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The Power of an Instant

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“This I Believe” Essay-Jennifer Lassen, Freshman

If there's one thing I believe in, it's in the striking power of an instant. I believe in the seven-letter word that can mean the difference between something as major as life or death, or something as miniscule as a good or bad day. Instants have the ability to alter relationships, make or destroy families, or take someone from zero to hero in a small fraction of time. For such a small word, it carries so much weight; instants can change the most monumental or least important aspects of someone's life, but in the end, an instant brings *change*.

This “change” I speak of was an instant that drastically affected me and my family's life in 1995. The night was April 29th, a typical and pleasant spring evening. At age two, I knew little about life, completely naïve to its hidden uglier side. During that evening, a car in the middle of the road crashed into my parents' vehicle, killing my father on impact. It was that instant that made my mother a widow, me and my sister fatherless, and the rest who knew him completely perplexed as to why this wonderful man's life was taken from him.

The worst part about instants? They're irreversible. They stain, leaving a residue that is always felt by the mind and heart. However, instants are powerless when choice comes into play; my mother, sister, family, friends, and I *chose* to look past what happened and began to pick ourselves back up. Although we'll never forget how quickly my father's life disappeared, we've become stronger from that moment. We've gained comfort in knowing that tragic instants among others are ephemeral, and choosing to move forward from them is what matters.

Each instant in our lives teaches us something. Whether it's the fact that we can't help say “Yes!” the instant our fiancé proposes to us due to how strongly we feel for them, or whether we make the decision to never come back to that horrible restaurant the instant we taste the meal we've ordered, instants stay with us yet continually teach us things about ourselves. We learn how we feel, what we like or dislike, or how strong we are from every instant we encounter. I've personally learned to focus more on the better instants in my life, like witnessing the matrimony between my mother and stepfather or receiving my high school diploma, than the upsetting ones. It keeps me positive, optimistic, and hopeful. The main thing to remember about instants is to learn from and appreciate them, which in turn make us stronger, better, and happier human beings. “This too shall pass” speaks the perfect truth: however ugly or beautiful an instant may be, they come and go, and choosing not to dwell on them makes all the difference. I did just that, and from my experience, this is certainly what I believe.