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### Runways, Roller Coasters, and Race Tracks: The College Experience

“What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you.” said Ralph Waldo Emerson, a philosopher, lecturer, and an American Essayist. What he is basically saying is that nothing is more important in your life, other than how you feel within your body. Another Philosopher, just like Ralph Waldo Emerson, was Robert Barthe. The idea of comparing within a deeper level while using symbols, signs, and drawings is the way he lived life and taught people about this idea. This paper will include or use an aeronautical journey approach, a roller coaster theme, and a marathon race to depict and compare the main topic of college students going to college.

First, I want to compare a flights journey of take off, in-flight, and landing to the topic of college students during a semester. The take offs of any flight is like the beginning of the semester where students are filled with many emotions trying to figure out where they are going to be living, where to go to get food, where to go for classes, etc. Since it is the beginning of the semester uncertainties will be present during that time so people will have anxieties to start out with not knowing what to expect going into it. For example, I am about to end my third semester in college, I can say that I have always been excited to get a semester going because everyone is so nice and friendly and the workload isn't too much. I will add that incoming freshman are more prone to having these actions during their first semester as opposed to a junior returning for the fifth. A freshman doesn't really know their way around a campus too much, and a junior does

and so the nerves of a freshman are sky-high. The in-flight portion resembles the grind of hard working students through the middle of a semester. Just like turbulence shaking an airplane, students are tasked with difficult assignments that require deep thought and precision and sometimes that process can be hard for them. The process in which a student might get an assignment done might look different than what the teacher was expecting. Nothing is ever smooth when it comes to flying in-flight sometimes, which is basically what a student goes through during the middle portion of a semester. You get very busy with hanging out with friend groups, doing extracurriculars like playing a sport, or participating in a club that may feel like a load to handle which is similar to turbulence. The landing portion of the flight resembles a period in which students are gearing up to end the semester. Assignments start to ramp up, students are getting tired but still grinding to do well on finals and once that last final is over, they are packing up to go home for winter break or summer break. Overall, students go through all stages of a flight during one semester.

Second, I want to compare the roller coaster of emotions to college students throughout the semester. There are two categories of emotions positive and negative that these students can and will demonstrate through the roughness and craziness. If a student does well on an exam, their mood is going to be uplifting and happy compared to a student who doesn't do well. In, contrast, a student may study well for a test/exam and then completely bomb it, which plays a negative feeling over and over again in their heads impacting the rest of the day. They wonder what could've gone better and where they messed up. Those feelings stick with them for a little bit because they may not get their test results back from the teacher until a week later, so all week they have this nagging voice or itch in your system that bugs the ever-living juice out of them. Not only do students have to deal with their emotions academically, but they also have to deal with it socially as well when hanging with friends or doing activities outside of the

classroom. Emotions outside of classroom plus inside the classroom equals a possible chance for a student to experience a “low on battery” burnout moment like your phone, and so taking advantage of counseling and self-care techniques are essential, in my opinion, to having a successful semester.

Lastly, I want to compare a marathon race to a college students whole four year academic journey where you experience at least eight of those flight and emotionally draining semesters. Within these four years (two semesters each), students will experience many different kinds of experiences, but one thing that will stay constant is the writing portion and having to write papers and so having strong writing skills are key. In order to begin writing, you need to gather your notes and make a plan for what you want to write about similar to a racer prepping for a marathon. Then, the next step would be to craft an outline for your paper and create this playbook for what your paper will look like. Depending on when you get this done, then you can start writing slowly (which resembles the start line in this marathon comparison) and consistently until the paper is done and looks ok by your standards. It might take a couple of edits and redrafts after this (this would be in progress part of the marathon) until you reach the finish line which in turn would be the final result paper. Students repeat these steps over and over again as they continue to write papers in different formats and topics. This marathon analogy could also work outside of writing papers, you could instead look at the very first semester as a college freshman as your start line, the middle six semesters as the in-progress portion, and then the last spring semester of your senior year as the finish line after running, hurdling, and experiencing different kinds of emotions throughout the four years. Graduation afterward is the trophy or medal ceremony that happens after each race, but instead of only three winners, you have many winners which include all of the senior class.

These three comparative lenses in which the flight, the roller coaster, and the marathon shows the journey of a college student. Each student's experience is unique, yet all share the common goal of academic achievement. While the path may be difficult with turbulence, highs, and lows, the ultimate destination remains within reach. The key to navigating this complicated time lies in a blend of personal resilience and support. By implementing effective self-care habits and using the resources available on campus, students can not only endure the challenges but also thrive in their academic pursuits. The way in which individuals respond to setbacks and obstacles ultimately defines their character and their capacity for future success.