

Anthony Hinds

Graduation Speech 2008

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. When I was trying to figure out a theme for this speech, I had an incredibly difficult time. The challenge was not helped by members of my class, who offered these bits of advice:

“Don’t make it boring,”

“Make it fun,”

“It shouldn’t be lame.”

I’d heard my fair share of graduation speeches, and though I wanted my speech to adhere to my friends’ guidelines, I was still at a loss on how to do this.

My first idea was to write about the present. You know, make some interesting extended metaphors about how much this graduation means to us, and its significance in our lives. I decided not to, not because it is a bad idea, but because you all already understand how important this day is to us.

This speech could address the future, but I decided against that almost instantly. As seniors, the future has been the most common point of conversation with almost everyone we meet. After a solid year dealing with the question: “So,

what are you going to be doing next year?" our minds deserve a chance to ignore that topic, if just for a few minutes.

Still, there's another reason to not write about the future, and that is because I am terribly afraid of it.

Don't get me wrong, I am very excited about things to come, as I know all of you are. It's just that we will all be leaving our comfort zone. No matter how amazing college, the military, or the workforce is, it's going to be hard to beat being part of such a tight-knit group as the Sleepy Hollow Class of 2008.

So I finally decided that this speech should focus on the past.

We've often been told not to dwell in the past, but this advice seems rather silly. The past is where our memories are, and those memories are going to stay with us for years to come. Many of us have been going to school in the Tarrytowns since Kindergarten, and as I look out into the crowd tonight, I see a lot of people from my elementary school classes. Some people came to our district at later times; they became a part of our class in Middle or High school, but they were able to fit right in. We all have common memories; things that have connected us and made our collective experience at Sleepy Hollow exceptional.

That is the main reason that our class stands out. The Sleepy Hollow High School Class of 2008 is incredibly inclusive. Other grades are not bad, but the

Class of 2008 is a group of high school students that is less “clique-y” than the rest. If you watch a high school satire, such as *Mean Girls* or *Not Another Teen Movie*, the stereotypical high school groups are always exaggerated and isolated from one another: the jocks, the nerds, the loners, the popular kids.

This is not to say that our school does not have people who fit into these groups. You see before you a nerd in almost every sense of the word. Not only do I enjoy calculus, but I spend almost all of my free time rehearsing for plays, making me a theatre geek too. If this was another school, or, God forbid, one of these movies, not only would I not be hanging out with the cool three-season varsity athletes, these same athletes would probably be dunking my head into a toilet. So thank you for making this nerd feel like a part of something bigger and better, a place where people are accepted for who they are, as everyone here can attest to.

Sleepy Hollow is an amazing place, and our class is truly spectacular. Though neither is perfect, it is wonderful that everyone in our class can hang out together. Our group’s small size has something to do with this. Everyone knows everyone else in the class of ’08, and this makes it easier for us to be friends with each other. Tonight may be the last night that some of us see each other, but I hope that we can all stay close in the coming years, through friends, family and, of course, Facebook.

Before I finish, I want to tell you about a dream that I had a few nights ago. In this dream, I woke up from sleep, with my mom telling me that it was the first day of high school, and that if I didn't get ready soon, I was going to be late. After stressing out for a few minutes, I woke up and realized that I am actually a senior who is about to graduate.

My first feeling was, of course, relief. Then I started thinking about what it would be like if I actually had to redo all of high school. The idea seemed unthinkable at first, until I remembered the faces of all my classmates and all the teachers who have helped me over the years. After thinking about it for a few minutes, I went from being repulsed by the idea of re-doing high school to almost wishing I had the chance to do it again. When I realized that in order to do this I would have to not hand in any final projects or take any finals and I'd probably even have to *insult* a few teachers, the nerd inside of me slapped me to my senses. It's time to leave, and there's no way to avoid that. We've been here for four years, and we've all left our mark on this school. This school has certainly left its mark on all of us. I can only hope that college will be as incredible for me as high school was.

You are all amazing. I love each and every one of you. I'm sorry if I seem sappy, but I really do care about each and every one of you and I wish you the best in all you do in the future. Thank you so much for everything. Good night.