All that the sky promises and more

*“Why is the sky blue, why is the sun yellow, why does the moon glow?”*

These are the questions of my childhood. The explanations I received?

*“Well… they just are.”*

When I was younger the answer of “*they just are*” was enough. After all, this tableau of listen, memorize, repeat was the foundation of my early education. By the time I entered Evergreen I had almost forgotten these questions. I was inexperienced but desperately craving knowledge, and hoping to find the tools that would allow me to acquire it. As for the blueness of the sky, it still just *was.*

I pursued my passion for the sciences and the humanities. What I was studying inspired me to work harder than I ever had, not just because I needed to “pass” but because I was driven by the quest for answers. I learned to actualize texts not just read them. My professors encouraged a consciousness of subjectivity and fostered participation in academic discourse. I realized that to truly learn I needed to understand and effectively use the written word to express my understanding.

I was also taking tests, a lot of tests. I had always been *terrified* of tests, but I found myself surprisingly thrilled. These tests were not byproducts of a systematically institutionalized education, or a unilateral judgment of my abilities, but instead were tools for me to better collaborate with my professors and peers in my own education. I became liberated from my fear of failure and inadequacy by the very thing that had inspired those fears in the first place.

One of my most challenging classes was *Molecule to Organism*. It pushed far past dogmatic limitations and into a wildly diverse array of intellectual exercises hinging on interpretation and understanding through engagement rather than rote memorization. I dreamed in stoichiometry, I breathed glycolysis, and sometimes the granola in my bowl of milk looked suspiciously like the Krebs cycle. It was worth it. Participating and thriving in such a rigorous environment helped me realize that Evergreen has provided me with the tools to be successful in *any* subject.

In my last quarter, I researched the geophysical phenomena that lead pre-terrestrial plant life to use specific light waves for photosynthesis. As light strikes the molecules that make up our atmosphere, it scatters in wavelengths visible to the human eye. The effect is called Rayleigh scattering, and I understood that this is why the sky is blue, sunlight is yellow, and the moon glows. I had found my answers.

The sciences seemed so perfectly adept at describing the world. I thought, “Do I still need the humanities?” I took a chance and registered for *As Poetry Recycles Neurons*. I remember reading “Weak with the Dawn,” a poem from Pablo Neruda’s *Residencia en la Tierra I*:

The fabric of the day, its frail linen

Is good for a gauze for the sick, in the wake of absence:

It is the color that wants only to replace,

To cover, to engulf, to subdue, to make distances.

This visceral description of the dawn touched on something so intimate about the world. We are constantly engulfed by this omnipotent and simultaneously fragile expanse of color and light, and have been for all of existence. The physics of the atmosphere could explain why the sky was blue, but not why it resonated so deeply with the most primordial and intellectual aspects of my humanity.

I learned that in Greek mythology the sky is a constellation of stories, the place where Prometheus stole fire from the gods, the home of Apollo on whose temple is etched the maxim, “Know thyself.” I learned about a different sky and it taught me how myth and poetry could reshape the syntax of a subject to account for its significance. It spoke to how we make evaluations as a society, a community, and as individuals. As it turned out, poetry *could* explain the blueness of the sky, the glare of the sun, the glow of the moon.

The more interdisciplinary my education became, the more I saw that each sky made the others richer. I couldn’t divide the sky into parts in order to better understand its sum. In fact by doing so, I understood it less.

I am graduating in true Evergreen fashion and applying to both MD and MFA Programs. I know now that I can love both Rayleigh’s sky and Neruda’s.