

Dear all,

This is a letter that Mrs. Bailey asked me to write for my English class, to please tell her what we were feeling and just unload. After writing it, I decided that most of my thoughts were worth sharing. I've never been the type to come to the administration with personal thoughts throughout my 13 years with Westminster. I've always trusted the decisions made without my input. However, I just wanted to say thank you for the time I have spent here, and let you know how I'm feeling. Here was my letter, with a few added questions and small edits.

Mrs. Bailey,

As you have gotten to know me over the past year, I'm sure you've noticed that I have never been one to suppress my feelings, emotions, or opinions. Perhaps I come across as a drama queen. Actually, there is no "perhaps" there, as I was voted our grade's "Biggest Drama Queen" for senior superlatives. I'm blatantly not upset by this title, for two reasons. 1. I will be remembered by our grade for something, even if it is being dramatic. And 2. I can't help that I have lots of thoughts and that I like to share them. With that as a precursor, let me just launch into many of the feelings that are swirling around in my anxiety-ridden, pissed-off, selfish, (but also selfless), confused, what-did-i-do-to-deserve-this, bored, 18-year-old mind.

I am so angry right now. Angry beyond description. For simplicity's sake, I am going to number a list for you for things/people I am angry with.

1. Westminster. I wish they didn't have to postpone until April 30. I mean actually what is that. That is literally our last day at school. Would it have been that challenging to maybe say April 28? And if that time came and it didn't work, we could move it back? Personally, I don't find that to be extraordinarily difficult. We have all done harder things. With that being said, I'm also very aware that this is happening to every high school senior in America, so I don't blame Westminster for keeping us at home. I think that is something that is going to have to happen.
2. Mother Nature. I already have seasonal affective disorder. Put the recent overcast, misty days in a tandem with the fact that the only thing I'm allowed to do outside of my home is go for a walk, and you have the match made in hell. I'm literally bored out of my mind and I'm playing Kenny Chesney's El Cerrito Place on loop as I gaze out my window with a melancholic stare.
3. Anyone in the Westminster 'Class of 2020' GroupMe who is making a petition to go back to school early. If you genuinely think that your 4 sentences that are casually formatted and not even proofread are going to drive change in this sector, let me remind you of something. They won't. Lines such as "Help us show our school that although our world is in a pandemic we need to treasure these last moments together and to not jump the gun on any decisions that are far away". Oh, gee. Thank you so so much for your insight. How eloquent. Let's do abandon everyone at risk of the coronavirus and live it up. NOW, I think Mrs. Trask and Mr. Evans are going to reopen Westminster's gates in hopes of appeasing some forlorn seniors. Not like they have thought about this decision at all.
4. Myself. I am literally being so selfish it's hilarious. There are people dying from this all over the world, and I am treating not being able to go to school or hang out with my friends like I'm being personally victimized by Lucifer himself. (Maybe I am though. Something I have been

considering). Last night my dad tried to give me a hug, and I told him “don’t you dare touch me right now”. I’m not that kid! I’m literally such a good child. But, times are ever-changing, and I’m currently your worst nightmare.

5. My brother. It’s nice having him home and all but he literally is going deaf or something. I don’t understand the necessity of all his loud music or TV. It is actually hurting my ears and it feels inconsiderate.

6. My mother. Again, love having her keep me company. But can she please stop panic-buying groceries. I’m gaining the quarantine 15 as we speak and it is not helping. Again, plainly inconsiderate.

7. My father. He has been working from home, which his job allows him to do. To some degree, I really like seeing him in action and I think he’s really great at what he does. To a more significant degree, the amount of mess that results from him, my brother and I all working from home is truly disgusting. Everywhere I turn there is a new dish in the sink and they are giving me visceral reactions. I think we have different definitions of “clean”.

8. My friends’ parents and my parents. Why do they feel the need to be so darn rational. Let us cry and celebrate ourselves together, for the love of god! We are 18 years old and ANGRY! Can’t we just abandon everything we’ve been told, say screw it to social distancing, and be with each other!! No, I know we can’t do that. I am just shooting the messenger. (Refer to above #4. I am angry with myself right now. This isn’t me. I am just lashing out).

So, you said today you promised not to think any of us were spoiled brats. After reading my 8 bullet points, you are probably wondering why you agreed to this assignment and wishing you had just read my below-average attempts at poetry instead. Well, I have a few happy thoughts to share as well, just to restore like 3% of your faith in me.

1. It actually really makes me happy to see tweets about less pollution, or fish returning to rivers, or a whale being spotted in one of Denver’s rivers. That is one of the only silver linings I can think of, but it is a darn good one.

2. I’ve discovered some youtube workouts that I am actually a big fan of. I will probably continue doing them even after quarantine and I’m glad I found them.

3. I think I’ve learned to stop taking things for granted, or at least for a while. The trivial things that I now realize I’m not going to see again have left marks on me.

a. Mr. Dwyer saying “Be well, hold the door, you are dismissed” after every senior homeroom

b. Coach Fitz making us do “One-minute planks” during cheer practice that involved everyone’s knees on the ground, often varying from 22 seconds to 3 minutes

c. Someone half-heartedly saying “bumbadadumdum bum bum bum bum go wildcats” a little too far away from the microphone to start pep rallies

d. Mrs. Latham exclaiming “Isn’t this fun?” after discussing a calculus concept that I just got a 40% on (No. It has never been fun. I actually will not miss calculus at all. I really deplore it actually)

e. Dr. Combest’s 33-minute lunches

f. Mr. Munday’s astonishment each time he discovered that no one had actually done the reading for macroeconomics class, nor had planned on it, nor would ever do it

g. You, Mrs. Bailey, talking about your family and your dogs. Your family tree actually baffles me. I wish I had that much going on in mine.

h. Mr. Berry making me late for class by slowly asking me “How are you, Miss Caroline” and maintaining trivial conversations at a sluggish pace (I really do love him though. Name a nicer man. You can’t.)

i. The little stomach drop I got every time I walked into the weight room (I know that is sort of sexist. But being the only girl is scary. I was making strides for women in the weight room! Breaking gender norms!! But then the school had to go and end so not sure how much progress I truly made)

j. Batcheller loitering in the Turner parking lot every morning before school

4. This all just makes me realize how lucky I am to have had a high school experience I have loved so much. Or just an educational experience in general. I’m genuinely not sure I would have changed a thing about the way I spent my time at Westminster, or who I spent it with. In terms of college, it has gotten me exactly where I wanted to go. I pushed myself academically, I found my people socially, I led extracurriculars. I mean, I really checked every box that I wanted to check. I think I’m just so upset I didn’t get my chance to say goodbye.

a. I was that girl who had people’s schedules memorized so I could plan when to run into them in the hallway or walk by their classroom. Might sound psychotic. It gets worse, though. If I knew it was the lunch period of someone I wanted to impress, I would literally go to the campus center and buy nothing just so I could see them. Odds are that I wouldn’t even say hi.

b. I would pick out my outfit and send it to a group chat the night before school every night since my sophomore year. They varied depending on if I was trying to impress someone the following day or not.

c. I loved Sunday nights because it meant I got to see my people the next day.

d. I didn’t really like having free periods last, because everyone was leaving and I didn’t want to. (Fun fact: I never once left Westminster during a last free or for lunch. I didn’t want to miss the chance to see anyone).

e. I pulled off “casual Friday” about 94% of second semester Fridays since sophomore year. I really do hate to bring up my occasional disrespect for the dress code, but traditions like leggings/yoga pants every Friday would give me something to look forward to.

f. I never got more than 5 hours of sleep on a first semester Thursday night, because I was too busy baking for my football buddies, or tanning to wear my cheer uniforms the next day or practicing a halftime show.

g. I would come to school at 7:30 every Monday with a Soy latte in hand, ready to scream at my yearbook staff and then complain to all my friends about said yearbook meeting. Nevertheless, I’m literally obsessed with this year’s yearbook and I’m so proud of everyone’s hard work. Especially now that school is over, I’ve never been so grateful to have been the editor-in-chief of a yearbook, recording every all-too-short moment of the year.

h. All of these sub-bullets are just me rambling about how much I love Westminster. I do though. I feel like I did it right and took advantage of everything I wanted to. Which is great and all, just makes this even harder.

Anyways, I guess all that just goes to say how sad I am right now. This is so hard for me. I feel mopey and like lashing out at the world all the time. My heart just shrank three sizes, like the opposite of the Grinch. I don’t know how I’m supposed to look forward to things again. There’s really not much anyone can do either. Let me know if you have any tips towards making myself happy right now, despite all of this. I could also use some show recommendations.

Thank you for listening to my ramble. I'm very grateful for all you have taught me this year and have loved every minute of your class. I know it must be hard for you to leave Westminster too.

Caroline

That's all I had for Mrs. Bailey. However, I wanted to share this with you all as my way of saying thank you as well. I can't imagine having had a better experience at any other school. However, there are also a few questions I must ask you that I knew Mrs. Bailey might be unable to answer. You might be unable to answer them as well. However, after having been here since pre-first, I feel it is my duty to ask. Mr. Evans and most of the faculty have let us know that our voices are welcome and to ask all of our questions. Well, ask and you shall receive.

You can ask any of my teachers about my planner. I have two, actually. One large, spiral-bound, custom-designed Erin Condren planner where I color code school assignments and appointments. Another bullet journal, in which I do weekly spreads to record my moods, workouts, and social plans. I plop both of them down on my desk at the start of every class. Honestly, it's very obnoxious. As such an organized, punctual person, though, I must ask about a few events.

When y'all mention postponing, not canceling senior events, what events does this entail? Is it a possibility that I will still be able to come to Westminster in my alter ego outfit, or my Vanderbilt shirt, or have a mudslide? Will we be able to have our alpha omega day, where I can say goodbye to the story well, and lose at Star Wars one last time? Will we still have a senior health day? A baccalaureate? Will I still be able to present the yearbook to the rest of the Upper School, something I have labored over for 11 months now? If not, could I do that via email or zoom to the Upper School? Obviously, prom is lingering in my mind too. My dress is so cute. I have to wear it somewhere.

Obviously, I know you all cannot control the virus. I also know you cannot control the decisions made by our mayor, governor, CDC, or even our president. With that being said, I do appreciate the frequent updates we have been getting from y'all. I have so many questions, I feel more anxious than ever, and I just feel like I can't get any answers from anyone. So, it is a relief to have zooms, or emails, or updates from people that I consider leaders each day. I think the senior class appreciates this more than you know. Even if all it says each day is "we still don't know", we like knowing that the administration is considering our feelings and how much this truly breaks our heart. So, while I recognize that many of the questions I just posed are unanswerable, I just ask that y'all continue to keep us posted the way you have. This period has made us all into anxious, frenzied monsters and the only thing that makes us feel better is some semblance of structure or information.

After all that, I just wanted to say thank you one more time. With due credit to my parents and my brother, this school has raised me. I would call Westminster my second home, and I owe most of my person to this place.

**Thank you,
Caroline Lingle**