



# FEATURED STUDENT AUTHOR

## THE TRANSITION

**Kevin Van**  
**Class of 2019**  
**University High School**

Without the intense work and college preparation, University High School would have not only failed to rise above the 19,000 other high schools in the nation, but would have also failed to use my strengths to their full potential. The transition from middle school to high school can be the toughest on the strongest students out there. However, with the help of an older sibling and the welcoming staff of University High, I was able to successfully finish the first week of school without any casualties while only getting lost on campus twice. Thankfully, I was escorted to class by all the other loving and successful upperclassmen attending University High. From that point on, work was constantly being thrown at us with extremely high expectations. Through all the work, I gained lifelong skills to cope with the abundance of work while managing to still keep a high GPA. This set of lifelong skills included the skill of prioritizing and, most importantly, the skill of time management. Since then, I've been able to manage my time while joining and actively being a part of three different clubs.

Although I have been mostly successful, University High has also caused lots of stressful nights, studying for major exams. The first semester of high school has gone by like a breeze. From the very first freshman day to the first performance assignment, the first semester has already started to open new opportunities for the future. Opportunities such as the chance to take advanced placement classes for college credits and summer programs to greater improve as a student. This community of successful students and fully dedicated teachers are strongly united and strive together toward a better future by helping each other become successful and prepared for college. Ultimately, University High School enhances the high school experience to its full potential, and I'm proud to be a part of the successful environment.



# FEATURED STUDENT AUTHOR

## PORTFOLIO REFLECTION

**Arielle Torricelli  
Class of 2016  
University High School**

I never really gave much thought to how much I have improved in the last three and a half years, but looking back at all of my old papers, I see now that there has been a *major* shift in my work and in my thinking. My freshman year, I was still just learning the ropes and figuring out how to think critically in terms of analysis and work. I remember we had very short stories to analyze, because we were still learning how to do so, with very little amount of time to write out our analysis, because we could not take our papers home to work on yet, and the stories were short anyway, so there was not a lot to analyze anyway. Despite how terrible they sound, I was starting to get used to the process of writing longer assignments, which require many edits and revisions before turning in to make it as coherent and polished as possible. Before coming to University High, I had always thought I was good at listening, but I could not have been more wrong. I found some of the first group notes I took in Speech about body language, and they look strange, to say the least. They look like I was focusing more on what I thought I needed to do well on the test than actually thinking about what the groups were saying and how it could help overall. However, it became obvious that working in groups was my biggest struggle, because I was afraid of getting comfortable around people I was not familiar with, and for a while, I refused to do anything about it. I remember reading about it in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, which helped me get started in trying to improve myself. I believe I have surprised myself the most with how much my speaking skills have improved. I was working on getting over social anxiety when I first started as a freshman, and I never imagined I would be where I am today in terms of being able to speak in front of a large group of people. The first speech I actually enjoyed was the poetry recitation for Poetry Out Loud, because I felt somewhat comfortable as I spoke. The fact that memorizing a creepy poem by William Blake was a lot of fun really helped too, I am sure. By the end, my first year helped me figure out what was necessary to be successful, and that I was a big procrastinator that needed to get my life together.

This year, as a senior, I realize that I am not perfect, and I am still working on improving my skills, but I have definitely come a long way. For my analysis, I chose to look at my notes for analyzing the vignettes in “House on Mango Street.” This book was easy to read, but difficult to understand on a deeper level, because there was so much going on in so little space. Admittedly, I did not do so great when it came time to analyze a set of vignettes with a group, because my focus was too narrow, but I have learned from the experience, and I am still working on refining my skills in preparation for analyzing more complex literature, such as Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

Over the years, I have read a lot of books, and the thing I enjoy the most is seeing what they all have to say about humanity, because I want to be able to have an open perspective on life, and reading has really helped me see through someone else's eyes. My biggest writing struggle this year was writing a college essay, because I had to figure out how to make myself sound interesting by telling a story, but keep it down to only 500 words. My final essay looks nothing like the first draft, after so many edits and revisions, which is a good thing because the first draft is never very good. Looking at my *Metamorphosis* notes, it looks like I have gotten a lot better at figuring out what I should be thinking about later when I take notes, and that has made writing an analysis or a response a lot easier. During the *Antigone* presentations we did this year, working in a group was incredibly easy for me, compared to how I had been as a freshman, and synergy came a lot easier, possibly because we were all more familiar with each other and knew how to work better in groups. I also wanted to use our *Antigone* presentation to show my speaking skills, because I tried reading literature with emotion—something I still need to work on, because it is a lot more intense than reciting poetry—and the discussion we did afterwards showed me where I need to improve. Overall, I am proud of who I have become, and I know that I have the ability to become even better, so long as I put in the effort. My experience in English has shown me a lot about what it means to look at the world with a critical eye, and how to express my ideas in a way that sounds intelligent and makes sense, and I know that I will never forget that experience.