

Mikaela Nowinski (Teen) 2nd Place, Untitled

“Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first and the lesson afterwards.”-
Vernon Law

The best life lessons that I've ever learned have always been through my experiences. Experience has been my teacher, friend, my motivator, my harsh critic, and my biggest cheerleader. She can be extremely brutal because she loves to teach lessons through failures first and success later. She comes in many forms such as school experiences, sports, and family experiences and these past 18 months, she came as an experience like no other, a pandemic called Covid. Covid has been an experience that I could never imagine would ever happen, but it did. She was one of the harshest teachers' the world has ever experienced. She truly gave her test first and lesson afterwards. She tested people's resolve and patience but then gave them truly some amazing lessons on enjoying life, trusting others and most importantly, hope.

Hope is a word that meant nothing to me before Covid. I only saw it in poems like Emily Dickson's, "Hope a Thing With Feathers". Before Covid, I always viewed hope as something you had to do as a result of a lack of preparation. However, during Covid as cases rose and an end seemed nowhere in sight, I realized that in the absence of hope there's fear. A fear which can consume you, take over your mind and fill you with "what ifs". The hope I thought was only needed due to lack of preparation was actually the vaccine to fear. It provides light during the darkest times and eliminates the "what ifs". For me, hope was truly a thing with feathers, floating throughout those difficult times, spreading a much needed message. We can overcome anything with hope.