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English 621
Mr. Coffin
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Valedictorian Speech

Good evening family, friends, teachers, and fellow graduates.

Tonight we come together as one school; one graduating class; one family, to celebrate our achievements.

Nelson Mandela once said, and I quote, "Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world." Now, I'm not naïve enough to believe that the people sitting to my left will change the world one day. But I do know that, however tiny, there is a chance that they will. And I have enough optimism to hope for it. Ghandi once said that whatever you do in life will be insignificant, but it's very important that you do it. Whether we change to the world or not, for us tonight, our world is changing. We're becoming graduates; we're becoming adults. And, although that scares the heck out of me at the moment, I know that these changes are necessary for us to grow as students and as people, so that we can forge our own path, just as we have been doing for the past four years.

On our last day at Morell Regional High School, I invite my fellow graduates to reflect on their own personal journey that led to this day. The first thing that comes to my mind is our first day in grade 9. I don't know what was scarier: meeting my new classmates, or listening to Mr. Crawford's orientation speech informing us on how to be good little minor niners. We came from different elementary schools, and so this is the day that we truly became a class, and, unknowingly, a family. It's mind-blowing to look back to that first day of grade nine and realize how far we have come in the last four years. My fellow graduates, my friends, have given me some great memories, so I would like to share a few with you today.

I will always remember the Twelve Days of Christmas competition, when we would battle it out, homeroom-to-homeroom, in the gym with oven mitts, wrapping paper, and tug-of-war, even though Ms. Compton's or Mr. Coffin's homerooms were the only two that ever won.

I remember when Morgan MacAree sat in Ms. Parkman's classroom every day and made fun of her height, when he was only an inch or two taller than her at the time.

I very clearly remember Ms. Compton, Ms. Minnis, and Ms. McGee dressing like they were from the hood and rapping a math song to the entire school. And, the performance that followed; Mr. Gillis, Mr. Kelly, and Mr. Farrell dressing in drag and singing, "Man, I feel like a woman."

I will never forget the sense of accomplishment that came with rallying together as a school to raise money for a good cause, whether it was the Pink Glove Dance and Relay for Life to raise money for cancer research, or the 30 Hour Famine to raise money for world hunger. It's nice to know that we can, and have, made a difference.

So, I would like to kick off my long list of thanks by thanking my fellow graduates for being friends to me, and for the wonderful memories I will carry with me when I leave Morell High.

Also, thank you to Mr. Crawford, for keeping us in line by scaring the heck out of us with the potential consequences of misbehavior. Also, thanks for the hilarious childhood stories you told in grade nine English – I'll never forget that you once had a crow stuffed into your locker.

Thank you to Dianne, the woman who is single-handedly responsible for our entire graduating class having proper manners and knowing the importance of a 'please and thank you'.

Thank you to Mr. Gallant, for always saving the day when the teachers weren't tech-savvy enough to know how to use their computers or SmartBoards.

Thank you to the janitors for cleaning up the messes we left behind, and for always going out of their way to say hello. I will never forget the roaring laughs that somehow always came from an encounter with Woofer in the hallway.

Thank you to the teaching assistants. Although not many of us had the pleasure of being taught by you, you always said hello to us anyway.

Thank you to the kitchen staff, for preparing the out-of-this-world food we ate every day in the fine dining hall, AKA the cafeteria. I'm warning you now, I might still pop back in once in a while – and the special had better be a hot chicken sandwich or I'll start a mutiny.

Thank you to Ms. Simmons-Shaw for being the best peer helping teacher that I could possibly hope for. It's easily one of my favorite courses, and it definitely has an amazing teacher.

Thank you to Ms. Gordon, for being the alt ed teacher and a leader for the student council. My biggest regret is not taking one of your classes, and not being able to make toast in the morning with the toaster that you, for some reason, have in your classroom.

Thank you to Ms. Parkman, for having a good humor and laughing every day - even with Morgan MacAree in your class. For the record, I don't consider you short – just vertically impaired.

Thank you to Ms. Doyle for somehow leading my French-impaired behind through grade nine French class. More importantly, you really are a true inspiration to all of us. So, as they say in French, Je m'apelle Jenny...No, wait..Merci!

Thank you to Mr. Reid for teaching gym class. I silently thanked my lucky stars that you were the gym teacher every time I walked into the gym and you had the tunes just-a-pumping through the speakers.

Thank you to Ms. Pendergast, for having a sixth sense with books. When we asked you for a book, you somehow always managed to give us an amazing book that perfectly fit our interests.

Thank you to Brenda, for seeing us in the hallway and genuinely asking us, "How are you?", and then waiting until we gave an honest answer.

Thank you to Ms. Compton. Thank you to Ms. Compton. I can't say this one enough. You are the most mathly-inclined person I know. You somehow manage to make math fun, singing songs about the quadratic formula and wearing your geeky math T-shirts. Your laugh can be heard throughout the school, and no matter how many times I hear it, it always brightens my day.

Thank you to Ms. Minnis for being the Vice-Principal, and for somehow managing to find time to also teach us math.

Thank you to Mr. Gillis, for being an outstanding science teacher. You were always game for extra help at lunch, and more than willing to welcome us into your classroom while you sang and taught yourself how to play the guitar. Your passion to pursue your goals and better yourself is an inspiration to all of us.

Thank you to Mr. Coffin, for making us hand in every single English assignment, so that we passed the one class we needed to be standing here today. But, more importantly, thank you for teaching us more than just textbook information. Thank you for the hands-on work and the life lessons you taught us during Global Issues. Just to let you know, I'm still expecting my award for being the Employee of the Month for two years and running.

Thank you to Mr. Judson, for being the Native Studies teacher, although I never had the pleasure of being taught by you. I will never forgive you for grade twelve paintballing, when I was on your team and you shot me anyway.

Thank you to Ms. Smith, for teaching us how to cook, clean, sew, iron, and do laundry. You taught us some of the basic skills we will be needing for next year, and because of you we'll be heading out into the world as somewhat competent adults.

Thank you to Mr. Farrell, for guiding us through our four years at Morell High, and for singing to us in the hallway to bring some happiness into our day, even if that meant that our happiness came from laughing at you. Trust me, guys, you've never lived until you've heard Mr. Farrell sing "Jesus Christ Superstar".

Thank you to Mr. Murphy, for making your tests manageable by giving your fill-in-the blank questions a word bank – something Ms. McGee obviously never learned how to do.

Thank you to Ms. McLean, for pushing myself and my fellow band students to actually take our instruments home and practice. Thank you for demanding excellence and pushing me to be the best I can possibly be. Please, just don't cry, or we'll both be blubbering babies for the rest of the night.

Thank you to Ms McGee, for being an outstanding teacher. Your dedication to teaching is the only reason I passed grade twelve chemistry - and I'm sure that's also the case for quite a few of my fellow graduates. After having me every single day for the last year and a half, I would guess that you're getting pretty sick of looking at me by now. But, since you might never see my face again, I would like to thank you for your humor, for your passion of teaching, and for being a role model and a friend. To me, you'll always be my Big MamaGee.

Although he's not currently teaching at the school, I would like to thank Mr. Duncan, who is so much more than just a band teacher. I will always remember the famous quote by Beethoven that he slightly modified and quoted to us almost every day: "To play a wrong note is inconsequential; to play without passion is inexcusable. As in music, so in life." Thank you, Duncan, for teaching me that it doesn't matter if I screw up, as long as I try my best and put my heart into it. You will be dearly missed by myself and my fellow band geeks.

Finally, I would like to thank my mom and dad for guiding me, and for putting up with the seemingly thankless job of being a parent. You're the sole reason I am here today, and I hope that this thank you makes up for all the times I probably forgot to say it.

Every person I mentioned today has had an impact on my life and my fellow graduates' lives; and every single person has helped us get where we are today. I'm not saying that they're perfect, or that I'm perfect, or that this class is perfect. But, really, who is? You've made us better people. I am not as good as I could be, and I'm not as good as I should be. But I am better than I used to be. That stands for every single person in this graduating class. We are not as

good as we could be, and we're not as good as we should be. But we are better than we used to be.

I want you to remember that tonight. Remember how much you've grown, but also remember that there's always room for improvement. Now, it's up to you to follow your dreams and forge your own path. Because who knows; maybe we will change the world some day, and maybe we won't. We can't know for sure, but I hold on to the hope that there's always someday, what-if, and maybe. Even if whatever you do in your life seems like it will be insignificant, it's important that you do it. So, whatever your goals are, whatever your dreams are, I encourage you to chase after them. Because, like Walt Disney once said, "All of our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them."

Class of 2014, it is with great honor that I say, "Congratulations, we did it!"