The place where I was born and raised is all about material things. People in California only care about the best clothes, fame, and money. Everyone wants to fit in and become someone they’re not. What’s most important to everyone is being “normal,” which means you have to like what everyone else likes, you judge others, and you put down the people who don’t have what you have.

One of the themes in *The Promise of a Pencil* is “Why Be Normal.” Adam Braun talks about his childhood and how his parents taught him to be different and to hold himself to a higher standard. I feel that in my community we weren’t taught the same values. However, I feel personally that I am different because I take the path that’s less traveled. I do community service, stand up for people who surrounded me, and do not follow that path that “society” has paved for us. For instance, Adam mentioned, “They served as a constant reminder that to achieve exceptional things, you must hold yourself to exceptional standards, regardless of what others may think” (Braun 8). I honestly feel this is true, that I have to hold myself to certain standards and though people may judge me I shouldn’t care.

When reading this book I felt like Adam Braun when he saw the *Baraka* video. I had the feeling like I’ve been kicked in the stomach because I never knew that things like this were happening around the world. It makes me look at the world in a totally different light, and made
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me think of what I could do to help. When Adam described his semester at sea it made me look at the things I take for granted, like school supplies, clean water, and a roof over my head. I view the world completely differently now, especially with how people spend thousands of dollars on gold chains, shoes, and clothes when less than half of that could help others in different countries in a massive way. My family doesn’t have much money, but seeing that others have less makes me want to try and help. I want to save up knowing that one day I could change someone’s life, and I’m starting with donating supplies when I get to St. Bonaventure.

Having an education has shaped me tremendously, and I’m grateful to have one. Throughout my senior year I was challenged with AP classes that I thought I wouldn’t be able to pass, but I worked very hard and that showed me that I could get through anything I put my mind to. I am a seeker of knowledge and I always have been. To this day I don’t know everything, and I want to learn more.

My education taught me that there is knowledge all around me, I just have to take the right path. Pursuing college is important to me because it isn’t just about learning; it’s about becoming a better me and learning about myself. Pursuing a college degree can teach me to become an adult, manage time, and save money. College is important because it gives me more options to learn and become wiser. Plus, my mom taught me that the value of an education is priceless because it’s something that will shape me forever. In addition, there is barely anyone in my family who has gone to college. I want to be an example for my younger brother, so that he can become extraordinary just like me despite our family circumstances. At first I thought that I wasn’t smart enough for college, and I questioned if I would be able to do the work once I got there. To this day I question if I am ready for the work and to live in the real world. Yet the more skeptical I got I realized that this is something I had to do because I knew I would regret it if I
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didn’t get out of my comfort zone. Overall, after reading *The Promise of a Pencil*, it has made me question so much about what I want and who I want to become. It also makes me wonder if I’m on the right path to become something great. By attending St. Bonaventure I know that I am.