments I've captured with my own two eyes.

They asked me to write about high school...but how do you take a mix of a mere 26 letters to describe what we've all been through the past four years? What was high school to me you ask? High school was diner runs at 4 A.M. on Friday nights when there was nothing better to do than eat to pass the time. It was doubling over in pain from laughing too hard, from laughing too loud at some stupid joke we'd all forget about in the morning. High school was running to your best friends' sides to comfort and console them during their heartache...and it was also accompanying them on drive-bys of that one ex's house that they would never ever really get over. High school was the time you failed that math test with a 14 and told your parents that everybody else failed too, so why should you be the only kid to get your keys taken away for the weekend? High school was the group of kids everybody hated, but everybody secretly wanted to be. It was sub-tweeting and weekend rounds of #letsmakeitawkward that always made Monday mornings...interesting.

High School. It was the closest thing to a fantasy we will ever find, because none of it...none of it, was real. And we all expected so much out of it, but we never anticipated that time would pass by so quickly, and now...we're sitting in our desks asking ourselves, "What was high school to me?"

I hope when you think of high school, you remember as it was. The good, the bad, the ugly, the ratchet, the crazy...I hope you remember the one that got away and I hope you remember the one you should have let go of sooner. I hope when you look at the football field, it's still as big to you now as it was during your first homecoming football game. I hope every Wednesday, you think of the times you only really made it to school because it was chicken nugget day. I hope you can pass by that girl that you hate and smile knowing that you're never going to have to see her again. I hope it hits you during the last ten seconds before the bell rings at 1:40 for the last time and you look around at all of the people who helped make you who you are today... and more than anything?

I hope you made high school worthwhile - I know I did.

Word Count: 560

So Many Things At Once

By: Megan Sondermann

Thinking of high school sends thoughts bouncing around on the inside of my head in a rapid motion. Thoughts, memories, images. They all knock around like the bottom of ocean after a monumental wave crashes against the shore. Thinking about leaving sends blood rushing through my body in waves of heat, fear, excitement, nostalgia. Then trying to explain this to someone who isn't in my shoes turns me into an uneducated human who doesn't know how to form practical sentences. It's nearly impossible to explain the feelings I get when I think about what high school was for me.

High school, for me, was so many things all at once.

A roller coaster.

It's ups and downs sending me into a nausea that's only relievable with a break from reality.

An unhealthy relationship.

Pulling me in and keeping me around when I felt I needed out. Manipulating me into this person that wasn't actually me, except a distorted persona with my name and face.

A boxing match.

Hitting my competitor straight in the face just to find myself seconds later, on the floor with a bloody nose. Gathering myself to balance just to swing back and fall straight back to the floor.

A walk in the park.

Relieving and comforting, with the sun shining above and my body gently kissed by sunshine. Complete happiness and smiles, with temporary friends.

A shark pit.

Throwing myself in just for the thrill of getting hurt, but instead the cage would retract and suddenly I'm out of the water; with fins poking out of the surface.

Blood flowing through my veins.

Keeping me up and holding me ready for my future and what's coming next.

An everyday routine.

Causing me to form habits that felt unbreakable, at the time. Something I'm so used to that when I think of breaking out of it, it's petrifying.

A competition.

Constantly trying to push out of the normality, called "an average student." Trying to leave my mark on every person I pass, just to win the grand prize; college tuition.

Everything endured in high school affected me. I learned to use the roller coaster, unhealthy relationship, boxing match, walk in the park, shark pit, blood in my veins, everyday routine and competition all to my advantage. Although high school included things like ‘heartbreak’, snotty noses, uncomfortable speeches, long days and even longer nights, early mornings and chlorine filled swim classes, high school also gave me some of the best memories of my life. Whether it was sitting around in an empty basement with all my best friends with a couple of beers, walking home from each other’s houses at 2 a.m., laughing to the point where it felt like my stomach was instantaneously “jacked” or getting accepted to my top school, they all wouldn't have happened without my bittersweet friend I call high school.

These past four years have been a crazy experience, but I wouldn't be the person I am without them spent here.

Word Count: 506

Anti-Renaissance

By Ima Happyitsover

High school was a scam (freshman & sophomore year) — O how falsely advertised as a nest for friendship and reinvention. All high school had done for me within the first few months was purge all of my friends and reap my self-esteem. I had always been lectured on how things would be different, how people would be different; that wasn't true, nobody has changed, not even me. The kids who were getting busted for smoking weed in the boy's locker room are the same ones who are being dragged by their overpriced headphones to their assistant principal for vaping in the bathroom. High school was supposed to be my renaissance; instead it was my dark age.

High school was heartache (junior year) — Not only did this three-story beast take away all of my friends, it also enslaved them to temporary masters. Drugs, alcohol and toxic relationships became their gods, and that was when I really knew pain. There *is* such a thing as “caring to a fault”; I felt physical pain for every friend that was plucked from me. Watching my friends wash away, one-by-one, was like standing behind a plate-glass window while watching my house burn down. No matter how loud my screams were, I couldn't save any of them; that was the hardest truth I had to face.

High school was a social experiment (senior year) — Sitting in this empty, air-conditioned room, I am forced to reflect upon what high school *was* to me. All of the friends that I had lost along the way were paid back to me. My life was unexpectedly flooded with incredible people, who care about my well-being, as well as their own. All of my teachers are amazing, and have taught me so much about life. It seems cruel that now, as I have found my special corner of this place: my personal renaissance, that it must be ripped from my grasp, once again. The social experiment is hidden within the vicious cycle of give-and-take. This school wanted to see how much they could break me, and honestly, I've been chewed up and spit out by this school; and I am still just as vulnerable as when I started.

Word Count: 370