

February 3, 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter! I love the neat science-themed paper you wrote on!

In your letter you said that you enjoyed the pictures I sent and that you weren't allowed to send pictures back. Well, I have a solution for that! You can draw pictures or use your words to make pictures ;). In this letter I will do both!

First I will draw you a picture with words: My office!

In my office there isn't a lot of space. The building is an old house with all of the rooms full of desks and people. I store all of my science education things and supplies for experiments in cardboard boxes and totes on the top of four tall filing cabinets. They have labels like "owl pellet dissection" and "plant signs" and "soil samples." I also try to hold on to things that might be useful later like toilet paper tubes, empty soda bottles, and chicken wire. On my desk is a computer with two screens so I can work on more than one thing at a time. There is also a stack of books for all sorts of things. I have one for identifying caterpillars and one for describing the color of soil and rocks. There are also magnifying glasses hanging from the window and seeds, moth chrysalises, and lichens in petri dishes scattered around.

Maybe in your next letter you can paint me a word picture of one of your favorite places! Just describe it so I can see it when I close my eyes. ;)

In your last letter you also said that I didn't ask many questions, so I will ask some more! I started using this new type of planner in January that kind of works like a journal because it asks questions that help your reflection and planning. This month the questions were:

Who or what are you particularly grateful for this past month?

What was the most memorable part of the past month?  
and

What is the most important lesson you've ever learned and who taught it to you?

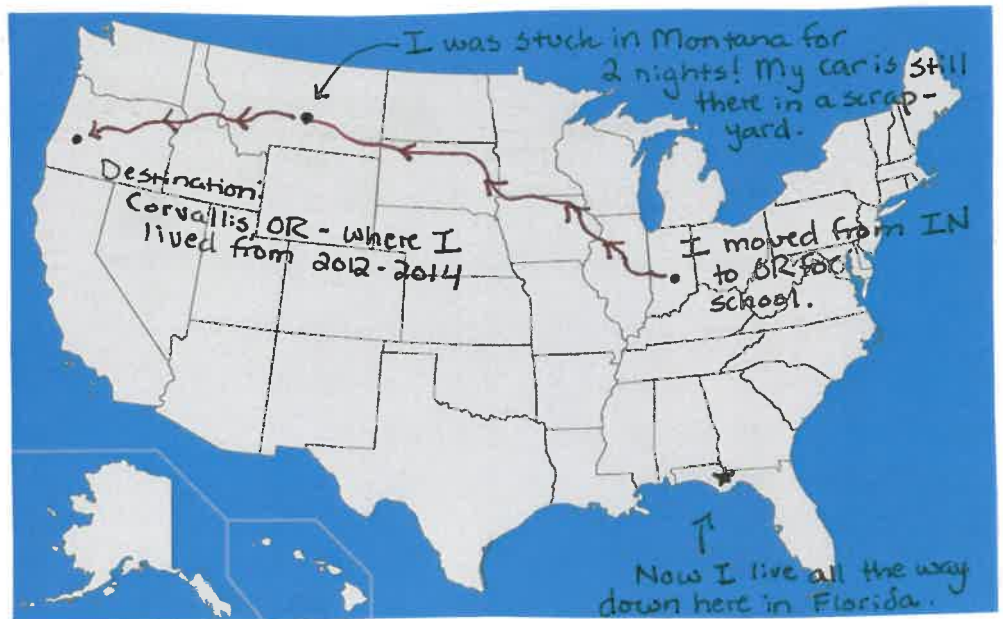
This past month I am particularly thankful for my friend Maggie. She has been my best friend since high school and whenever I have a problem I can always talk to her - no matter what.

The most memorable part of the past month was when I got to go on a bike ride in the National Forest and then hang out with my girl friends trading clothes and eating snacks ; I also hosted an event at work where I got to help kids plant a garden.

The most important lesson I have ever been taught is that change is the only thing we are guaranteed in life. My mom said that to me once when I was very little and it has helped me deal with unexpected things happening my entire life.

For example, when I moved from Indiana where I grew up to Oregon for graduate school my car broke down in the middle of the highway in Montana! After an hour of sitting on the side of the road, a tow truck came by & stopped. We took my car to a repair shop in the closest town but I didn't have enough money to fix it!

I had to rent a car to drive the rest of the way. When I got there I had no money, no car, no bike, and I didn't know a single person. It was all very scary.




Luckily I had some very nice neighbors who let me have dinner with them and helped me move in. My new classmates helped me get books and invited me to study in groups so I wasn't lonely. In the end, I made lots of friends and graduated with a master's degree. A lot of unexpected things happened on that trip - and in my 2 years in Oregon. They didn't stop me though. I knew that things would change, and with any luck they would change for the better!

Was there ever a time in your life when things changed really fast and you had to adapt or make the most of the situation?

In your last letter, you asked if I liked college. I loved college! It wasn't easy, but the hard work was worth it. I liked being able to take all sorts of different classes and learn about all sorts of different things. I took classes on rocks and plants and chemistry and physics, but I also took a whole class just on William Shakespear and another one on writing about your life experiences. I took classes on women's history and on theater. All of those things made me a more well-rounded person. But I think my favorite part of college was meeting so many new people who were so different from me. My college friends taught me how to cook and use bikes for transportation. They taught me about different cultures and how important community is. I wouldn't be the person I am today without them.

How long are you going to be in Portland this summer and why are you going? Have you ever been there before? I have some friends who live in Portland. They own a coffee shop called The Guild.

I put some Manatee coloring books and scavenger hunts from our museum in the envelope. The lichen scavenger hunt is specific to The Grove, but you should be able to find everything except the "Christmas Wreath Lichen" and a Lichen growing on leaves in California too!

Let me know what you find! 



LAVA

Paleosol!

Jade

Geology  
Snapshot!

New Mexico, 2015

This picture was taken in New Mexico a few years ago. I am standing next to a "paleosol" which is the word for a fossilized soil. This soil got baked underneath a lava flow. That's what the grey rocks above my head are. The layers in the soil that are such pretty colors are called "horizons". They form because rocks weather from the bottom & plants die & decompose on the top... the dead plant material works its way down & the minerals from the rock work their way up! This one got cooked in place!