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2015

### 2015 'Why Humanities?' Winner: Humanities, the Science of the Soul

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## Why Humanities? Contest

Winner 2015

### Humanities, the Science of the Soul

Bibi Hijab Balkhi

Let's be frank here, the Humanities aren't exactly painted as the academic road to success. My own parents weren't very thrilled when I gave up my childhood dream of being a doctor in favour of pursuing a degree in Literature. "Bibi!" they said. "Bibi, what will you do with a degree in English? Now a doctor, just like you wanted to be, a doctor is always needed! People will always get sick and people will always need doctors to heal them! Who will need someone with an English degree?" But I stood my ground, and here I am, starting the second year towards my undergrad. Every now and then my mother will drop a hint. "Bibi, it's not too late to change your path, my friend from work- you know the one- her daughter just switched her major from History to Nursing. Says it's the best decision she's made so far. Besides, what even is an English degree?" Well, I have a few things I'd like to say.

Mom, Dad, I'm going to be a doctor! I'm going to finish my undergrad, push through my Masters, get myself accepted into a PhD program and if things go my way, I'm going to be a doctor! No, I might not be able to disinfect and heal a wound, but watch me spin words into medicine.

Nobody's ever read an anatomy textbook to soothe heartbreak at three in the morning.

What use is an English degree? What use is any Humanity? It's in the name: Humanity.

Humans aren't numbers and statistics, and while numbers and statistics can be complicated in their own rights they don't even come close to sharing the intricacies of human nature. So how do we understand humans? Through their languages. Through their traditions. Through their past and present societies, through analysing again and again all of the things they've created. Through the art that's been produced in times of prosperity and in depravity, can we understand humans. The surgical steel of a blade won't cut through walls someone's put up around their heart, but the wisdom of an ancient proverb might.

So here's to this generation's doctors! Kudos to you who learn to understand the body! I'm going to give a shot at understanding the soul.