

GET THE ACCEPTANCE LETTER

By: Professor Treasure Shields Redmond



Write an Extraordinary College Entrance Essay (Quickly and Easily) That will Make Your Dream School Say "Yes!"

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About the Author

Hi, my name is Treasure Shields Redmond and I am known as the “#Debt-FreeDegree Expert.” I founded Get The Acceptance Letter Academy™, where I help busy parents of college bound kids secure top-tier education—without massive debt!

After nearly 20 years as a writing teacher, first in high school and then in college, I began helping students privately when I saw that there were many more students who reminded me of myself. They were “college material,” but they needed an advocate. So, I became what I’d needed.



I bring the full weight of my 20 years of teaching, my doctoral studies, my professional writing career, and my inside knowledge of colleges and universities to bear on the work of saving my clients time and money. That translates into millions of dollars, and thousands of acceptance letters and scholarship award notifications.

You can go to www.GetTheAcceptanceLetter.online to learn my proven steps to a #DebtFreeDegree.

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The College Entrance Essay: What is it and why focus on it?

Next year it will be 20 years since I first stepped into a high school classroom to teach English. It was in a ninth grade classroom in Memphis, Tennessee that I learned how to reach novice writers and help them create essays that sang from the page. This book takes the best practices I gained over a two decades long career and breaks it down into five easy to digest sections.

Why take the time to learn how to create a great college entrance essay?

First off, many colleges require an essay to be admitted. In addition, the essay can be a deciding factor for admissions committees. Think about it: every year, colleges receive thousands of applications from “Miss Perfect.” Miss Straight A’s since kindergarten. Miss captain of the cheerleading squad. Miss perfect SAT score. Miss valedictorian. After a while, they begin to blend together. The essay is a key way to make your application package stand out, and even sway an admissions decision in your favor if other items in your package are weak, such as test scores and GPA.

Another huge reason to focus on the college entrance essay, is that it does double duty as a scholarship application essay as well. All of the high dollar scholarships, the one worth thousands of dollars that could mean a free ride to college, require a strong essay of some kind.

Imagine your college bound kid having more than one fantastic essay already completed in January of their junior year of high school. That would mean that over 90% of scholarship opportunities would be just a matter of attaching a document, or revising areas of their essay to make it better respond to the writing prompt. There’s really NO reason to not focus on this key component of college admission AND eliminating student debt.

1

Picking the perfect Writing Prompt and crafting your “Claim.”

- 3 W's: Where are the Writing Prompts, Which one should you pick, and Why
- How to discover the prompt's “Assignment”
- How to craft the Claim that will guide your essay straight to “Acceptanceville”

The first item on your list of what to do when preparing to write a strong college entrance essay, is figuring out what to write about. You need to find writing prompts to which you can respond. A writing prompt is a short 2 to 3 sentence set of writing directions that colleges (which require a college entrance essay) provide to applicants. It is also the same for scholarship committees. “Discuss an obstacle you’ve overcome, and what you learned from it,” is an example of a very common writing prompt. In the case of writing an essay for college, however, one does not just make up their own prompt.

In order to be certain you are writing an essay that can be used for college and for lots of scholarship opportunities, I recommend choosing prompts from the list of six located on the Common Application. Found at www.commonapp.org, the common application is a nonprofit organization designed to make college entrance more accessible. It is where you can apply to almost 700 colleges in one place. Each of the colleges have agreed, that if they require an essay, they will take responses to one of the six prompts listed on the common application. Here is the list of the prompts:

The 2017-2018 Common Application Writing Prompts

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

How to discover the prompt's "Assignment"

In order to decide which prompt you should respond to, I suggest the following exercise: take each of the prompts and insert personal pronouns in order to make them "I statements." Here's an example:

Here is the original prompt:

The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Here is how it sounds turned into an "I statement:"

The lessons I took from obstacles I encountered were fundamental to my later success. _____ was a time when I faced a challenge, setback, or failure. It affected me and I learned _____ from the experience.

At this point, the only items missing are what the obstacle was, and what you learned.

Take some time to do this with each of the prompt choices. See which ones feels the most “true” to you, and that is the one you should move forward with.

How to craft the Claim that will guide your essay straight to “Acceptanceville”

Now, you need to move from the initial “I statement” to the “claim.” You may have heard it called the thesis. It is the sentence or group of sentences that tell the reader what the essay will be about.

Let’s imagine an example student -- Sydney -- and we’re going to say the the first prompt was the one that felt the most “true” to them.

FIRST, Sydney changed the prompt from a question to a statement and inserted personal pronouns so that the statement sounds as if they are saying it right now:

Here is the original:

Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

Here is how Sydney made it sound more personalized:

I have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful I believe my application would be incomplete without it. Here is my story:

This is a good start but now Sydney has to decide which of the items (background, interest, identity, or talent) if omitted would make their application incomplete.

Here’s how Sydney’s prompt can become the Claim for the resulting essay.

Sydney’s interest that is meaningful is writing. Sydney carries a journal everywhere and has won several writing contests. With that in mind, Sydney further refines the prompt to reflect that interest.

Here is how it sounds further refined:

“My application would be incomplete without mentioning my writing. Here is my story:”

Okay! Sydney now has a solid direction for responding to the prompt. Sydney knows the essay will focus on their interest and talent for writing.

The only problem is the final sentence: “Here is my story:” First off, a colon is not an end mark. The final punctuation of a sentence can either be a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

Let's see if either of those fix this:

- “My application would be incomplete without mentioning my writing. Here is my story?”
Okay, that's just weird. Is Sydney asking the page a question?

- “My application would be incomplete without mentioning my writing. Here is my story!”
Whoa. Aggressive much? Who is Sydney shouting at?

- “My application would be incomplete without mentioning my writing. Here is my story.”

Nope. There's a cliff after that sentence. Sydney sees that “Here is my story.” does not make sense, but that the claim just needs a bit more of a hint of what the essay will discuss in detail.

Earlier we learned that “Sydney carries a journal everywhere and has won several writing contests.” So Sydney develops -- lengthens and strengthens -- the claim, resulting in this final version:

My application would be incomplete without mentioning my writing. Through every major event in my life, writing has been there. When I share my writing, I'm sharing my heart.

That's good stuff, Sydney. Now Let's move on.

2

Inserting the stories that tug at the heartstrings and prove your claim

- How to map the Event that proves your Claim
- How to include the most compelling details of the Event
- How to use “Vivid, Eye Catching” language when retelling the Event

Now that you have your claim, you need to prove it. The body of a great college entrance essay is made up of one or more “little stories” that prove your claim.

Ultimately, the claim needs to prove that you would be a good fit for the college or university to which you are applying.

Often times, students have trouble figuring out how much of the story to tell. And some people include more than one story.

In the first chapter, Sydney chose to respond to prompt number one on the list of common application prompts.

Let’s imagine that Sydney is now writing a second essay that responds to prompt number two, which reads:

The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Sydney has created a claim and has decided to use the story of the time their debate team discovered they had been practicing for the wrong set of questions the whole time, causing them to stay up all night before the competition reworking arguments. In the end they did not win the debate, but they made a respectable showing, and Sydney learned some things.

So the first question is, what does Sydney claim to have learned from this experience?

Answer: I learned that when you pull together with a team on a clear goal you can achieve almost anything.

Now Sydney can sketch out the events that led to the learning of the lesson, and prove the claim.

I suggest three events representing a beginning, a middle, and an end of the story. Here’s what this Sydney’s debate story sketch might look like.

- **Beginning:** Our team received the document with the issues to study for the upcoming debate. We spent a lot of time preparing intricate plans to do the best we could, and we were hoping to win.
- **Middle:** About 48 hours before the debate we received an email from the organization referencing the issues and they were totally different than the ones we’d been practicing. We realized we had read the instructions wrong.
- **End:** We got together and pulled an “all nighter,” reworking our opening statements and arguments, and we completed it just as

The next step would be to add “feeling words” to each of the parts of the story. For instance, how did the Sydney feel after the beginning events? Answer: They probably felt confident, excited, prepared, and hopeful.

Here is how Sydney’s beginning of the story sounds with “feeling words” added:
Our team excitedly received the document with the issues to study for the upcoming debate. We spent a lot of time preparing intricate plans to do the best we could. Our coach was confident with so much lead time, that we had a really good chance of winning. We had a rigorous practice schedule, and in the days before the competition, we felt very prepared.

Take some time to add “feeling words” to a section of your story.

Then you should brainstorm some sensory words, and figurative language like a similes and metaphors. Sensory words are words that speak to the five senses: hearing, taste, touch, sight, and smell. Similes and metaphors are comparisons of two unlike things. For instance, maybe upon the receiving the email with the issues to study for the upcoming debate, “they felt like a lottery winners.” Maybe the debate document fresh from the printer “felt warm and inviting on their hands.” You should do this for each of the three parts of your story.

Here is how Sydney’s beginning of the story sounds with sensory words, and figurative language added:

Then you should brainstorm some sensory words, and figurative language like a similes and metaphors. Sensory words are words that speak to the five senses: hearing, taste, touch, sight, and smell. Similes and metaphors are comparisons of two unlike things. For instance, maybe upon the receiving the email with the issues to study for the upcoming debate, “they felt like a lottery winners.” Maybe the debate document fresh from the printer “felt warm and inviting on their hands.” You should do this for each of the three parts of your story.

Our team excitedly received the document with the issues to study for the upcoming debate. We felt like a lottery winners when one of the issues was very similar to one we’d already written arguments for in the city competition. We couldn’t believe our luck! I still remember the feel of the debate documents fresh from the printer. They felt warm like fresh baked cookies and we tore into them dissecting the best ways to respond and anticipating counterarguments. We spent a lot of time preparing intricate plans to do the best we could. Our coach was confident with so much lead time, that we had a really good chance of winning. She was our head lioness, we were her pride, and we sharpened our claws, sparring with each other for five weeks before the national competition. We had a rigorous practice schedule, and in the days before we left for Baltimore, we felt very prepared.

Take some time to flesh out the body of your essay. Add “feeling words,” “sensory words,” and “figurative language.”

3

Writing a conclusion that “seals the deal.”

- How to avoid the trap of simply restating my claim
- How to connect your goals and gifts to the school’s academic programs
- How to push a future vision forward that makes schools want to join you

A conclusion is the final impression you leave the reader. And keep in mind, your reader here is usually an admissions officer or scholarship committee member who has been confronted with lots of writing.

They have probably seen the phrase “In conclusion” many, many times.

Think of your conclusion as the perfume that remains in the room once you’re gone. You want it to be pleasing and distinctive, but not too strong, and definitely not offensive.

So how do you do that?

Well, I’ve already imbedded one hint in my comments so far.

Avoid overused transitions: “Last,” “Finally,” and “In conclusion” should be banned from the room!

The next trap that college bound writers fall into is simply restating their claim.

In Chapter one, we talked about how to create the claim. The claim is a sentence or group of sentences that tells the reader what the essay will be about.

In Chapter two, we looked closely at how to create the body of an essay that responds to this claim:

The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

4

Why writing the introduction last is a “secret weapon.”

- How to use a quote to create an “Attention Grabbing Opening”
- Where to find a quote to create an “Attention Grabbing Opening”
- How to add the quote, the claim, and development to create a “Gripping Introductory Paragraph.”

In chapter three, I likened the conclusion to a sweet smell that lingers as your exit the room. Well the introduction paragraph is the tasty appetizer that makes readers eager for the main course.

The title and the introduction paragraph are both items that should be written last. This may seem counterintuitive, as most of us have been taught to work chronologically (from beginning to end) when it comes to writing.

But, here’s why you should work on your beginning last:

Imagine you are planning a meal. The body of the essay is like the main dish. The main dish is the one that has the most ingredients and will be making the biggest impression on your guests. The main dish is also where most of the nutrients are found. Finally, the main dish is what guests are usually anticipating the most. For that reason, it takes the longest to prepare and requires most of your attention. The opening paragraph of your essay is the appetizer. The same way you wouldn’t focus the majority of your meal planning time around the appetizers, you don’t need to spend the majority of your time on the introduction paragraph.

Don’t misunderstand me, though, the introduction is very important. Over my 20 year career as a writing teacher, I’ve learned that an essay’s chances at a good grade can be ruined by a sub par introduction. Major error in the first sentence? Hackneyed opening? “Giving it all away” up front, leaving nothing new to be said during the rest of the essay? Each of these can leave a bad taste in the reader’s mouth from which it will be hard to recover.

The beauty of working on the beginning last, however, is once you have created an incredible body and conclusion you can reverse engineer an introduction that really sets up what’s happening in the body and the conclusion.

It’s kind of like knowing how the movie ends first then you going back and creating a beginning that doesn’t totally give it away, but bookends it in a really clever way.

One of my favorite ways to grip the reader’s imagination from the very start is by using a quote to begin the essay.

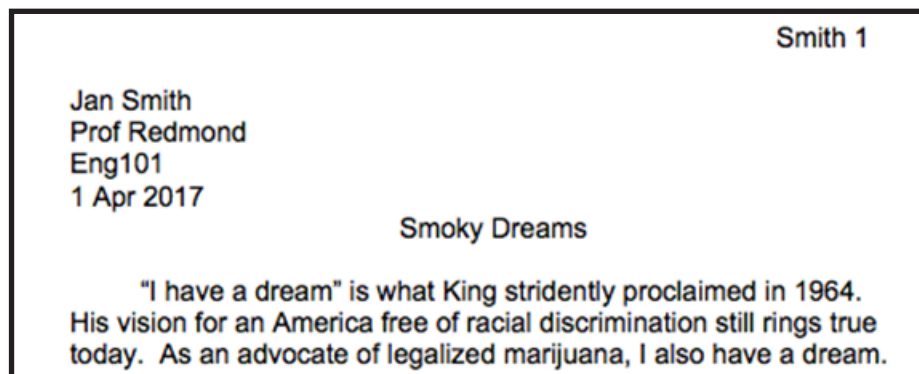
Starting with a quote that grips the imagination, is a tried-and-true tip for creating an attention grabbing opening.

There are some pitfalls to watch out for though.

One mistake that novice writers make is to pick quotes that are overused. Another mistake is to do a poor job of tying the quote in to the topic of the essay.

Here's what I mean: "I have a dream" is a very famous quote from Martin Luther King Jr's speech that was given during the 1964 march on Washington. Because most students "have a dream," this quote readily comes to mind. To add, it is often a poor choice because the cultural weight attached to it makes it difficult for a 17 year old writer to have an experience that can be adequately tied to the quote.

Here is an example of something I've seen below:



I don't know about you, but King's dream seems to be a bit more far-reaching than the legalization of cannabis. The weight of the quote and the man associated with it greatly overshadows the topic to which it is being tied.

That was an example of opening with a quote being poorly done. Now here is an example of it done better:

"Failure is a bruise not a tattoo." This quote resonates with me because failure will happen, but from experience, I know I will get through it. Through life I've struggled through many challenges, but defying expectations is something I'm used to doing. When I first arrived at Brentwood high school, I was not enrolled in Accelerated Physics. I believed that I was being underestimated, so I took the initiative to change my schedule. I finished with an A in Accelerated Physics, and a B average in Accelerated Math. Despite my success in these courses, however, I still had a lot to learn. It is the lessons I learned from failing to advance to the district finals during my freshman year that have proven to be toughest and most important so far.

Notice that the Quote is tied to the topic of the essay. Readers can see that this essay will focus on a failure that made a painful impression, but that taught a valuable lesson. It will be a failure that hurt, but ultimately helped.

My favorite place to search for quotes is on the Goodreads site located at <https://www.goodreads.com/>. It is valuable because you can search for a quote tied to the claim and/or lesson in your essay.

For instance, I searched "quotes about writing," and this Maya Angelou quote came up: "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

In chapter 1, our pretend student Sydney wrote this claim:

My application would be incomplete without mentioning my writing. Through every major event in my life, writing has been there. When I share my writing, I'm sharing my heart.

5

Polishing the essay to (near) perfection

- How reading the essay backwards works like magic
- How using metaphors are an excellent way to grab attention
- How to polish your claim, body paragraphs, and conclusion

In chapter four, I advocated for working on your introduction last. (Shocker!), and I likened the introduction paragraph to a “tasty appetizer that makes readers eager for the main course.”

To continue the metaphor, have you ever seen a video of a chef emerging from a kitchen to a round of applause from his satisfied patrons? Well, this is the reaction you want from college admissions and scholarship committee readers. Editing and proofreading are the final steps to making your essay so engaging that readers want to meet the writer. And that’s what college bound writers want!

So, here are some key strategies college bound writers can use once a great draft is written:

Read Your Essay Backwards

This tricks your brain into seeing errors you wouldn’t normally have seen. Of course, I don’t mean to literally sound like a piece of audio run backwards. What I mean is read the last word first, then the next to the last word second, and so on, and so on. I don’t know about you, but there are times when I read back my writing and I realize I’ve left out articles like “a,” and “and,” and “the.” This technique catches those kinds of omissions.

Improve Your Attention Grabber

Here is a key area where you can really create an opening that builds and emotional bond with the reader. In a previous post I talked about using a quote to open your essay. Here I will show you how to use a metaphor. Below is a screenshot of the beginning of an essay that won its writer a large scholarship:

I like to think of myself as a piece of steel: a perfectly crafted metal with the ability to overcome any obstacle and slash through any adversity. I didn’t always use to be this way. I didn’t have any of my finely sharpened edges. I wasn’t always unbreakable. I guess one could say this is the story of a boy who was cast into the hottest hell that life had to give, was broken down, and was forged into the man he is now.

The writer is comparing himself to steel. We know steel is created from forging metals together in extreme heat. He is also hinting at the adversity he’s overcome and how, though it was “ the hottest hell life had to give,” like steel, he came out as something new and stronger.

This is such an effective technique and such a gripping opening. You could imitate this strategy except with a different metaphor.

Improve The Wording of Your Claim

The claim is a sentence or group of sentences that tell the reader what the essay will be about. The claim should use the language that is in the prompt. This may seem simplistic, but much the same way that your resume should use the language of the job posting, this is one area of the writing process where you shouldn't get overly creative. Here are a couple of examples of claims created from the 2016-17 common application writing prompts:

Prompt #1: Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

Claim: Although I have participated in several extracurriculars that would look great on my application, no introduction of myself would be complete without mentioning the role Muslim school has in my life.

Prompt #2: The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later successes. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Claim: Making a terrible mistake that could've cost me everything I'd prepared for taught me that by asking for help, and working together you can overcome almost anything.

Prompt #3: Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

Claim: When I was able to convince the other debutantes to walk out with me, we started a movement and eliminated the cotillion's sexist policy that disqualified teen moms, but ignored teen fathers.

Make Sure the Words You've Chosen Mean What You Think They Mean

In some of my videos located on my Get The Acceptance Letter YouTube Channel, I've talked about overuse of the thesaurus because students are worried that they are using language that is too simplistic. This can go very badly. You can wind up using words that are obviously inserted and don't fit the real sense of the meaning you're trying to make. For example, here is a sentence that might be in a college entrance essay:

My heart dropped when I heard the spelling bee judge say that I had spelled the word incorrectly.

Here's an example of an "overuse of the thesaurus" error:

My heart plummeted when I perceived the spelling bee judge say that I had made a fatal error.

"Plummeted" feels overdone. "Perceived" and "heard" have different connotations and aren't perfect substitutes for one another. "Fatal error" might work without the other choices, but the combination sounds like a person who does not have a sensitivity to the audience. And really, those fundamentals we were taught in middle school – audience, purpose, and tone – still reigns supreme in the instance of the college entrance essay. Remember they want to know you, not your verbose and snooty representative.

Develop (Lengthen and Strengthen) Your Body Paragraphs.

The best way to do this is to add examples that illustrate your topic.

I call this unpacking. For instance, let's say a student had a sentence like, "Losing my friend to suicide drove me into a deep depression."

This writer may think, "what more can I say?"

But, through the process of unpacking, this can be developed (which means lengthened and strengthened), to a greater extent.

The writer could:

- Describe the day/moment she found out about her friend's death.
- Use a metaphor to describe the feelings she was flooded with at the moment of realization.
- Describe what it feels like to descend into deep grief and depression.
- Paint a vivid picture of what her depression looks like. Did she stay in bed for days, weeks? Did her dog scratch at the door with his collar in his mouth in an attempt to draw her out of her room?
- Did counselors and teachers at school pull her in to offer support?

By providing the answers to these unpacking questions, what seems like a sentence that can't be expanded further becomes one in which the expansion possibilities are limitless.

Fatten Up Your Conclusion

I'm a big advocate of tying in your claim to your college goals, which I talked about in chapter three.

Another way to develop your conclusion is to project into the future and paint a brief picture of your future self. This is the self that has matriculated through the fine institution to which you're presenting your college entrance essay, and is now making use of all the skills and preparation you've received from their college or university.

Here’s an example:

I know that the preparation I have received in high school is just the tip of the iceberg. The important lesson I learned here about being your authentic self, will only be expounded on once I’ve received the extraordinary training that your institution is so well-known for. I see myself collaborating with women all over the globe to improve the lives of women and girls. Right now, I’m just a young woman with a big vision, but I am certain that with your help, I will be an alumni equipped with all the tools to create change in the world.

Practice this. Imagine what your life will be like once you’ve gotten your degree. Then work on how you might tie that vision to one of the prompt choices on the common application.

Practice this. Imagine what your life will be like once you’ve gotten your degree. Then add it to your conclusion, along with development -- lengthening and strengthening -- to further improve your concluding paragraph.

These are just some of the ways you can polish your essay to (near) perfection and Get The Acceptance Letter.

Appendix A

SAMPLE ESSAY #1

Prompt: The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

“Mama, porque no puedo ser como las niñas gringas en la escuela?” Growing up, my mother was a pale woman who looked as if she was white. However, she only spoke Spanish, making it the only language I spoke up until first grade. My father was a dark man who people thought stayed out in the sun for too long. Because my dad was never in my life, I would look in the mirror and wonder why I wasn’t as white as my mother was. I envied her skin tone. My skin tone is what people call “cafe con leche.” I would also question why I looked the way I did. I would invariably say, “Mama, porque no puedo ser como las niñas gringas en la escuela?” (Why can’t I be like the white girls at school?). I hated my ethnicity. I was a 7-year-old Dominican girl who had dreams of being white. It was only through the process of overcoming the hatred I had towards my culture and identity, that I learned to love myself, my home country, and that being a minority does not make you worthless to society.

First grade came, and I remember at least 70% of my elementary school being white. I would walk into a classroom, and all eyes would be on me. It was like a light shined on a tan girl, and everyone was ready for the show. Because I never spoke English, anytime I would try, I would stutter. I recall Ms. Winnie calling me up to the board and asking me to read a sentence in English: “I love school.” When I got to the word “love,” my mind went blank, and I froze. From that day forward, I felt that being Dominican was the worst thing in the world. Not only were my looks not good enough to fit into what society wanted, neither was my language.

Middle school eventually arrived, and I finally started to realize and accept who I was. The people of color in my school made me comfortable listening and dancing to my culture’s music, eating my culture’s food, and speaking my culture’s language. I accepted my nationality. I began to accept who I am. I am Dominican. I remember the first time I came to school in my natural hair. A young

Appendix A

SAMPLE ESSAY #1 (cont'd)

lady, with the palest skin, straightest hair, bluest eyes thrillingly questioned how I got my hair to be so big and curly. And of course I was confused because I thought “Get under the shower, get out and dry my hair”. But then I realized, she did not experience that. Her hair was just straight. From that moment on, I recognized that curly, big hair may be something that is cherished by a lot of people, yet the only person who has taken years to accept it is the one with the curly, big hair. I found myself loving my culture more. I realized that everything I aspired to be, didn’t matter because I knew who I was. I was the girl with the dark, big curly hair, caramel skin, brown eyes and the cheesiest smile. After I had recognized my identity, I began to realize that “white” girls wished they had the hair I had, the ability to tan without burning, being bilingual and dancing to Spanish music. Salsa, Bachata, Merengue. That’s when I saw that the 7-year-old me was blinded by the world telling her that being a minority makes her worthless to society.

As I prepare to become an engineer, I see that there are many scholarship opportunities for women of color in STEM. Because there are so few of us in the field, companies and colleges have provided funding earmarked for us. This is encouraging, but I think real work has to be done much earlier so other 7 year old brown girls are not lost in low self esteem and so that 7 year old white girls are taught that their brown classmates have value. That way, In the future instead of asking “Mama, porque no puedo ser como las niñas gringas en la escuela?” I want other Dominican girls to see brown engineers, and ask how can they be can be like us.

Appendix B

SAMPLE ESSAY #2

Scholarship prompt: *Tell us about a significant challenge you've overcome and how you would use this award, should you receive it.*

As a teen mother I had to face a lot of obstacles, like finding childcare, and a lack of familial support, all while trying to complete high school. It was so overwhelming at times. I had to think about that little one who was depending on me and decide how I was going to get through this. I decided I had to not give up on myself and complete school.

Our neighborhood was like a big family. Everyone knew everyone. People began to move in and out of the neighborhood and faces began to change. There was this young man who would come around from time to time to visit a family down the street from us. He happened to be a close friend of my God brother's family. We would speak and one day he stopped and we talked. We began talking more and more. Next thing we were dating. He was charming in the beginning. I became pregnant and the whole world changed for me.

I was 15, pregnant and in high school. I was given an opportunity to transfer to a Family Living Center in the area which was basically a school for teen mothers-to-be. I excelled at the new school and also learned what we were about to experience as young mothers. We learned about eating properly for the mom and developing baby and about the delivery. After my daughter was born I was able to complete the school year at the Family Living Center with a class rank of a senior but would soon have to transfer back to my "home" school, which I did. At the Family Living Center I was an honor student but returning to my "home" school wasn't something I wanted to do. I was never challenged there. And my relationship with my daughter's father was not supportive. He became possessive and his insecurities started to show. He would have me followed and watched by people he had "befriended" at my school. High school by this time was very difficult for me to focus on. My studies began to suffer. I dropped out of school. He didn't even try to encourage me not to.

I dropped out of school for I guess a number of reasons...overwhelmed with pressures from family issues, a small child when I was pretty much a child myself, a baby's father who was older in age but not equipped for real life experiences that required maturity. And I was bored at school. I stayed out of school for maybe 6 or 7 months. I would think "This isn't me! Education was my

Appendix B

SAMPLE ESSAY #2 (cont'd)

path to better things! A better life. I didn't just want to get by like my mother did. She was barely making it. There was seven of us and yes she would find a way. But barely. I didn't want to just find a way. I didn't want it for myself and I definitely didn't want it for my daughter. So I decided I had to go back to high school.

I registered myself and told my mother I was going back to school. All she could think about was maybe I should try to find a job. I told my father and he was elated! I informed him it wasn't a public school and there would be tuition. He didn't care and helped me with the tuition. I did very well at this new high school and as graduation was approaching I was asked to give the Valedictory Speech!

I learned no matter what happens to you in your life, things that we may consider a set back or a failure can't be allowed to destroy your dreams. Focus and find some direction and just put your dreams into action. If I am awarded the Live Your Dream Award, I will use it to become a very viable commodity in the corporate world. I will have not only life and career experiences, but also my degree. I will be using all that I have learned to better understand and mitigate issues in information and cyber security, to keep people and organizations safe.

Eventually, the award would allow me to open a technology center where kids in disadvantaged areas such as mine can come and learn about all things tech. It will provide kids and adults with tools to build better lives and not guns or drugs that destroy lives. They in turn can spread the wealth of knowledge by teaching their peers or a family member.

Appendix C

SAMPLE ESSAY #3

Prompt: Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more? (word count: 647)

The rights of non-rich people and the damage that the rich do to society are what I find engaging. I find it so captivating because I hear so many stories of the rich getting richer at the expense of the middle and lower class; pitting us against each other so we can't fight back. I usually turn to politicians and researchers when I want to know how this affects me and those in the middle class. I also use books to find out information on lasting issues.

Fast Food Nation is a combination of all that a writer saw while investigating the practices of fast-food corporations. The writer witnesses many morally inferior practices, some being barely legal. Animal cruelty, false advertisement, and bad hygiene practices were just a few of the things he witnessed. The most important was the maltreatment of the employees at the slaughtering and meat-packing locations. Deaths and accidents were commonplace and unavoidable. I was completely ignorant to the wealthy doing any bad until I stumbled upon this book. This book was my first hint that the world was different than my innocent perception of it. Ever since then my moral compass has steered me towards caring about how others are treated. I still wasn't a very politically active person when I read that book, but after I read more I started to become more involved.

Appendix C

SAMPLE ESSAY #3 (cont'd)

The Hunger Games is a trilogy of books that follow the story of a dystopian world. In this world the rich rule over the destitute poor, and force their children to fight for the amusement of the upper-class. This, in my opinion, is an exaggerated version of the history of our society. The rich take advantage of the middle and lower class, and hold a grip on our government. They also use shady means to keep that power, though not as gruesome as the trilogy. Another thing the books mirror from our society is the ways the rich make us turn on each other. In the books the gladiator style battles led to tension among the people whose children killed each other. A well known example of this in reality would be the treatment of Chinese immigrants all throughout the 1800's. Mining companies sought to hire them immediately, and they began laying off almost all of its white workers to hire the Chinese. The fired workers began expressing bitter thoughts at the leaders of the mining companies. With the help of a paid racist politician, the owners directed the blame to the Chinese. The poor white workers took the bait, and began attacking Chinese people and homes. They threw dynamite into Chinese homes, shooting and hanging anyone that tried to run. By the end of the night, no Chinese were left in the mining town. Anyone left alive had fled far away. It was during this night that the mining company higher-ups made their escape.

I learned a lot from the books I read, but I also took time to look at other media. I felt many emotions the more I learned. I was angry that few people were controlling the fates of the many, and sad that so much potential was lost. I also wondered what the government could do to help. Writing is one of my passions, especially non fiction and fantasy. I can see myself writing something political that can be of help to some people. I also have an interest in mythology, and one of

Appendix C

SAMPLE ESSAY #3 (cont'd)

the themes is always learning from history. Perhaps we can look into the past to find a solution for the future. I have many discussions about these issues on social media, particularly on my Tumblr, and I see Social media as a place I can go to share information about these issues I care deeply about. As I mature and learn, I hope to inspire others to care as well.