

GARMENTS THAT TELL MY LIFE STORY



Siara Brown

Foreword

Siara is truly a kind and special young woman. I always felt protective of her because she experienced a tragic loss at a young age. Siara's mother had many health issues due to diabetes. Unfortunately, Siara lost her mother in January 2014 due to complications from diabetes. For a young girl to experience this kind of loss is very frightening. Some young people become rebellious and develop behavior problems after experiencing such tragedy. Yet Siara was able to adjust to her new life and went on to graduate from high school and is now attending college. Although having support from her family surely helped Siara cope with her grief, I feel a lot of her healing came from within. I see so much of myself in Siara. When I was young, I was very quiet and kept to myself because I felt people would not understand me if I shared my thoughts and dreams. Siara is similar in that she is very quiet and always seems so pensive. Siara is now looking forward to finishing her college education and pursuing a career in her major of choice. I see her being very successful at any career she chooses. Her kindness and pleasant demeanor will always be a big plus in her future endeavors. In my opinion, Siara is a real gem who will always shine bright!

Sincerely,

Wanda Rivera

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Prologue

Dress is more important than others think. We use dress for many different events that come in our life but we don't think about it as much as we should. The meaning behind a dress, a shirt, a pair of shoes and an entire outfit can have an unforgettable story behind it.

Dedicated to my lovely family and friends

My grandmother,

My aunt Marina,

My brother Michael

Shanice, Nicole and Jennifer

8th Grade Prom

Prom was a few days away. I was stressed about what dress I wanted; however, I always wanted a pink dress since it's my favorite color and all the dresses I could find that I fell in love with were extremely expensive. A week or so before prom, my mom and I went prom dress shopping. My grandfather spent the day driving us to many different stores. My mom suggested we check out David's Bridal, so I listened to her and we ended up going inside and they did have a small prom section.

I decided to go with a royal blue dress. The color went well with my skin tone and made me look tanner. The dress is a one shoulder dress that ended right about eight my knees. It was cut in an A-line style and was made from a silky polyester material. On the shoulder part, there are silver gems placed around it in a straight line. Whenever it hit light, it would shine and become iridescent which made it feel magical I paired it with long silver earrings that also had that iridescent shimmer with the matching necklaces and bought silver small wedges from payless.

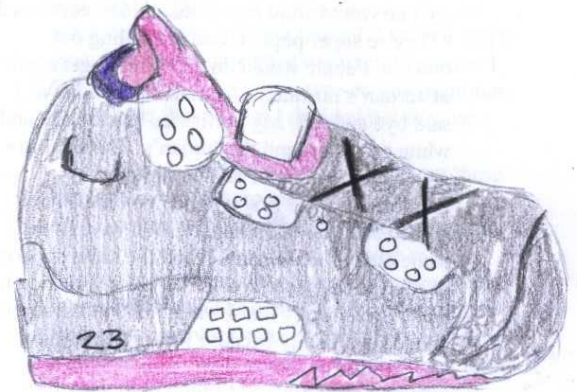
It's finally time for prom. I left getting my hair, nails and eyebrows done for the morning of prom because I wanted it all to look perfect. First was my hair, I woke up early, brushed my teeth, ate breakfast and went to the hair salon a block away from my apartment. It took about 2-3 hours. I got a blow out, cut bangs and got the rest of my hair curled with a curling

iron. Next was my eyebrows and nails. I got these done at the nail salon 2 blocks away from my apartment. It took about 30 minutes and I got royal blue nail polish to match my *dress* with small silver gems placed on my ring fingers to match my jewelry. I put everything together and felt beautiful. When I'd walk outside, there was still some sunlight and all my jewelry shined and it was magical. I was proud because I was able to attend prom with my friends and couldn't stop smiling the entire time on my way to the place prom was held. I met with my friends, took pictures with them and danced with them the whole night. It was a bittersweet feeling when prom ended. It was the last time I felt this happy band free for a while.



First Day of High School

The first day of school always made me nervous but I was extremely anxious about going to high school. I was attending *Bronx Academy of Health Careers*. For the uniform, I could choose between a white, teal or blue polo shirt with black bottoms. There was a small patch on the shirts that said 'Health Careers' in dark blue or white (depending on the color shirt). I chose to wear the white polo shirt and some black jeans. I knew I had to wear uniform so while going back to school shopping, I kept in mind how I could make the outfit look more appealing. I walked into Jimmy Jazz with my parents. I chose a pair of Jordan number 5 sneakers that had just been released. They are a grey/silver color with pink/purple detailing and silver laces. They stood out to me because of the color choices. I'm used to wearing simple plain black or white shoes but seeing ones with pink, purple and grey caught my attention. They reminded me of girly aliens with the colors, so I decided to get these. They were my first pair of Jordan's. They were expensive sneakers and my parents wouldn't get me a pair until my foot stopped growing and it finally did in 8th grade and because of this I was thrilled I had a reason to wear them. I felt like a cool kid and was more relieved about going to school because I could show off my new sneakers. It's finally the first day of school and I wake up excited even though I didn't get much sleep, mostly because I was excited to wear my



sneakers and nervous about going to a new school. I get ready to leave and my mom tells me, "Be careful! make sure no one tries to take your sneakers." I laughed and was confused as to why anyone would want my shoes and she continued, "They're super popular and are selling out quickly. People would do anything to get a pair of Jordan's nowadays." I nodded my head as I said bye and left. My outfit was black jeans and a white polo shirt and the Jordan's. The sneakers gave it a pop of color and were super comfortable. The first two people I met were named Jennifer and Shannon. We were in the same classes and Shannon had the same sneakers as me which made it easier for a conversation to start. I was happy that I was able to make some friends so quickly because I'm extremely shy.

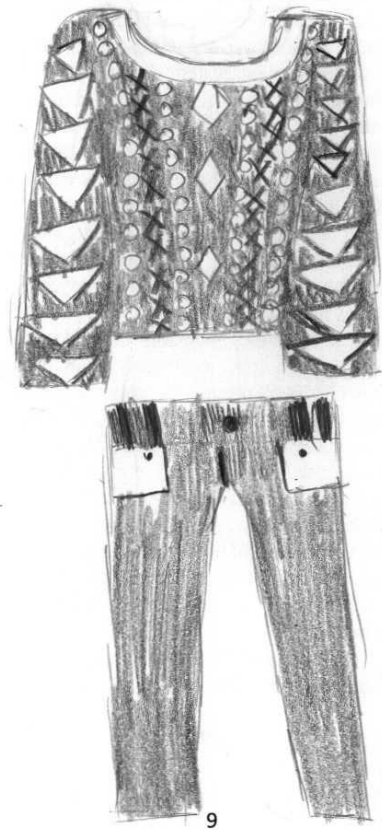
Moms Funeral

My Mom was very ill most of her life. In January 2014, she passed away because of this. I was in 10th grade and I took a week off from school. This was my first funeral. I knew I had to wear black even though it wasn't my favorite. I felt like I was living in a never-ending nightmare. It was cold that day, so I decided not to wear a dress.

I went in my closet and picked out these black pants from Aeropostale. They were one of my favorites at the time because they were soft whenever you touched them. They're made from cotton, modal and polyester. I paired them with a black cable knit sweater from Charlottes Russe and my black toms' shoes. This outfit was comfortable to wear which is why I wore it to this occasion. I couldn't process what happened it didn't feel real. I choose to wear clothing my mom bought me because it kept me at ease throughout the day.

It was time for my family and I to go to the funeral home and pay our respects. As soon as I walked in, I felt like all eyes were in me since I was her daughter. Every time I would see someone as I was walking into the room she was put in; I would just start crying and couldn't stop. Before entering the room, I sat on a bench outside the room and bawled and my stepdad rubbed my back. His friend was there with him and she told me, "I know it feels hard right now but she's not

suffering anymore. She's not in any pain and she's free." That made me feel a bit calmer but when people gave their speeches about how she was a good person, friend and mother, it made me cry again. There were times I needed medicine to calm me down that my aunt Marina would give me. Having multiple people tell me, "Things get better. She's watching over you" kept me somewhat composed throughout the day.



Easter at Church

I come from a semi religious Christian family. In 2014, my grandparents, Abraham and Crucita and Aunt Marina started going to church again after stopping for a while. They never brought my brother or I along because they knew we were never interested. Easter was around the corner and my grandparents begged us to go to church with them on Sunday. They told us that people from church wanted to meet us etc. My brother and I didn't have any plans with our dad at the time, so we decided to go.

Sunday comes and I start stressing because I didn't have any 'church clothes. My grandma told me, "You can wear anything besides jeans." Which wasn't helpful because that was obvious. I wore an A-line sleeveless peach colored dress with small holes that formed many circles all around the dress. It was a hand me down from my aunt. She gave it to me because she never wore it and didn't like the way it looked on her. I was scared my family wouldn't like the color because it wasn't neutral, but I went with it anyway and they loved it. I wore the dress with gold flats and a white cardigan. I was excited to go to church because the peach color suited my skin tone and I felt comfortable in a dress.

When I arrived at the church, I received multiple stares which became uncomfortable. I

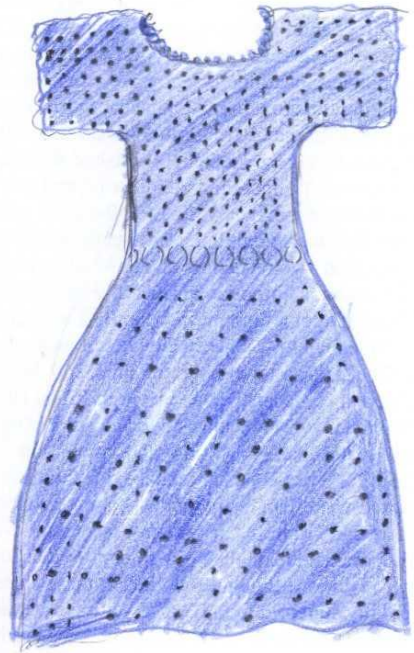


find out these people staring are my grandparents' friends from years ago. They haven't seen me in a while, so they were shocked and told me how beautiful I look and how much I grew up. I enjoyed my time at the church and met many of my grandparents' friends.

Cousins Graduation

My cousin was graduating from Syracuse College in May 2014. We took a 5-6-hour road trip to get to the hotel. This was my very first road trip with my family, and my aunt rented a huge black truck. My two aunts came, my grandparents Crucita and Abraham and my brother Michael. For the graduation, I wore a dress that was in my closet for a while, but I could never find an event to wear it to. It was from H&M and is navy blue with white polka dots all around it. It's made from polyester. It was a very flowy A-line dress that's soft to touch. I felt like this was the perfect look for graduation. It was simple and wasn't too 'extra'. It was windy so I wore it with a white cardigan, black sheer tights and white flats with small bows on the front. My aunts and grandparents told me I looked amazing and they loved everything I picked out and said, "You're really good at matching clothing." Then, we went to the auditorium and a couple of minutes later, I had to use the bathroom, as I was walking to it, a lady stopped me and asked, "Where is your dress was from?". I told her H&M and she had a shocked expression on her face. I have a feeling she was shocked because H&M is known for their basic clothing. She said she loved it and that I wore it well. That small comment made me feel so happy because I'm not into dresses at all, only when there's something special happening I'd wear a

dress. I enjoyed the graduation, took many pics with my family and went to eat at Denny's after.



16th Birthday

When I turned 16, I wore a simple white dress from H&M with bright pink flowers with the leaves sticking out all around it. My birthday is in July and I was in summer school since I had failed the regents. It was my first year in summer school and I was nervous about it. I remember bringing the dress in my bag because my aunt was picking me up from school and I didn't want to go with a dress on. School finished at 12pm. As soon as 12 hits, I put the dress on and felt comfortable and happy. I paired the dress with gold flats with small holes around them and gold hoops and a gold chain from H&M as well. It felt like it was my birthday instead of a normal day. My aunt kept telling me how pretty I looked, and it made me blush. She asked where I wanted to eat, but I wasn't hungry at the time, so I didn't give a specific answer. We went to Ridge Hill Mall and we went shopping for hours. We went into stores like H&M, Lord and Taylor and Uniqlo. A while later, I realized one thing, every store I went into, a stranger asked me if I worked there and I didn't. This was my second time shopping at this mall. I was so confused as to why everyone thought I worked at these stores and my aunt told me, "You're getting older and have to start looking for jobs soon. This is a hint on where you could start looking." I feel like this dress is a "good luck charm." Every time I've worn this dress, I felt like it brought out positive vibes and it was always a good day.



12th Grade Picture Day

Picture day was around November. I went to the salon a day before pictures were taken and got a blowout for the first time in a while. It took about 2 hours. Afterwards, I met up with my aunt Marina and went to a nail salon and got a manicure and pedicure. My cap and gown were teal, so I got teal gel nail polish that changed to silver whenever I got cold.

It's the next day and it was the first-time people in my class saw my hair straight since I always wore it curly. I received so many compliments and many of my classmates didn't even recognize me! I wore a cheetah print shirt with mesh patterning on the neck and sleeves from a store named Easy Pickins. It is a scooped neck top. I paired it with polyester leggings that had a small shimmer to them and suede black wedges with a small strap at the top. Cheetah print is one of my favorite prints. It made me feel fierce and is known as a 'sexy' print but since the shirt had a small amount of it, I felt like it was appropriate. The school auditorium was cold, and I didn't bring a sweater, so my friend Jennifer gave me her leather jacket to wear. She also got her picture taken the same day as me. People always thought we looked alike but now that everyone saw my hair straight and hers was straight as well, we kept getting told we looked like sisters. The jacket matched my outfit perfectly. There were gold zippers and detailing and the gold looked well with the cheetah shirt.

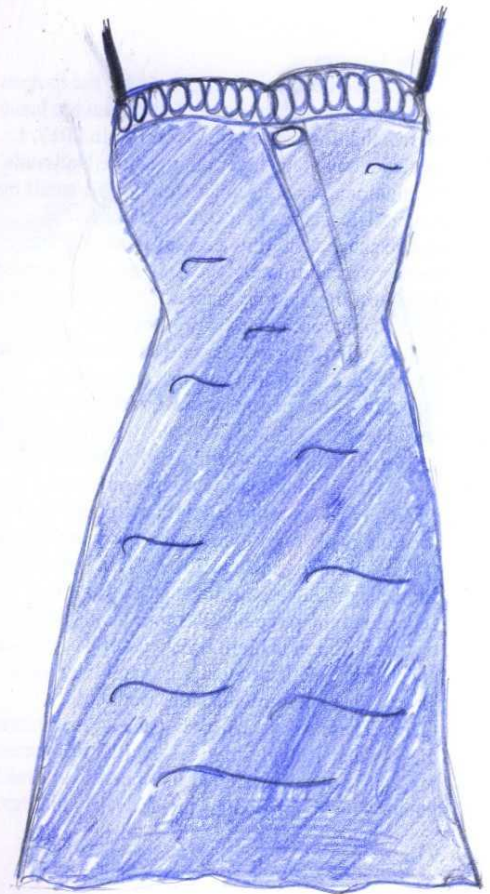


While I was in the coat, Jennifer was taking pictures and people from other classes started saying how nice I looked etc. I was so shocked that a simple leather jacket made many others notice me and I ended up wearing it until school was over. Wearing this jacket made me realize that I needed one for myself because it was a nice way to dress up any outfit.

12th Grade Prom

I went prom dress shopping with my aunt. She took me to the city, and we went into Macy's on 34th Street. We were so lost, but we finally find the huge section full of prom dresses. I found multiple dresses that I wanted to try on I even had my aunt carry some to the dressing room as well. This one dress I tried on was a beautiful bright blue color hat was long and flowy. It fit well but I couldn't zip the back up so I called in my aunt and she also couldn't close the zipper. She saw how devastated I was when I couldn't get the back closed because she knew I was obsessed with how the dress looked. She asked a worker if they had any in a bigger size in the back and they didn't. She took a picture of the tag on the dress and said she'd check if they had some online. She then proceeded to give me another dress and it was this white ankle length one. I personally didn't care that much for this dress mostly because of the color and design on the bottom portion of the dress. It reminded me of a dress an old person would wear to Church but, my aunt kept telling me it was perfect because it didn't touch the floor and it was a flowy dress which she knew I was looking for and it wasn't expensive. I gave up and told my aunt to buy it but shortly after regretted it because it didn't give me "prom vibes." A couple of days go by and I'm in Sears with my grandmother and I saw this long royal blue dress that caught my eye. I

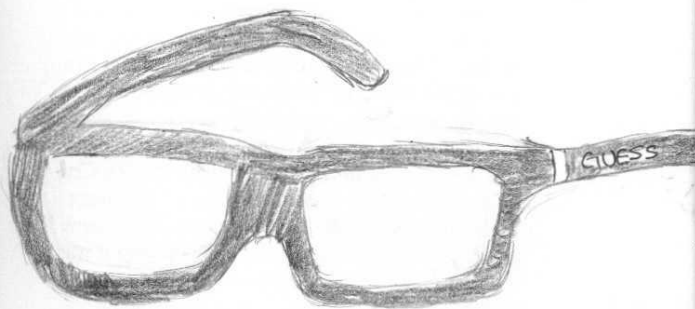
sneakily went to try it on even though I had a dress. It fit well but it was fitted to my body type and that was something I was avoiding however, it suited me and I actually didn't mind that it showed my curves because I felt good in it. I begged my grandmother to buy it for me even though I had a dress. She was upset I made my aunt buy me the dress, but my aunt ended up liking the blue one more. The dress is the same color as my 8th grade prom dress and I loved my 8th grade prom dress and I got blue because my mom always told me she loved the way I looked in royal blue. I took pictures with my friends, ate and danced with them all night long. It was so much fun and wearing something that I knew I looked good in made me feel confident.



Getting New Glasses

I've been wearing glasses for the longest time, ever since third grade. I always wore basic frames that insurance paid for fully. In 2017, I needed a new pair. I went to the store Nationals Liquidators. It's a discount store with a small eye center. The frames I picked were black and square shaped. As time passed, I realized the frames were extremely cheap. They peeled about 3 months after getting them and would get loose easily. My prescription stayed the same, but I started to hate my glasses to the point that it made me insecure. I felt like I would get judged especially from people who were close to my face daily.

2 years passed, and I still wanted new glasses, but I didn't know my prescription. I made an eye appointment with my doctor and was told my prescription stayed the same. I went glasses shopping in June 2019. I went into a store and I picked out a pair that costs \$400. I was shocked at the price but was told it was because my prescription is high. I picked out basic black guess frame with circular edges and they have *guess* super small on the sides (legs) of them. These were my first pair of name brand glasses and it made me feel excited and boosted my confidence. I was glad I stopped overthinking about what people would say about my glasses.



Ariana Grande Concert

I was going to the Sweetener Tour in June 2019 at Madison Square Garden. I've been to two other concerts before this one but I knew this was going to be my favorite. I have listened to Ariana's music since her first album came out in 2012. I found her music really healing and I've always looked up to her not only music wise but fashion wise. I loved her simple yet elegant style. It was about 60 degrees when the concert ended so I wore a crew neck with No Tears Left To Cry on the front which is the title of one of her songs. I remember when I bought this sweatshirt it came out the same day the song was released and it was my first Ariana Grande merchandise that I bought with my own money. I usually ask my dad or grandmother to get me something. I felt so proud I could afford it and support her. It was a light grey sweatshirt and I paired it with my favorite pair of denim jeans and my all black Adidas tubular sneakers because those are the comfiest sneakers I own. I remember seeing her come up to the stage and tears almost came down my eyes it was the happiest I have felt in a while. Every time I wear this crew neck I remember this day like it happened yesterday.



Betty Boop Shirt

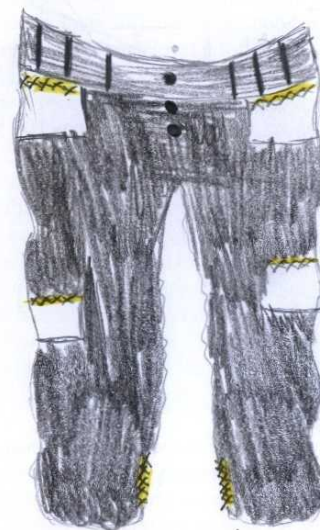
I was on the Urban Outfitters site and saw this tee shirt that was originally \$34 but went on sale for \$16. It's a pink tie dye shirt with an image of Betty Boop on the middle. It's made from cotton. The shirt has a vintage feel to it since the picture has a small amount of saturation added and it was peeling and faded. I always loved big oversized tees since I felt the most comfortable in them. Pink is my favorite color and Betty Boop was my mom's favorite character, so I decided to get this shirt because it reminded me of my mom.

A week passes and it finally arrives to my house. I'm extremely excited it looks just like the pictures online it. I wore this shirt and met Youtubers that I always watched. I feel like this has slowly become one of my favorites. Every time I see it, I get a smile on my face because it reminds me of happy things and is also comfortable to wear.



First Tattoo

My Dad decided my gift for my 21st birthday would be a tattoo of my mom's birthday. Ever since she passed, I knew that her birthday was going to be my very first tattoo. I begged him to let me get it for the longest and my grandmother hates tattoos but when I told her my idea, she didn't mind. My birthday is on July 25th and I got it on the 28th. I was getting it on the inside of my ankle so I wore a pair of black cargo pants from fashion nova. They're made out of 65% cotton 33% rayon and 2% spandex. There are zippers on the inside of the ankle and there's three big pockets in the sides. I decided to wear all black because I was in a lazy mood and the only place I was going was the tattoo shop so I didn't want to wear anything 'stylish'. I shaved my legs right before I left the house because I wanted them to be nice and smooth before getting a tattoo. It honestly didn't hurt as much as I thought. My dad and brother were expecting me to cry and embarrass myself but I was normal and it only lasted 10-20 minutes. As I was leaving, I couldn't stop smiling and saying to my dad and brother 'oh my god I really have a tattoo!' It was something I've always dreamed of getting and I was the happiest to finally have one.



Shadow Hill Hoodie

Shadow Hill is a company that's extremely overpriced. They sell basic garments like hoodies, sweatpants and many more. I find their hoodies so beautiful, but I never saw myself paying 70-\$100 for a simple hoodie. One day, I was scrolling through the website and saw a black hoodie with green lightning symbols drawn on each sleeve with the Shadow Hill logo on the front of the hoodie also in green. It costs \$80 and at first, I was skeptical if I should buy it. While staring at the page for a while, a wheel comes up stating to put in my email and I'd get a 'prize' which could be \$5 off, a free gift, free shipping, and many other options. I do it anyway and I got the \$5 off prize and if I didn't use it in 15 minutes, it would expire. I ended up buying it for \$75 and I felt a bit of regret but was still excited since this would be my first hoodie from a popular brand.

It came in the mail and it was exactly like the picture. The only problem was the hoodie is extremely lightweight. I was expecting it to be thick because of the price but overall, it easily became my favorite hoodie to wear especially when it wasn't that cold outside. It made me feel special and comfortable since it fit big. Whenever I went out with friends, it would be the first thing they'd notice, and I felt like people paid attention to me. I also see many celebrities in this hoodie, and I decided to treat myself and didn't regret it at all.



Camo Pants

One of my favorite prints on clothing is camouflage. I always loved how it included different shades of a specific color and it reminded me of my grandfather and stepfather going to the army. Every time I'd look online/in store for some, I never found any that would fit my body since they don't stretch a lot and run small. I was on the Hollister website because I got an email saying there was a sale going on. Scrolling for some time, I came across these camouflage 'joggers' that originally cost \$45 and went down to \$17. I immediately checked if they had my size and they did so I instantly bought them.

When they come, I was expecting some type of sweatpants material since it says they are joggers, but it was very lightweight and a thin cotton material, but they still looked like pants I've been wanting for the longest. They are made of 55% cotton, 45% viscose. They are ultra-high rise and have a stretch drawstring waistband, two side pockets and banded cuffs at the bottom. I try them on, and I'm surprised they fit me well since they barely stretched. I was so happy I could find some camo pants that fit well since it's been one of my favorite prints ever since I was little. I would wear them whenever I didn't feel the need to dress 'nicely' but wanted to still look and feel pretty.



Teddy Coat

Having a teddy coat was always a must for me. They looked extremely comfortable and were a trendy garment for a while now. I told my friend Rochelle that I wanted one, but they were all expensive. She told me to check the website *prettylittlething* because they're always having a sale. She was right, they had a teddy coat that originally cost \$80 but everything was half off so I got it for \$40 plus shipping.

It finally comes in the mail and I squealed when I saw it on my bed. It's a big black teddy coat made of a borg material with two small pockets at the side and a zipper going down the middle. It's HUGE and so soft it felt like I was holding a bear when I picked it up. I put it on and felt extremely warm. The reason I wanted a teddy coat so badly is because I know it's easy to dress it up or down and could be worn with anything! My cheeks become super red and I couldn't stop smiling. It was exactly what I imagined it to be. It was the perfect jacket to wear when it was somewhat cold outside because it wasn't too lightweight nor too heavy and thick.



About the Author

Siara Brown is a student at New York City College of Technology and is currently in her junior year, studying Business and Technology of Fashion. She grew up in New York and was always interested in fashion.

