Intro: My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I’m a senior at Great Oak high school, and although I am just one individual, there are many people and factors that make me the person (or flower if you will) that I am today. There are certain detrimental factors a flower must have in order to survive and flourish, such as: a strong foundation, plenty of sunshine, and a healthy environment. Thankfully, these are all present in my life.

**The Soil and Stem:** Just as a flower could not survive without a strong foundation, there is no way I would be able to survive without my family. If the soil underneath a flower is sturdy and powerful, the flower will be protected against the worst hardships imaginable. A foundation is something you will always be able to rely on when it seems you can’t rely on anything else. This describes my family to a tee. Of course, there are factors that test a foundation, such as rainstorms, heavy winds, or long periods of drought. A hardship my family has faced not too long ago was divorce. What gave this rainstorm an advantage, was the fact that it was a sneaky one to say the least. One finds that it is difficult to defect a storm that you don’t see coming. The divorce was a long, difficult, and hurtful process, but my foundation is still as strong as ever. Although my support is not all in one place anymore, I still have the same amount I had before the divorce, if not more. The fact that my foundation is still intact and powerful only emphasizes how strong it is.

Four Leaves (Four Corners): The four leaves on my stem are friendships, morals, faith, and determination.

**Friendships**: “You are who you hang out with.” What to some may seem like an overrated motto, or cliché, to me is a wholesome statement that could not be truer. I always refer to my friends as the family you get to choose. Your friends are the people you choose to keep close in your life, that make you happy, no matter how alike or different they are to you. True friends to me are friends that you are proud to have, and accept entirely for who they are. I believe that a friendship lost was never really a friendship to begin with. My friend Karen is one of the closest friends I have, and has truly taught me so much. She is a strong individual that I am proud to call my friend, and has power and determination written all over her. We share the same beliefs and morals, and agree on pretty much everything. She uses her intelligence as power and still remains kind to everyone she encounters. My friend Katalina is one of my longest friends and although we seem to differ in some beliefs, she brings out the fun side of me. One attribute I truly admire is her ability to be real with everyone. She doesn’t hide behind a mask, and is the same person in front of her friends that she is in front of her family. This is a trait that is hard to find in people sometimes, but once it’s found, it is something to hold on to. Karen, Katalina, and I sometimes refer to ourselves as the “three amigas”. We will remain friends no matter what, and our similarities and differences are exactly what keep us so close.

**Morals**: One non-negotiable that will remain the same despite outside factors is the way I carry myself. If you were to ask any of my friends my motto, they would tell you, “classy, never trashy”. I reflect my morals in what I do, how I speak, the way I dress, my over all attitude, and almost every other attribute of myself. My morals come from my family and my religion more than anything else. In the Christian faith, one should always have respect for others, “treat others the way you’d want to be treated”, and try to do good as often as you can. Morals are what make me who I am. It is the reason why I believe the things that I do, and what I consider right and wrong.

**Music:** Music is something in my life that will remain constant. The fact that there is a type of music for every emotion you are feeling creates a sense of comfort for me. When I am happiest, I listen to music, when I’m feeling down, I listen to music. Music is a stress reliever is so many situations, and has a therapeutic kind of anecdote that is unexplainable. Not only does listening to music create a sense of peace, but I find that creating music has the same effect as well. Although I’ll be the first one to tell you, I’m not the best at playing keyboard, just playing free hand creates happiness. One genre in specific that I can listen to 24 hours a day is reggae. I Reggae to me is so raw, and contains so much history and passion behind it. My father grew up in the Virgin Island, and a large part of our family lives there. Being so, I grew up listening to reggae and have learned to not only love it, but truly understand the message the genre seems to hold.

**Determination**: One word that I believe describes me well is determined. Once I set my mind to something, I will never be truly satisfied until it is complete in its entirety. I find that how determined you are almost always reflects how successful an outcome will be. My determination is almost always reflected in my school work. I try never to turn in anything that isn’t to my highest ability. I believe what you put into your work, reflects the kind of person you are. I want to be seen as hard working and dependable in everything I do.

**Petals and Thorns**: The petals to my flower are the finished, polished look that the outside world sees. Flowers are seen as beautiful because of their colors, shape, structure, design, and overall appeal. For some, these traits may be factors in what they deem attractive in a person as well. What the outside world also sees, are the facial expressions that show, and even mask what I feel. Sometimes the way I look can be very accurate to what I’m feeling, and other times, a smile is the easiest way to keep the world out. The thorns to my flower is my knowledge. Although knowledge isn’t a physical thing, it can protect you in so many ways. The more knowledge you obtain, the easier it is to stray away from naivety and ignorance. Keeping yourself educated can help you in so many situations. Knowledge truly is power, and is infinite as well. It is something you can never have too much of. It is one of the only things that cannot be taken away from you. It is your responsibility to receive as much as you can, and your duty to spread as much of it as possible.

**Sun and Rain**: Sunshine and water are great necessities when it comes to a plant. When it comes to me, my mother is my shelter, my protection, security, my everything. As a single parent, my mother does WHATEVER it takes to make sure my sisters and I have the best life imaginable. She goes out of her way to make our lives as enjoyable and meaningful as they can possibly be. She is a hard worker, an amazing protector, and the best provider. I think many would agree that there is no love like a mother’s love. It is one that is warm, and everlasting. She is the strength that holds me together, and when I do my best, it is with her in mind. Unfortunately, I don’t always express how thankful I am for her, but I have never been so thankful for another presence in my life. I guess I get my independence from her as well. She has proven without a doubt that she doesn’t need anyone but herself to be successful. She is everything I want to be one day.

**Pollen:** The pollen to my flower is my open mind set. Just as when the wind blows, pollen is carried through limitless currents, I often let my mind wander as far as the tiniest speck of pollen can be carried. If my father taught me one thing in life, it is that there are always two sides to every story. Keeping an open mind also allows you to learn so many new things. A portal to me is not only what I reveal to others, but just as important, what others reveal to me. Although I may be sturdy in my beliefs, I know it is important to hear all view points, for there is always a large possibility that someone may have a good point that you would have never thought of yourself. Keeping an open mind ultimately broadens my horizons, and in my opinion, can only be a positive attribute.

**Bees and Butterflies:** The bees and butterflies represent the beautiful community around me, in my case, the people of Temecula. This goes for my friends, my school, my church, my job, and any one I come in contact with. These all play a major role in enhancing integrity in my life. The Boys and Girls Club is a perfect example of this. I have done community service there since my freshman year, and worked there throughout my junior and senior year. I learned that to be a positive role model, you must “practice what you preach”. In other words, lead by example. Because Temecula isn’t exactly the largest city in the world, I tend to see the children I’ve worked with often, whether it be in a grocery store, or even at the beach. Knowing that I set an example for these kids, truly has affected the way I act in and out of the club. My school has affected my integrity in a positive way as well. The S.P.I.R.I.T acronym is so heavily influenced upon the students of Great Oak, it is good near impossible to silently repeat what each letter stands for every time you hear the word. I feel, the repeated use of the acronym is a great way to assure students to have integrity, after all, if you hear something again and again, it’ll have to rub off on you eventually, right? (:

**Credits:** Although many people have helped in shaping me into the person I am today, none of it would be possible without God. I have been truly blessed in the people that have been placed in my life, and have learned so many things through the situations I’ve been placed in. Both the good and the bad days make up my flower, and sometimes a couple discolored petals, or torn leaves add character. Although my flower isn’t perfect by a long shot, it is truly me, and I am growing both physically and mentally every day.