

## Scholarship Essay Example

The individual who has had the biggest impact on me in my life is my grandmother. She died two years ago, but she lived plenty of life—and every weekend for one year leading up to her death I would go to her house to hear stories about her life. I feel like I matured decades just listening to the details of her life story, all she experienced, what she went through, and what wisdom she had to offer me. I never realized that someone so old could still be so sharp and have so much common sense to give. I also realized that although it's called common sense, it isn't really all that common—after all, I lacked a lot of it and my grandmother always ended one of our visits with a little advice: simple things like, “Be nice to your sister,” or, “Listen to your father,” or, “Tell your mother you love her”—things that you often hear but never really take to heart because the manner in which they are told you fails to really hit the mark. My grandmother never failed to hit the mark: every single one of her stories was told with such deep feeling and empathy that I couldn't help but open myself up to the experience and let myself be touched by what my grandmother was saying. My grandmother died at the ripe old age of 92—but she left me with advice that I'm sure will age like fine wine and mean more and more to me as the years go by.

My grandmother's story began on a farm outside the city. She grew up in what amounted to a stone cabin. Her father was a farmer and slaughtered pigs for a living and grew flowers and plants for the marketplace, too. She learned the meaning of frugal living. She grew up without television, without furnaces, without air conditioners, without iPhones. She grew up in a world where hard work, ethics, values and virtues were not only cherished but needed: one could not expect to survive without them. From the way she described her childhood, her brothers and sisters fighting illnesses, her work on the pig farm, her father's devotion to duty, and the humble lifestyle that was theirs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, I would go home and think about my own life, the world I had inherited, the things I so often took for granted—the creature comforts, the grocery stores, the cars, the communications, the Internet, the ability to have just about any desire satisfied nearly instantaneously. I thought about all this and wondered if I had the same work ethic and drive that my grandmother and her family had been required to have when she was young.

The more I listened to the tales of her life the more I reflected on my own. This is something Jung Chang does in *Wild Swans*—the sweeping epic in which she recounts three generations of womanhood in 20<sup>th</sup> century China. Reflecting on the past helped to put the present in perspective for Chang, and the same was proving true for me. I realized that some of the devotion to duty and hard work of my grandmother's family had actually taken root in my personality, too. After all, I was committed to getting good grades in school, to succeeding at work, and to making my family proud of me. But was there more that I was missing? Was there something I was not paying attention?

Slowly I realized that, yes, there was. My world was still self-centered. Instead of making my parents proud, I wanted them to be proud of me. Instead of looking for ways I could improve my school and community, I had been looking for ways my school and community could benefit me. My grandmother's stories taught me about sacrifice, honor, doing things for others because that was what needed to be done. There was no mention of reward, no discussion

of “what’s in it for me,” no sense of entitlement. My grandmother lived a long life—and she constantly put other people and their concerns before her own. This was the secret to her longevity, the special character of her personality that enabled her to be so spectacular even at age 90.

From my grandmother I learned that in order to be something special, you don’t have to be the next Steve Jobs or the next Elon Musk. You just have to be yourself—the best version of yourself that you can possibly be. My grandmother taught me to always strive to do the right thing, to do right by others, and to be aware of others and how I could help ease their burden instead of constantly thinking about my own. Because of my grandmother, I want to continue my education in the field of management so that I can obtain a good job and provide for my family. I want to dedicate myself to the duty of supporting my family, of building the community, and of making the world a better place simply by doing what’s right—by being nice to others, by showing empathy and compassion, and by putting the needs of others first. If I can accomplish these goals in my personal and professional life, I know I will make my grandmother proud.