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## The Assumptions that Define Me

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## The Assumptions that Define Me

### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"When I was a little kid, I believed that before colored movies were created, people saw in black and white. I was honestly convinced that colored film was a direct result of humans finally learning how to see in color. I also believed that the older you got the more warts you grew, that eating watermelon seeds could lead to the spontaneous maturity of a new melon in your stomach, and that God was a man with a flowing white beard and kind eyes, not unlike those attributes most often accredited to Santa. The logic of a five year old is not perfect, but in many ways I have found my first beliefs to be the most challenging."



*Amy Ryan*

### **\*\*\* The Assumptions that Define Me**

When I was a little kid, I believed that before colored movies were created, people saw in black and white. I was honestly convinced that colored film was a direct result of humans finally learning how to see in color. I also believed that the older you got the more warts you grew, that eating watermelon seeds could lead to the spontaneous maturity of a new melon in your stomach, and that God was a man with a flowing white beard and kind eyes, not unlike those attributes most often accredited to Santa. The logic of a five year old is not perfect, but in many ways I have found my first beliefs to be the most challenging.

A few years passed and I was able to convince myself that the development of colored film was not the reason I was able to see in vibrant color, rather than in the seemingly drab and impersonal black and white of the "olden days." I came to the realization that my grandmother had no warts even though she was most definitely old, and I even concluded that it was physically impossible, hopefully, that a watermelon seed survive the harsh conditions of human digestion to grow into a full-size melon inside one's stomach. Oddly enough, I still envision God as the skinny brother of Santa, but there are some assumptions even a devout Catholic girl cannot shake.

As I passed my adolescent and teenage years, I often found myself wondering back to the times that I could believe in almost anything. The world had seemed to be the best it could ever be, a never-ending loop of morning hugs, preschool, lunchtime routines, and bedtime kisses. I was quick to learn that growing up meant being able to understand when your world fell short of perfect, when your parent's words failed to ring with absolute and indisputable truth, and when God was not the tangible being you always assumed He would be in times of turmoil.

The night I found out my father was diagnosed with cancer was the unequivocal worst night of my life. Nothing could prepare me for the absolute isolation that I experienced in that moment. Had I been standing in the

middle of a crowd rather than sitting in my car in a nearly empty parking lot, I am not sure I would have felt any different. My loneliness was more than a simple physical deprivation, but rather a combination of emotional shock, mental suspension, and sudden spiritual mistrust. No amount of second hand experience derived from dramatic movies made for the sole purpose of wide-spread entertainment could have prepared me. Not one of the religious studies classes I had attended in the interest of adding a minor to my degree could have told me what to say in response. Scraping a knee, losing a game, being dumped, nothing even came close to the pain that I experienced in that moment. My father sat on the other side of the phone call, rambling about how he was not afraid, how he had come to terms with his fate, how he would only regret not being there for me and my brothers, and the entire time I struggled not to cry, because I knew in my heart that was exactly what he was doing for me.

In that moment, I hated God, because I had so devoutly believed in him and he had so impartially thrown me and my family aside. I hated society because they had provided the cliché condolences that my father had eventually started to throw around as if his life, at least in that moment, depended on it. Most of all, however, I hated myself for not being strong enough to say that I would miss him, and that I felt like if he were to die, the part of me that grew solely because he was a part of my life would die with him. That night, I prayed to God for the world to turn back to black and white, for my grandmother to grow warts, and for God to descend in a flowing white robe on a shimmering cloud of fluffy, golden-tinged mist to carry away the cancer that was destroying my father's body. I even considered downing a watermelon on the off chance that the unbelievable things I used to believe in would suddenly become worth my faith. If a watermelon could grow in a girl's stomach, surely a man would be able to overcome stage-four cancer.

I still believe in God, and I still equate my religion with the common link that holds my family together. I know that it is illogical to blame God for the events that have torn my family apart, especially when those tears have since mended in such a way as to make us stronger. However, the feeling of constant isolation that I have since been unable to shake often leaves me incapable of allowing any measure of forgiveness to a universe that has deprived me of the stability that a healthy parent provides. I find comfort instead in the knowledge that I am part of a community of people that will support me through my time of crisis and help me in any way possible. Saint John Fisher College has given me a family to rely on and a safe place to express my concerns, and for that I will always be grateful.