

## **Rebecca Silverman's Valedictorian's Address Huntington High School Graduation – 2010**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I have received quite a lot of advice when it comes to this particular speech. My friends and family have inquired on a consistent basis for the past year on whether or not I had written it yet, and my teachers have imparted upon me little suggestions over the past few months. I have been encouraged to include a meaningful metaphor, prodded to mention the sciences (and physics in particular), advised to include an important quote, and begged to above all not bore my audience to death. So, I will strive not to disappoint any of the people who took the time to give such considerate advice and if I fail abysmally I ask in advance for your forgiveness.

I will, after all, be attending an institute of technology in the fall, so perhaps it's only fitting that the sciences make an appearance in my address. The four years of high school are actually quite remarkably similar to the evolution we learn about in biology. We enter as freshmen with rather underdeveloped brains and four years later, as I'm sure many of our parents will testify, we have evolved and diversified into what is practically another species. And while it is a well known fact that chemistry plays a large role in everything from high school classes to high school relationships, there are certain chemical equations that we have found to be invaluable in our high school career. For example, good teachers + managing to stay awake in class + actually doing your work + energy → good grades + happy parents + exhaustion. You can even bring math into the picture by figuring out that if you negate any of the reactants in that equation you end up with negated products. For example, not managing to stay awake in class yields unhappy

parents. You get the idea. Now each of us has come to this point by inputting various reactants and thus getting back different products. And as any physics teacher will tell you, we're all leaving here with a slightly different velocity. The equation for velocity is distance over time. Well, we've all spent the past four years, 180 days of each year, 7 hours of each day, in high school. That's 18,144,000 seconds of time, and most of us have spent much more than that between clubs and sports and extra help. But assuming we all spent approximately the same amount of time in high school, over the years we've all traveled different distances. Some of us have made great leaps and bounds while others have chosen to move smaller distances at more steady paces. And so, for the first time in our lives, we are ready to move off at different velocities in different directions to new schools, new states, and even new countries.

This journey we are about to embark upon takes place in a world that is rapidly changing. There are certain comments that our generation has become accustomed to hearing that would be completely incomprehensible mere decades before. It has become commonplace for me to hear, "Stop texting at the dinner table!" or "Ohhh is that your facebook page?" from a parent who is peering over the edge of my computer. And as many detriments as there may be to the instant gratification that this technology has taught our generation to take for granted, there is something it has also given us that I am infinitely grateful for. A few weeks ago, I realized how incredibly fortunate I am to have a network of so many wonderful people who are there for me when I need them. Since I came to this district eight years ago, I have cultivated friendships with some of the most incredible people I ever hope to meet. And whether I'm catching a word with someone as I pass them in the

hallway, texting someone else to ask for advice, or facebooking a friend at some ridiculously late hour of the night, I know that my network of friends will never let me down. This class that you see sitting behind me is comprised of some of the most talented, intelligent, compassionate, and dedicated people that I ever hope to meet in this lifetime. I only wish I had more time to get to know each and every one of my amazing classmates whose skills have left me in awe more times than I can count. I have met the most gifted actors, heard the most angelic voices, listened to the wildest philosophical debates, announced the names of the most exceptional athletes, gazed upon the most gorgeous works of art and still I find every day that my classmates have even more astounding skills to offer. And often I have found that it is the quiet girl who smiles at you in the hallway, or the guy who offers to carry your books when you're about to collapse that, once you get to know them, are truly the most incredible people of all. I am honored to be a part of this class and to be able to count so many of these wonderful people as my friends. I know in my heart, that while we may have very different futures in store for us, the bonds we have made these past years are too strong to ever break.

It is customary for me to offer some words of advice to my departing classmates. I have instead, not so much advice to offer, but instead a mission. I have expounded upon the many virtues of this class and thus it is remarkably clear that ahead of us we all have bright futures just waiting for us to achieve our full potentials. So now I must reveal myself to be the tree-hugger that I have so often been called in the halls of this high school. For I have a mission for each and every one of you. We live in a world where success is defined by a dollar sign and we are judged by the labels in our clothing. I implore you to, instead of striving merely to put money in a bank

account, use that shining potential for one thing. Make a difference. Change this world, even if it's in the smallest bit, and make it a better place. Just think about it; which would be better? Being the multi-millionaire CEO of an oil company that is killing the environment, or being the engineer who discovers how to make drilling for oil more environmentally friendly? Then again, you may not find the cure for cancer or single-handedly achieve world peace, but all it takes is a little work and a little dedication to impact the world or someone's life in a positive and lasting manner. If each person here made just the smallest bit of difference, you know what? Together we would make a pretty big difference. We've been told one day we'll be all grown up and the world will be our responsibility. So let's make it our mission that when that day comes, we'll be ready to, bit by bit, make this world a better place.

A very wise old bear once said, "You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes." Well, if Winnie the Pooh were here, he would tell us that we have spent these years of our life in our own, safe little corner of the forest. Some of us have ventured out into the woods farther than others, but most of us have been content to stay in this part of the Hundred Acre Wood where we know there will always be a nice jar of honey in the cupboard. But at last the time has come to venture out and explore, and who knows? Perhaps we'll meet someone who likes to bounce a lot, or find a friend we can play poohsticks with. But a word to the wise, as Pooh Bear says, "People who don't think probably don't have brains; rather, they have grey fluff that's blown into their heads by mistake." So in addition to watching out for heffalumps and woozles, keep your brains about you these next few years

and keep an eye out for any grey fluff that's blowing around as you journey out into the forest.

Now before I finally stop talking I would like to take a moment to thank all the people who have brought us to this point: our parents and relatives who have worked tirelessly to encourage and support us even when all we did was whine, the teachers, administrators, counselors, and secretaries who have succeeded brilliantly at the exhausting job of trying to educate hundreds of moody teenagers, and of course all of our friends who have been there for us no matter what. So graduates, I leave you with one more mission: to personally thank each and every one of these people before you start upon your path to the future. We would never have achieved as much as we have without them.

Hence, to all the members of the Class of 2010, congratulations, and on this Final Friday, I wish you a gratifying graduation and a stupendous summer!