Editors' Note

In this writer's history, Jennifer Balidio uses an extended metaphor to explain her issues learning to write a good conclusion. How does the "sweet" metaphor enable Balidio to share her struggle descriptively? What is the chronological or point-by-point path the writer creates for you to follow as she explains her writing problems? What is the purpose of Balidio's use of italics, and does it help you to understand her as a writer and a narrator? Was the author successful in her attempt to map a history that includes failure, transitions, and finally, accomplishment as Balidio tastes "sweet" success in her conclusion? What does this essay leave you feeling? What extended metaphor can you use when developing your writer's history essay?

Sweet to the Last Sip

Jennifer Balidio

Finishing off a warm and delicious mint chocolate ice cream sundae with a feeling of satisfaction is like getting to the end of a well-written essay. The conclusion of an essay is the grand finale of a Tchaikovsky Symphony in Carnegie Hall—the memory of it will be the last thing you remember as it reverberates through your mind. I have always thought of myself as a decent writer. I knew the structure of writing an essay, and I didn't think too much of the conclusion, I've always told myself, "Writing the conclusion is easy! Just repeat everything you said in the introduction! " Then, 10th grade came around and Mrs. Lawrence, a tall woman with fiery red hair and clacking black heels towered over us.

I have never really liked writing, but I seemed to float effortlessly through grade school following the basic structure of an essay—mostly caring about my body paragraphs. My least favorite part of writing an essay was getting to the conclusion. For me, it was like reaching the end of a marathon, I had already crossed the finish line after my last body paragraph. I had nothing left in me. I was puzzled by how genius writers concocted philosophical, thought-provoking conclusions that stuck in your brain. I was content with my grades though and didn't feel the need to change my writing style.

Before I knew it, my first essay was due in Mrs. Lawrence's class. She asked us to describe and explain the major themes in the Utopian, science-fiction novel, *Brave New World*. I wrote my thesis and followed the usual structure: introduction, three body paragraphs, and a boring, lackluster conclusion. A few days later when I received my essay, I saw vibrant red marks splattered across the bright white pages of my essay. More importantly, I saw the huge letter "C" written across the top of the paper. "This conclusion leaves me wanting more. I need more," she wrote in her scribble, which almost appeared like they were hieroglyphics. *What is that supposed to mean? What does she want more of? Did she want more words?* I had never gotten a "C" on an essay before. I approached her after class to ask about my paper. "Jennifer, read aloud to me your introduction, please," I read it for her, "Now, read your conclusion for me, please," she said in her raspy, low-pitched voice. "I don't understand, Mrs. Lawrence, I summed up everything in my essay! What's the big deal?" I raised my voice slightly. She explained to me that there was no way I could even think about getting an "A" in her class if I didn't put more effort into conclusions. She could tell that I didn't think conclusions were important, but they were Mrs. Lawrence's "thing" and I didn't have it.

A few weeks later, she assigned the second essay; this time it was on a topic I was interested in—existentialism in Albert Camus', *The Stranger*. I was excited to write this paper and had a lot to say. The idea of the absurd, individual existence, freedom, and choice fascinated me. I decided to sit down at Starbucks Coffee while sipping away an ice cold caramel frappuccino, determined to finish the essay. I wrote my introduction, I had strong arguments in my body paragraphs and I was getting into my paper while I vigorously sipped away at my frappuccino. Then, I sipped the straw one last time and the minute the liquid from the straw hit my tongue, I tasted lukewarm water. I had drunk all of the coffee from the cup and was left with a whimper, not a bang. *Wouldn't all aspects of life be that much more interesting if everything ended with a delicious caramel memory lingering in your mind?* I had a sudden epiphany. This was exactly what Mrs. Lawrence was talking about. I was inspired by my cold beverage; I wouldn't let this essay end lukewarm and watery, I wanted my readers to experience the heavenly, sweet taste of caramel in their mouth even after putting it down. I had realized that all this time I was disappointing my reader by thinking the conclusion didn't matter. I felt the fuel burning beneath my rocket and wanted to write a compelling conclusion.

That's exactly what I did, I worked hard at withholding some thoughts for the end to keep the reader's interest and I refused to copy and paste my introduction. Mrs. Lawrence passed back our second essays. She placed it face down and as I anxiously turned it over I saw a bright red "B+" written across the top of my paper and the words, "Solid conclusion," written at the end in her hieroglyphic handwriting. I smiled brightly with satisfaction, I was happy with a "B+." I have accepted the fact that I am not a superstar writer, but I am happy just knowing that Mrs. Lawrence had tasted some caramel at the end of my essay.

Jennifer Balidio is a psychology major.