

Jens Hieber

Jong Min Park Tribute

Mr. Jens,

I would first like to apologize. I'm sorry for all the times I've tested your unending patience. In the three years I've known you, I've arrived late to your classes. I've handed assignments in late (and rightfully taken the NFL) more times than I've handed them in on time. I've made jokes about wanting to put one of the fishes from the Harbor pond into your fish tank just to see what would happen. I've tried to scare you in the pitch-black night at Phi Phi. And most importantly, I've jumped around with my fist in the air and sang the Mario theme song in honor of your middle name.

I would also like to apologize for enjoying every bit of these moments. In all of these moments, though, I've learned many things about and many things from you.

You taught me patience. You not only had to put up with me for three years but also my equally crazy classmates. Aside from just how patient you are, there's something about the way you demonstrate it that I find something very unique and admirable. You find joy in the little things instead of letting them push you over the edge, and you find humor in my dumb jokes instead of letting them offend you. Your ability to see beauty in places where others wouldn't inspires me to live life the way you do: with peace (and a warm cup of coffee).

You taught me to be adaptable. Your World Lit class taught me how to construct smart-sounding answers during discussions based solely off of other people's ideas and some summary knowledge. The way you let us make corrections to our essays taught me that mistakes show more than just how wrong you are; they show how much more right you can be. You allowed me to make mistakes and taught me to use them to improve myself as a writer and as a person in the long run.

You taught me that being human is okay. You acknowledge the unique strengths of everyone and allow us to let it flourish. Under your teaching, you helped me explore and develop my own voice as a writer by providing me with limitless thinking space and by bringing my strengths to light. You also acknowledge the fact that I'm not perfect, and somehow, you still trusted me to not kill the fishes in your room while you attended a meeting.

You give me the freedom to be my crazy and goofy self around you. Whether it's joining in on our off-topic conversations or providing moving words of encouragement like in your recent blog, your acknowledgement of my humanness makes me feel so loved and valued.

I really admire how close and deep you can get with your students, and I'm so thankful that I'm one of them. Thank you, Mr. Jens. Thank you for teaching me valuable life lessons, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to enjoy your humor and peace so openly throughout my high school life.

I'll miss you a lot,
Jong Min Park