

Valedictory Address
Ms. Katharina Wynn

Thank you, Mr. Smith, and thank you all for being here today. I would like to begin by illustrating the nature of our senior class. Our story begins with *Disciplina, Virtus, Libertas*. We have overcome intellectually, we have matured in our character, and we have freed ourselves for the future. I am honored to stand before you today in the presence of so many great minds that have incalculable potential for the future.

This year, we, the class of 2007, have achieved *disciplina*; we have been disciplined in the great arts and works of the ancients before us and have become aware of who we are. We have overcome in this regard and have revealed our character through our reflections on *The Iliad, Moby Dick, The Federalist Papers, The Canterbury Tales, and Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Despite the countless hours toiling over the seemingly endless nights of homework, we have managed to find a meaning of self and have developed our *virtus*, or strong moral characters which will continue to guide us. All of our midnight struggles and intellectual debates have led to our *libertas*, or freedom. We have experienced what Nietzsche recognized as a freedom for something, rather than a freedom from something. In trying to discover the examined life, we have been provided with the tools to aspire to BE and to live rightly. We have been propelled toward greatness and have been provided with the finest education which is further gilded by the most vibrant, motivated, excellent class. I wouldn't have it any other way.

Our experience here may be likened to Plato's cave. We entered as young children and through mentoring and the great love and care which our teachers have invested in our education, they have provided us with a light that led us from the cave to a new life, a new meaning, a new purpose. Though we will miss the humorous stories of Mr. Luce, the "quick tangents" of Mr. Smith, Mr. Herndon's engaging historical recreations, and Mr. Hild's random German references, we will "press on" from Dr. Moore's class and from all of our teachers' classes, with the wisdom which each has imparted to us. They have provided us with the breath to aspire toward our goals and have encouraged each on the path toward success. They have revealed the beauty and elegance of the arts and sciences, filling us with the curiosity to know and to live. For this we thank them. As one graduate eloquently put it: despite the workload for a subject, these are the people that I am willing to work for. We are willing to work, because we trust in these mentors, our role-models, our friends. They have opened our eyes, that we might see the grandeur of what lies beyond, and they have filled us with passion: for that we are grateful. Teachers, hail and farewell – *ave atque vale*.

My parents have also contributed to my education: whether it be helping me to write, mercilessly marking my papers, drenched in red ink; whether it be helping me understand physics, that incomprehensible subject; whether it be discussing philosophy and moral principles, testing me outside of school. As we move to college, parents, hail and farewell – *ave atque vale*.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to my class as well. This year, as I broke free a bit from my controlling, perfectionist side, I was able to relax a bit and enjoy life. I owe this in part to them and thank them. As the prospect of leaving dawns upon me, I am frightened to go, to leave behind something that is special. As I was writing this speech, I realized that I lack the words to adequately express how great our class is and how much they are loved. There is unity in our class. Some have traversed the waters of knowledge since elementary school and others have recently joined, but nonetheless, we are all walking together, and we will all walk together today from this place. We have grown in each other's presence and will carry lessons learned from each other. I feel blessed to have taken part in our senior-bonding moments, such as the lock-in at the beginning of the year; from this event I will always carry the kind, encouraging words of my fellow students. And forever will we remember the infamous senior roast. The gifts and memories we have bestowed upon Ridgeview history are immeasurable; we have set

precedents with our intellectually competitive class, and have left our marks behind in wit and yellow paint. Ridgeview has also imprinted in our hearts her mark. This class and these people have become a family to me, people in whom I can confide and find help. We are all individuals, and yet we are all able to act as one, and in so doing we are, as it seems to me a strong, invincible class. Brothers and sisters, hail and farewell – *ave atque vale*.

As we go forth from this place, let us cherish the memories we have. Dostoevsky expressed it thus: "If man stores up many such memories to take into life, then he is saved for his whole life. And even if only one good memory remains with us in our hearts, that alone may serve some day for our salvation." It is my wish that we will remember each other in the years to come and that we will have memories of the life gained by each of us during this year. Ridgeview is not a building, it is not a place, it is not simply the number-one high school in the state. It is what it is because of you as individuals: your personalities as physicists, bless you all for countless hours on gmail helping me; as politicians and business men, leading us in class, and soon the world; as linguists and musicians, enveloping the world in the angelic songs of men, and perhaps God; as biologists and doctors, discovering, improving and saving life and lives. No matter the profession, you will all touch many lives, as you have touched mine. You are all inspirations to me.

We are ready for the world and for successes. This is for you, hoplites, this is for you, class of 2007, for you, friends, brothers and sisters, which you have become to me, but more importantly this is for you, the great, mature men and women of the class of 2007. May God bless you all in your endeavors as we go from this place and remember: "This was our finest hour."