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Life offers us plenty of experiences which greatly influence our world-views and contribute to the formation of our personalities. Everyone of us has a story which has had such a big impact on our lives that we will never forget it. Today, I am putting my reflections into words in order to share with you my own story. It is a story which took place in the city that will never die; it is a story about my study-abroad experience in Rome the memories of which I will keep in my heart forever.

Last year, I had the chance to study in Rome and I was immersed in the Italian culture for three months. I was amazed to find out that this short span of time had enriched me so much. While I was in Rome, I tried to familiarize with as much of the foreign culture as I could. Yet, I am still not sure whether I managed to feel Rome to its fullest, because this city is so rich in history, art, architecture, food, flavors, and fashion that you will always doubt whether it is possible to experience all of it.

I have always been interested in history because I believe that in order to understand and interpret the present one needs first to be acquainted with the past. Rome gave me the chance to feel the history of one of the greatest empires of all times whose remains continue to convey the invincible spirit of glorious emperors, strong gladiators, powerful popes, and celebrated artists. Rome taught me to see things in depth because in the city that never dies every cobble, every building, every sculpture, and even every curve has its own significant meaning. Layers of history have loaded this place with so much power that at first the view of all the beautiful cathedrals, perfect sculptures, incredible pictures, gorgeous fountains, and Roman squares seems quite overwhelming.

My staying in Rome was accompanied with a lot of short trips to places such as Ostia, Paestum, Pompeii, Venice, Florence, and Naples whose monuments, museums,

and architecture enhanced my understanding of the Roman culture and its history. I became so used with the view of all the beauty and perfection which surrounded me that I thought it would be impossible to ever take my eyes off it. However, after only three months, I was staying in Chicago facing a view which although similar in power was completely different in nature than the Roman one.

Staring at the amazingly beautiful Chicago skyline made me realize that by flying from Europe to the States I did not merely cross the ocean to go from one continent to another. I did something more: I traveled in time. While my eyes were reflecting the innumerable shimmering lights on every skyscraper which made all Chicago burst with life, my mind was reminiscing about the old Roman Forum and its own unique power. At this moment, I comprehended that my senses and my mind were struggling to overcome the huge difference between the two cultures and to bridge the gap between past and present. This feeling filled me with happiness and revealed to me a picture that left an ineffaceable trace in my mind. It was a picture in which the Ancient World was playing and talking with the Modern World explaining to it how relative and unstable the concept of time was. I became conscious that the concept of time represented nothing but the human attempt to impose limits on the boundless eternity. I realized that everything ancient was modern once while everything modern will eventually become ancient. The beauty of the world is hidden behind its relative nature. I would have never had the eyes to see this beauty if it was not for my study-abroad experience both in Rome and in the States. I feel a more complete person now who is not only able to travel over the world but who is also able to travel in time.