

## Student Essay #1

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** *This essay is an example of a high school student who was encouraged by her teacher to develop her essay around a personal experience.*

In the United States we have many material blessings available to us. However, oftentimes we do not share those blessings with others. While on a trip to Romania I learned a very important *law of life*: give of yourself and your possessions every chance you have.

During July of 1999, I, along with eight others, traveled to the country of Romania to build a chapel in a Romanian/Hungarian village called Chet (Ketz). The town in which we stayed, Satu Mare, was filled with gypsies begging on tile streets. The road we traveled on the two hour bus ride to the village was lined with small two-room homes which house entire families. The same housing situation existed in Chet.

The team came prepared to make lunches of sandwiches and salads all week. However, the first day we were on the building site the ladies of the village brought a home-cooked meal at lunchtime. Then they informed us that they would prepare lunch for us every day, an extremely generous offer. They have no air conditioning, and in the summer, cooking around a hot fire is not very comfortable. Also, they don't have much money to buy food for a large group. These lunches were truly gifts of love. We were giving them something they needed, and they gave us something back.

However, their giving did not end with food. On the last day of work, the leader of the church called all the workers together and began a ceremony. He expressed his gratitude and asked us to remember Chet in our prayers. Then he presented every worker with a handmade gift, a mat of woven material, white, blue, green, red, purple, black, and yellow. The women of the village had once again given of their time, energy, and resources to thank a group of people who had come to help them.

Although the people of Chet do not know this, they gave me much more than food and a rug. They taught me a *law of life*. I am a person who is blessed beyond my imagination. I have a wonderful family, full of love and care. I have everything I need: food, clothing, and shelter; even the extras I desire. However, even when given the opportunities I fail to share these blessing like I should. As a recipient of the giving spirit of the people of Chet I now realize the importance of giving of myself and my possessions, even when it requires a sacrifice.



## Student Essay #2

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** *The author of the essay below took one law of life and wrote about three people who exemplified that law.*

The famous writer Phyllis Wheatley, the athlete Wilma Rudolph, and neurosurgeon Dr. Deborah Hyde all have several things in common. Yes, they are all African-American women. Yes, all three achieved a great level of success. However,

the strongest thread that binds these three women together is their immeasurable amount of perseverance.

The well-known scientist Charles Darwin wrote, “Only the strong will survive.” This statement is indeed true. As individuals, we must learn to overcome obstacles and overlook naysayers when trying to achieve goals. If we allow the negative opinions of others to stop us, we will never reach our full potential. This is why perseverance is one of the important *laws of life*.

At a time when most African-Americans were not even allowed to glance at a book, Phyllis Wheatley was reading. When most women were confined to child-rearing and household chores, Phyllis Wheatley was writing poetry. Not only was it amazing for this African-American woman to be reading and writing in the 1700’s, but who could ever conceive that a scholarly poem dedicated to President George Washington entitled “To His Excellency” would be the work of one young person.

Phyllis Wheatley did not allow the fact that she was a teenager and an American during the revolution to bother her. Being a woman and an African-American did not deter her either. She overcame all of these obstacles. Phyllis Wheatley persevered.

Champion Wilma Rudolph suffered from polio as a child. This crippling disease could easily discourage anyone from the thought of walking, even at a moderate speed. The thought of running would be out of the question.

Wilma Rudolph was not just anyone. She was one who hoped, one who dreamed, and one who achieved. Once she decided that running was the goal she wanted to accomplish, nothing could stand in her way, not even polio. Wilma sailed by her opponents in every race she entered. Along with a blaze of dust, Wilma left her adversaries shocked, amazed, and inspired. Wilma Rudolph persevered.

Neurosurgeon Dr. Deborah Hyde was told by a medical school professor that she had no chance of succeeding. After all, it was assumed that students of small Tougaloo College in Mississippi could not possibly compete with graduates of prestigious Ivy League universities. These doubts did not discourage Dr. Hyde. She went on to become the only female in her elite specialty and is now one of only four African-American female neurosurgeons in the nation. Dr. Deborah Hyde persevered.

At that moment when we are told that something is impossible, our hearts feel shattered and our momentum is decreased. The disappointment seems almost unbearable. This is when it becomes necessary to take the negative emotions we feel and turn them into positive energy. This positive force should then motivate us to work even harder. The mental cycle of converting doubts into motivation must occur each time we encounter obstacles, no matter how difficult these obstacles may seem. It is only through perseverance that goals are accomplished, dreams become reality, and the impossible ceases to exist. Perseverance is a tool for survival, and it is also my *law of life*.

## Student Essay #3

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** *This essay was written by an eighth grade student. It is a good example of a personal story that perfectly captures a law of life.*

It was a hot July morning in Estill Springs, Tennessee. My mother and I got up very early to pick tomatoes. It was my summer job, and my mother was good enough to help me. Every other morning she and I would enter Sak-n-Pak Convenience Market to sell several gallon buckets of tomatoes.

We were very busy sorting the tomatoes and hardly noticed a salesman as he entered the store. The salesman was very well-dressed, and he made his rounds back and forth throughout the store. As he made his way, he spoke to everyone in the store except my mother and me. Several times as we were sorting our tomatoes, the salesman passed us. It was obvious to me that he thought my mother and I were beneath him and not worthy of a “hello.”

After we finished our sorting, we walked to the counter where the manager paid me for the tomatoes. The salesman was now behind the counter talking to the manager. He asked to speak to the owner of the store. At that point my smiling mother, barefoot because our shoes were dirty, was introduced to the salesman. The salesman was very embarrassed. The one person who he thought was beneath him was the one with whom he needed to do business.

As life goes on, I will always remember this incident. No one is any better than anyone else. Never judge someone by the clothes he or she wears or the job he or she does. From this experience I have learned to judge all people equally, not by their outward appearance. This is one of my major *laws of life*.



## Student Essay #4

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** *This essay was written by a fourth grade student (age nine) and demonstrates that kids of all ages can participate in the contest and write a meaningful laws of life essay!*

“Sometimes to love means to sacrifice.”

That is something I have heard my mom say from time to time, but I never really understood what it meant until a couple of years ago. It all began one cold January night...

I woke up to crying! I ran into my sister Caley’s room...she said her head hurt really badly. I ran downstairs to get my parents. Caley was taken to a nearby hospital. She was delirious! The doctor sent her in a helicopter quick! To a hospital two hours away! There my parents learned Caley had a brain aneurysm — kind of like bleeding inside the brain. That was very serious! For three weeks Mom stayed at the hospital with Caley. I had to sacrifice my time with Mom...I had to sacrifice a lot. I love my sister, and I kept reminding myself that Caley needed Mom more than I did. Sometimes to love means to sacrifice.

When Caley and Mom came home from the hospital, I was so glad to see them. Then, my parents asked me if I would share my bedroom with Caley (my room is closest to my parents’ room) so they could hear her at night. Truthfully, I really wanted a room of my own, but I love my sister, so I said, “Sure.” Sometimes to love means to sacrifice.

During the past two and a half years, since Caley’s brain aneurysm, she has had a lot of physical restrictions...she can’t do anything that might increase her blood pressure or jolt her, causing her another brain bleed. (Things such as running, jumping, going upside down, and holding her breath, Caley cannot do.) Many times when I was playing with Caley, I chose not to do those things so Caley wouldn’t feel bad. I wanted to play like an ordinary kid, but I love my sister and...sometimes to love means to sacrifice.

Our family hasn’t even gone to any amusement parks during these past two and a half years because Caley isn’t allowed to ride any rides. Sure, I’d like to go, but I love my sister. Sometimes to love means to sacrifice.

But guess what? My sister is getting better! Soon we will be able to do lots of fun activities again. Through the past two and a half years, my sister Caley (who is two years older than me) and I have grown closer and closer. I love my sister. Sometimes to love means to sacrifice. And she is worth it. Now it actually feels like it was no sacrifice at all.