

A love letter to the artist that could have been

Are you listening, hello, oh my god you're not even listening to me. My friend is right, I'm not listening, I always struggle to concentrate on anything when I see an English lit student in close vicinity. She looks like me, or maybe I just hope she does. I hope we are alike. I hope that when she sees me, she sees a kindred spirit and not just a STEM major.

Just as I begin to question myself and my reasoning as to why I chose not to pursue English literature, my mother's voice cuts through the confusion before I can go any further. "As a woman you need to be financially independent, you need a stable career, you need to be able to get up and leave if things go wrong. You need to be more than I could be."

I don't blame her, I never would, how could I, she didn't force me to do anything. Everything she told me was completely out of love, but looking back at it today it still makes me sad. I was good at English in school; hell, I was the best in my year. It all just clicked for me; I adored English and when you love a subject like that, it loves you back. It lets you into its hidden meanings, things that the ordinary eye can't see from first glance. The thrill you get when you unearth multiple different meanings from a piece of work and the connection you feel to authors of a different world are unforgettable. Although English was my passion, the reality that my love wouldn't pay the future bills quickly loomed in when choosing a college course. Instead of choosing the thing I know I'm good at, and am confident in my abilities doing and what make my heart buzz with pure excitement, I chose stability, I chose a life that can provide for my future family, I chose a course that will give me a career where I won't have to fight to be hired.

I am on track to have everything I was looking for when entering higher education, and I have gotten some amazing opportunities within my degree. I have amazing lecturers guiding me through it all. I have recently completed an internship with a leading pharma company, which is a life changing accomplishment to be graduating with as it is. I have experienced tastes of my future financial status and my mother wasn't wrong. Everything in life will be easier with my STEM degree and I am so thankful for the opportunity I have, to even be in this course, which makes it near impossible for me to respect my feelings of longing for another life.

Grief is a complicated emotion; it can practically stick to anything. Most grieve over passed loved ones, or the destruction of something they loved but for me I grieve the life I could have had if I had chosen humanities. But my grief isn't just a deep sadness it's also mixed with anxiety and fear and a feeling of low self-worth.

It is the stew of feelings that simmers and sometimes boils inside me when I look at my education journey so far and where my life will go. You don't belong here, that's what I hear every time I open my laptop and tune my ears into the sermon being given by my lecturer. I sit amongst my so-called peers in the pews of a stuffy room, and I mime along to the responses that everyone else seems to have learned already at a secret class that I was not invited to. Everyone is typing! I don't know what they are typing but they are doing so at a superhuman speed. I try to peek into the word document of the disciple in front of me, how does he have it laid out so perfectly, wait where did he get that diagram from, hold on did I just hear something about an exam next week. Although I act like I don't, I do know why I'm feeling like this during my lectures. I am singing from a completely different hymn sheet, my brain doesn't work like this, it looks for hidden meanings not straightforward laws, it wants to be free not chained to the strict thinking my degree requires. I never second guessed myself when I was completing my exams for English, and I aced them, but here, I know I don't belong, and yet here I am.

I know it's not just me that feels this emptiness, Students all over the world are forced to look to the very distant future when making any life decisions. It is instilled in us as young children to always have a back up plan, always know a way out, always think for way too long before you act. Most students like me don't have the luxury of choosing a humanities degree in higher education. The humanities are advertised towards the financially stable students and because of this we miss out on just being happy instead of dreading the next 40 years of our working lives in a career that is only good for paying the bills, and devastatingly the human race misses out on our works of Art

As I lose myself in the longing for a life I will never live, I find myself wondering what would have happened if the humanities were more stable, but then again that's why we as humans love them so much because they can't be mass produced. They can't be learned off and studied in the conventional sense and that's why if I had the ability to remake that decision from 4 years ago with the knowledge I have now, I would still choose STEM over humanities and that is solely because I cannot withstand the burden of love.