

The Big Decision - Sample Story

What's my decision?

Whether or not to continue graduate school or go teach English in a foreign country. I wanted to go teach somewhere, but the graduate degree was the "safe" choice.

Historical figures/celebrities:

- Bill Nye (The Science Guy)
- The Dalai Lama

How did I pick them? I googled "famous travelers" and "famous educators" and picked people I thought might have interesting opinions

My Research:

You don't have to make a table like this, but you might find it helpful. Also, it's okay if you can't find good "notes" in this brief time, but you should have a clear reason for why these people would argue one way or another.

Person	Bill Nye	Dalai Lama
Search terms used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Nye on higher education • Bill Nye on graduate school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dalai Lama on traveling • Dalai Lama on making difficult decisions
Source	"Bill Nye the Science Guy Talks Keeping Teens Interested in STEM" by Alexandra Pannoni (2015)	"Compassion and the Individual" by Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama (I skimmed this because it was very long!)
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He says people should follow their passions, whatever those passions are. • He says we should "live by example." • He says a "tradition of academic excellence is passed down." • When asked about what happens to someone who loses their passion for science and math, he says, "Your life won't be as much fun..." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He says the purpose of life "is to be happy." • He says a lot about how we should have compassion for others and how that is really the main source of happiness. • He talks about how we need love and friends. • Compassion and "attachment" often get confused. • I also found a 1 minute Youtube video of an interview with him: "Dalai Lama - Make wise Decisions." In it, he says that the mind and heart should be

		unified in the decision you make/choose.
Thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I thought he would support higher education outright, but he's all about your passions. He would probably encourage me to do what I really wanted (teach in a foreign country). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I feel like the Dalai Lama would tell me I have to figure it out for myself. He might warn me though, to consider that my worries and concerns for my roommates were more "attachment" than actual "compassion," so I maybe shouldn't let that (or other material worries) weigh so heavily on my decision.

The Story

I was done with my Master's degree. It wasn't really what I'd wanted. The economy was terrible--one year into the Great Recession--and a Master's in English was a road to nowhere on its own. Standing in between our open-plan kitchen and living room, I saw two choices: take the safe path and stay in graduate school, familiar and uninspiring like the white and beige color scheme of our apartment, or take the leap, like the red spoonbills winging over the lakes outside our living room window, and try to find a job teaching English in Korea, Japan, or China.

Stray bits of kitty litter from the box in the closet reminded me of all my responsibilities here, and the pressure of the choice before me burst out into a wave of memories on both sides.

At the window, looking at the spoonbills or leaning on the piano, I saw my future husband--then living across the world in pursuit of home while running away from his own. My friends already living abroad waved me forward with stories and pictures.

Bill Nye the Science guy, who had so often entertained and educated me when I was a child, smiled and said, "Follow your passions!"

Across from him, in the kitchen, packed and crowded together, was a host of people. My roommates, relying on me for friendship and my part of the rent. My brother's cat bumped the back of my legs, pushing me toward them.

My professors encouraged me, along with my other friends from graduate school, telling me, "You're so close! You'll regret it if you don't finish," echoed by my senior English teacher in high school. Above them floated the bubbly, gaseous embodiment of my food allergies, warning me away from cultures rich in seafood and soy.

In between the two spaces, in the dining room we never used, I saw my mother and sister, torn between wanting me to stay and wishing me toward my heart's desire. The Dalai Lama stood with them, peace in his face.

"What should I do?" I asked him. "How do I choose?"

“You must make the choice for yourself,” he said. “Be careful that the feelings of guilt and obligation for your family and friends are not attachment instead of compassion. Remember that if something can be fixed, there is no point in worrying about it.”

His words lingered in my mind, but the specters in front of me weighed on my thoughts.