

### ***Genesis (953 words)***

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the land and the sea, the sun and the moon and all of the stars. It has since been found however, that in order for a star to be created a nebula must first collapse.

When I was ten years old, my figure skating coach told me that people have been conditioned to believe in things that have later been proven false. He gave me the example of the sun and the earth. In ancient times it was thought that the sun revolved around the earth which of course is wrong – the earth in fact revolves around the sun. To this I told him, *“You’re one of those people who believe in a lie – I know the whole world revolves around me!”*

I have spent a lot of my life being told, by my grandmother especially, that I am perfect and I can do anything I set my mind to. She admitted recently though that this may not be the best approach to raising a child. My English Literature teacher said to me in Year 12 that whilst he supported the school’s advocacy of an attitude whereby girls are told they can achieve the world, he sometimes wondered about the lack of acknowledgement for the idea of failure. I was born into a generation with grandparents who lived through war. They then told their children, our parents, that they should be infinitely grateful for anything they received. Consequently our parents made sure we had whatever we wanted, and our grandparents have given us more on top of that.

Failure is a taboo topic in this day and age. We don’t talk about what went wrong, but everything that went right. If we succeed it’s because we worked hard, wanted it badly, and had a little luck. But we often neglect to mention that we did, at some stage, fail. We have bred a culture whereby failures are not celebrated, but only successes. Outwardly, it looks as though people who achieve do so effortlessly. In reality, resilience is the key to success.

Some of the most famous success stories were not immediate celebrities. Their genesis was born from failure, their nebula collapsed before their star was born. Walt Disney was fired by a news editor for lack of imagination and turned down 302 times before he found financing for the creation of Disney World. Einstein couldn’t speak until the age of four nor read until the age of seven. Vincent Van Gogh sold one painting in his lifetime, to a friend. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. On failure he has said,

*"I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."*

J.K. Rowling, international bestselling author, broke taboo and spoke of failure, not of success, to the graduating class of Harvard in 2008. Soon after having graduated from college herself, she was jobless, recently divorced and raising her daughter as a single parent. It was in this period that she wrote the first Harry Potter book, on an old manual typewriter, only to have it rejected by twelve publishers before it was accepted by Bloomsbury. Rowling told the Harvard graduates, people whose failures may be considered the average person's success, that,

*"It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all—in which case, you fail by default."*

Sometimes the world isn't ready for us, sometimes we will try our hardest, and fail miserably. But J.K. Rowling also said that, *"rock bottom is a solid foundation on which to build your life"*.

I haven't failed on the scale that some of the most successful people have failed, and I haven't succeeded on their scale either. But I couldn't help comparing their stories of resilience with one of my own, after all, according to me, the world revolves around me.

I had trained all summer for the first competition of the season, and remember the warm up. I landed every jump and completed every spin perfectly, only to fall over three times during the actual performance. I had never skated so badly in my life, and needless to say did not make the podium. But I was determined to never let it happen again. I went to the rink every second day, trained hard on and off the ice. By the next competition I was so nervous, but stepped onto the stage and skated my best. And my best was good enough to win that night.

Like a nebula, I literally collapsed in my first competition that season. Three times. But that was necessary for me to learn to get back up, start again and tell myself that the season wasn't over.

In 1968, Tanzania's Stephen Akhwari finished last in the 42 km marathon. At the 19 km mark he cramped up, fell badly, wounded and dislocated his knee and hurt his shoulder. But he kept running. When he crossed the finish line an interviewer asked him why, and he said, *"My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race; they sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."*

Your failures are not the end. Your failures mark a new beginning. After all, for a star to be born, a nebula must first collapse. So, *collapse, crumble. This is not your destruction. This is your birth.* This is your genesis.