Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". It is with these words in mind that it becomes clear that there is a stark connection between an understanding of liberal arts and the democratic principles of fairness and liberty. It is no coincidence that the period of time that saw the largest advancement in liberal arts education was also the era in which great thinkers, like Locke and Montesquieu, advanced their ideas for law based upon the consent of the governed.

The study of history is vital to sustaining a strong democracy. Throughout time, history has continually repeated itself, and those who have taken heed of this pattern have fared best. From Germany to China, we have seen regimes strip away the rights of citizens. Democracy has been eroded time and time again because a constant vigilance is required to sustain it. It is our civic duty to become aware of past slights to freedom, assaults on assembly, and stripping of speech. The best way to accomplish this is to remain aware of previous tyranny. Knowledge of restricted press in Korea, knowledge of castes in India, knowledge of Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus is how we can ensure that these sort of actions do not manifest themselves in modern society.

Literature advances the principles of democracy through an education in the liberal arts. Novels where democracy has been suspended, Wiesel's *Night*, Orwell's *Animal Farm,* present messages of the peril of eroding democracy and a complacent populous. Literature is not merely for enjoyment; rather, it promotes a greater goal for society. The messages of appreciation for fundamental rights and suspicion of totalitarianism that are contained in the pages of books are amongst the most important protectors of society. Additionally, literature protects a keystone of democracy: empathy for others. Depictions of plights of the less fortunate, like Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath,* are vital to reminding voters in our society that we cannot think only of our own interests at the ballot box. Compassion for adverse poverty and other hardships helps to promote a society that cares about one another, a society that does not turn a blind eye to those in need. Through liberal arts education in literature, a generation of people can be moved to support one another.

High school has provided for the advancement of my understanding of liberal arts, especially through my debate experiences. The discussion of ideas and presentation of evidence has enhanced my understanding of differing viewpoints, particularly in relation to the protection of democracy. It has become evident that education in liberal arts creates a more engaged populous which in turn creates a more safe democracy. A key argument in debate, credited to professor Larry Diamond, frames the benefits of a society trained in liberal arts quite well, saying, "Countries that govern themselves in a truly democratic fashion do not go to war with one another". Liberal arts, through its democratic idealism, ensures this geopolitical reality.