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As a former honors biology student, I was lucky enough to have the option to opt out of a cat dissection. Just the thought of cutting open an animal no different than my beloved feline companions at home was enough to make my stomach churn. Something about causing death to study life just didn't seem right to me.

Though I wasn't present during the dissection itself, I still witnessed a change in my peers' attitudes upon being informed of the upcoming event. Some were disgusted while others cracked jokes about how they were "dog people" anyway. It was clear that they'd been desensitized to the sanctity of life; even those who were grossed out seemed to forget that the cat was once a living, purring, sentient being.

My education is very important to me. I've always made good grades and valued learning in and outside of school, and it is because of my interest and passion for learning that I am here today.

There is no doubt that students should receive the best education possible, but they should not need to harm others or sacrifice their ethics in order to do so. By giving students the chance to opt out of dissection, the lesson they learn may be far greater than whatever might be achieved through the dissection itself. Over time, people will inevitably fail to remember everything they learned in a high school biology class, but holding true to their moral principles is something they will most certainly never forget.