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When I first mentioned the idea of studying abroad aloud to my mother, I never imagined that the opportunity would become a reality for me. Still, it seems as if my month abroad living in Milan, Italy was a dream rather than a reality. While I spent the month travelling through the art inspired city of Florence, through the historic streets of Rome, and walking the tragic pathways of Auschwitz and Birkenau, the biggest adventure that I faced through studying abroad was my journey of self-discovery and growth. Before travelling to Italy, I never knew how independent, confident, and optimistic I can be when I need to be. And while I learned how to rely on myself, I also learned how to rely on those who were travelling with me. From borrowing hair straighteners and portable chargers to relying on one another to guide our group through the winding streets of Milan, I grew closer with those who I travelled with as the month went on.

While this trip did greatly change my life, I am most excited to use this experience to change the lives of my future students. As a middle level education major with endorsements in language arts, social studies, and ESL, my trip abroad will affect the way that I teach all of my students. After spending a month in a country where the native language is not English, I can now relate in a new way with students of mine who are learning to speak English in a society that expects them to already be able to. I can show my own photos of the Colosseum and tell my students stories that I learned about ancient gladiators when I cover ancient civilizations in social studies. As a language arts teacher, I can tell my students about the Dante Alighieri museum, or show them the pictures and tell them of the pain that still exists in Auschwitz as we read Anne Frank's diary.

While it seems like everyone who studies abroad raves about how life changing it is, there's a reason that they all do. Living in Milan was an amazing experience for me, and I'm sure it would be amazing for anyone else who is thinking about going.

