

Good afternoon teachers, family, friends, and – of course – graduates of 2008. I'm honored to have this opportunity to address the senior class before we embark on a new journey. Today, I'd like to discuss something very familiar, something that has touched all of our lives – storytelling. No matter what our background, we all grew up listening to stories of faeries, magic, and talking animals. We innocently absorbed their simple messages as we tried to figure out how to interact with the world around us. Even now, when our problems are more complicated and we're definitely nowhere near as innocent, we can still look back at the characters whose adventures accompanied us that first time we left home to go to school. So, as we prepare to write the next chapter of our lives, I'd like to share a well-known story. Besides being a personal favorite, I'm sure this is a tale many of you remember from childhood. I certainly will never forget the story of the three little pigs. It goes like this:

Once upon a time, there were three little pigs and the time came for them to leave home and seek their fortunes. Before they left, their mother told them "Whatever you do, do it the best that you can because that's the way to get along in the world.

Already, we see the story's first lesson, arguably our most important freedom as human beings – the power of choice. For the first time, we have complete control over our destinies; some of us might enter the workforce, some might decide to start a family, some will join the military, while many others will pursue further education. Next November, most of us will have the privilege of making an even greater choice as we take part in one of history's most pivotal elections. No matter what you choose to do, all of you have what it takes to succeed. All of us have the same amount of intellectual ability, and I truly believe that with hard work and determination, there's no limit to what each one of us can achieve.

Back to the tale. The second lesson comes when the three pigs construct their houses. According to the story,

The first little pig built his house out of straw because it was the easiest thing to do.  
The second little pig built his house out of sticks. This was a little bit stronger than a straw house.  
The third little pig built his house out of bricks.

We can identify with every one of these characters. We've all taken the easy way out before; while blowing off a project in favor of a more appealing activity can seem like a good idea, sooner or later, we realize that the amount of work we put into an assignment is directly proportional to the result. Striving for results, the class of '08 has certainly seen its share of competition. We came so close to winning the class cup our freshmen year; and this year, we faced the most selective college application process to date. However, victory brings true joy when it is shared. Only by working together can we attempt to improve our world as well as define our places in it.

The third and final lesson of the tale emerges as the big bad wolf enters the pigs' happy little world. For those of you who don't remember, he knocks on the door and cries "let me in, let me in." "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin," reply the little pigs. Frustrated, the wolf huffs and he puffs, and he blows the first two houses in. The brick house of the third little pig is the only one that holds up under the wolf's attacks. Essentially, what our families and teachers have given us over the years are the tools to build a house that will shelter us from any wolf. Although we will all face challenges as we make our way through life, I am confident that every single one of us will come out of this building fully prepared to overcome any setback. And as we find our way in the world, we'll always know that no

matter how strong and steady our future house stands, everything we achieve can be attributed to the guidance and support of our parents, teachers, and friends.

**With that, I'd like to wish everyone the best of luck. Congratulations class of 2008!**