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All these essays are strictly for reference only. Any form of copying or imitation is considered plagiarism and hence severely punished by admission officers.

Remember that these 50 essays are very popular and have been around for a very long time (probably even before you were born!). Therefore, the admission officers are VERY familiar with them. Again, do NOT copy or imitate anything from these essays if you want to succeed.

哈佛 50 篇 **essay--1**。塑造自我

A Formation of Self

Before even touching the camera, I made a list of some of the photographs I would take: web covered with water, grimace reflected in the calculator screen, hand holding a tiny round mirror where just my eye is visible, cat's striped underbelly as he jumps toward the lens, manhole covers, hand holding a translucent section of orange, pinkies partaking of a pinkie swear, midsection with jeans, hair held out sideways at arm's length, bottom of foot, soap on face. This, I think is akin to a formation of self. Perhaps I have had the revelations even if the photos are never taken. —

I already know the dual strains the biographers will talk about, strains twisting through a life. The combination is embodied here: I write joyfully, in the margin of my lab book, beside a diagram of a beaker, "Isolated it today, Beautiful wispy strands, spider webs suspended below the surface, delicate tendrils, cloudy white, lyrical, elegant DNA! This is DNA! So beautiful!"

I should have been a Renaissance man. It kills me to choose a field (to choose between the sciences and the humanities!). My mind roams, I wide-eyed, into infinite caverns and loops. I should fly! Let me devour the air, dissolve everything into my bloodstream, learn!

The elements are boundless, but, if asked to isolate them, I can see tangles around medicine and writing. The trick will be to integrate them into a whole, and then maybe I can

take the photograph. Aahh, is it already there, no? Can't you see it? I invoke the Daedalus in me, everything that has gone into making me, hoping it will be my liberation.

Music is one such element. The experience of plying in an orchestra from the inside is an investigation into subjectivity. It is reminiscent of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle: the more one knows the speed of a particle, the less one knows its position. Namely the position of the observer matters and affects the substance of the observation; even science is embracing embodiment. I see splashes of bright rain in violin arpeggios fading away in singed circles, a clarinet solo fades blue to black, and a flute harmony leaves us moving sideways, a pregnant silence, the trumpets interrupt with the smell of lightning. Perhaps in the audience you would sense something else.

I think of rowing as meditation. Pshoow, huh, aaah; pshoow, huh, aaah. I can close my eyes and still hear it. We glide over reflected sky... and lean. And defy the request for "leadership positions," laugh at it, because it misses the entire point, that we are integral, one organism. I hear the oars cut the water, shunk shunk; there are no leaders.

Once I heard an echo from all quarters. "Do not rush," said the conductor, "follow the baton." "Do not rush," said the coach, "watch the body in front of you." Do not rush. I write about characters' words: how they use words, how they manipulate them, how they create their own realities; words used dangerously, flippantly, talking at cross purposes, deliberately being vague; the nature of talking, of words and realities. Perhaps mine has been a flight of fancy too. But, come on, it's in the words, a person, a locus, somewhere in the words. It's all words. I love the words. I should be a writer, but I will be a doctor, and out of the philosophical tension I will create a self.

ANALYSIS

This essay is a good example of an essay that shows rather than tells the reader who the author is. Through excited language and illustrative anecdotes, she offers a complex picture of her multifaceted nature.

The writing is as fluid as its subject matter. One paragraph runs into the next with little break for transition or explicit connection. It has the feel of an ecstatic stream-of-consciousness, moving rapidly toward a climactic end.

The author is as immediate as she is mysterious. She creates an intimate relationship with her reader, while continuously keeping him/her "in the dark" as she jumps from one mental twist to another.

She openly exposes her charged thoughts, yet leaves the ties between them uncemented. This creates an unpredictability that is risky but effective.

Still, one ought to be wary in presenting an essay of this sort. The potential for obliqueness is high, and, even here, the reader is at times left in confusion regarding the coherence of the whole. Granted the essay is about confluence of seeming opposites, but poetic license should not obscure important content. This particular essay could have been made stronger with a more explicit recurring theme to help keep the reader focused.

In general, though, this essay stands out as a bold, impassioned presentation of self. It lingers in the memory as an entangled web of an intricate mind.

“Growing Up”

“Growing Up”

I’m short. I’m five foot five – well, five foot six if I want to impress someone. If the average height of American men is five foot ten, that means I’m nearly half a foot shorter than the average Joe out there. And then there are the basketball players. My height has always been something that’s set me apart; it’s helped define me. It’s just that as long as I can remember, I haven’t liked the definition very much. Every Sunday in grade school my dad and I would watch ESPN Primetime Football. Playing with friends at home, I always imagined the booming ESPN voice of Chris Berman giving the play-by-play of our street football games. But no matter how well I performed at home with friends, during school recess the stigma of “short kid” stuck with me while choosing teams.

Still concerned as senior year rolled along, I visited a growth specialist. Pacing the exam room in a shaky, elliptical orbit worried, “What if I’ve stopped growing? Will my social status forever be marked by my shortness?” In a grade school dream, I imagined Chris “ESPN” Berman’s voice as he analyzed the fantastic catch I had made for a touchdown when – with a start – the doctor strode in. damp with nervous sweat, I sat quietly with my mom as he showed us the X-ray taken of my hand. The bones in my seventeen-year-old body had matured. I would not grow any more.

Whoa. I clenched the steering wheel in frustration as I drove home. What good were my grades and “college transcript”-achievements when even my friends poked fun of the short kid? What good was it to pray, or to genuinely live a life of love? No matter how many Taekwondo medals I had won, could I ever be considered truly athletic in a wiry, five foot five frame? I could be dark and handsome, but could I ever be the “tall” in “tall, dark and handsome”? All I wanted was someone special to look up into my eyes; all I wanted was someone to ask, “Could you reach that for me?”

It's been hard to deal with. I haven't answered all those questions, but I have learned that height isn't all it's made out to be. I'd rather be a shorter, compassionate person than a tall tyrant. I can be a giant in so many other ways:

intellectually, spiritually and emotionally.

I've ironically grown taller from being short. It's enriched my life. Being short has certainly had its advantages. During elementary school in earthquake-prone California for example, my teachers constantly praised my "duck and cover" skills. The school budget was tight and the desks were so small an occasional limb could always be seen sticking out. Yet Chris Shim, "blessed" in height, always managed to squeeze himself into a compact and safe fetal position. The same quality has paid off in hide-and-go-seek. (I'm the unofficial champion on my block.)

Lincoln once debated with Senator Stephen A. Douglas – a magnificent orator, nationally recognized as the leader of the Democratic Party of 1858... and barely five feet four inches tall. It seems silly, but standing on the floor of the Senate last year I remembered Senator Douglas and imagined that I would one day debate with a future president. (It helped to have a tall, lanky, bearded man with a stove-top hat talk with me that afternoon.) But I could just as easily become an astronaut, if not for my childlike, gaping-mouth-eyes-straining wonderment of the stars, then maybe in the hope of growing a few inches (the spine spontaneously expands in the absence of gravity).

Even at five feet, six inches, the actor Dustin Hoffman held his own against Tom Cruise in the movie Rainman and went on to win his second Academy Award for Best Actor. Michael J. Fox (5'5") constantly uses taller actors to his comedic advantage. Height has enhanced the athleticism of "Muggsy" Bogues, the shortest player in the history of the NBA at five foot three. He's used that edge to lead his basketball team in steals (they don't call him "Muggsy" for nothing). Their height has put no limits to their work in the arts or athletics. Neither will mine.

I'm five foot five. I've struggled with it at times, but I've realized that being five-five can't stop me from joining the Senate. It won't stem my dream of becoming an astronaut (I even have the application from NASA). My height can't prevent me from directing a movie and excelling in Taekwondo (or even basketball). At five foot five I can laugh, jump, run, dance, write, paint, help, volunteer, pray, love and cry. I can break 100 in bowling. I can sing along to Nat King Cole. I can recite Audrey Hepburn's lines from Breakfast at Tiffany's. I can run the mile in under six minutes, dance like a wild monkey and be hopelessly wrapped up in a good book (though I have yet to master the ability to do it all at once). I've learned that my height, even as a defining characteristic, is only a part of the whole. It won't limit me. Besides, this way I'll never outgrow my favorite sweater.

ANALYSIS

“Growing Up” follows the form of discussing a physical or character trait, and exploring its impact on one’s life. Shim’s strategy is for the reader to understand his frustrations with his height, a physical characteristic that has played a great role in the way he sees himself among his family, friends, and peers.

This piece works because it is to the point, honest, and straight-forward. The opening, “I’m short,” delivers a clear message to the reader of the essay’s main idea. As the essay progresses, Shim reveals his personal feelings and aspirations. He gives us a window into the very moment of discovery that he would no longer be able to grow. We are taken on a tour of what makes Shim tick. Being short has shaped and influenced his outlook on the world, yet it has not diminished his goals. It is personal, yet remains positive. He recognizes both the benefits and negatives of his short stature and is able to convey them in a thoughtful manner. Furthermore, the essay not only lets us into Shim’s thoughts on being small but tells us his varied interests in politics, space exploration, sports, and the arts. Shim hasn’t just told us how his height “doesn’t limit him” he has shown us why.

“Pieces of Me”

“Pieces of Me”

---Sandra E. Pullman

The black and white composition book is faded, and the corners are bent. It doesn’t lie flat as many paper clips mark favorite places. Almost every sheet is covered with writing – some in bold handwriting hardly revised, others uncertainly jotted down completely marked up and rewritten. Flipping through the thin pages, I smile, remembering from careless thoughts to assassinate prose to precisely worded poems, this journal marks a year of my life as a writer.

In junior year, my English teacher asked us to keep a journal for creative writing, as a release from otherwise stressful days. We were free to write on any topic we chose. From

then on as often as I could, I would steal away to the old wooden rocking chair in the corner of my room and take time off to write.

As I now try to answer the question of who am I for this essay, I immediately think of my journal.

I am a writer.

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My writing is the most intensely personal part of me. I pour my heart out into my journal and am incredibly protective of it. It's difficult for me to handle criticism or change rejection:

I can tell he wouldn't read it right wouldn't let the meaning sink into him slow and delicious it would sound awful through his careless eyes I want him to open himself up to it and let in a piece of me I want him to know this side of me no one ever has I want him to be the one to understand let me see he prods once more I tell myself this time I'll do it I let myself go but as it passes into his rough hands I see it for the first time it's awkward and wrong just like me I snatch it back from him and crumble it it falls with hardly a noise into the trash

I am a child.

Growing up, I would always ride my bike over to the elementary school across the street and into the woods behind it. Crab apple trees scented the fall air and the winding dirt paths went on forever. I'd drop my bike at the base of a tree and climb as high as I could. All afternoon I would sit in these trees whose branches curved out a seat seemingly made just for me.

One day I biked across the street to come face to face with construction trucks. Those woods are now a parking lot. I cry every time I see cars parked where my crab apple trees once stood:

He allowed the sweet sadness to linger

As he contemplated a world

That he knew too much about.

I am a daughter, a cousin, a great-niece.

My family is very important to me. My mother has a huge extended family and we all get together once a year for a reunion. I play with my little cousins and toss them in the air to their squealing delight. Many of my relatives are elderly, however, and I find it hard to deal

with serious illness in these people I love. I am also deathly afraid of growing old and losing all sense of myself. When visiting relatives, I have to come to terms with these feelings:

With the toe of my sneaker, I push at the ancient pale yellow carpet. Like all the items in the apartment, it is way past its prime. It is matted down in most places, pressed into the floor from years of people's shoes traversing back and forth. It will never be as nice as it once was, that much is certain. At home it would be pulled up, thrown out, not tolerated in an ever-moving young family, not fitting in with all the useful, modern surroundings. But here, in this foreign, musty apartment where my great-aunt and uncle have lived so long that they seem to blend right into the faded wallpaper, the carpet is a part of the scenery. It could not be removed any more than the floor itself.

I am a friend.

I will always treasure memories of sleep-away camp and the friends I fell in love with there. Many of these people I have managed to keep in touch with, but I regret that some I have lost:

But now... the weather is changing. A cold front has moved in. the picture is barely noticed. Perhaps other pictures of other memories brighter and newer hide it from view. A cool breeze steals in through the open window, and the careless wind knocks down an old picture from the bulletin board. The picture falls in slow motion, taking with it a far-off memory. It comes to rest behind the desk, lying on the floor, never to be seen again. Its absence is not even noticed.

I am an incurable romantic.

Leaving a party one night, I forgot to return the sweatshirt I had borrowed:

Touching the small hole

In the bottom corner

And the stray thread

Unraveling the sleeve

I lift it up

And breathe in its smell

I smile quietly

It smells like him

I am a dreamer.

I often sit in class and let my imagination take me wherever I want to go. I love to read stories of mythic Camelot or the legendary Old South, losing myself in my favorite books:

The three dimensional

Kaleidoscope fantasy

Of far-off lands

And courtly kingdoms

Of passion and romance

And high seas adventure

Is shining with vivid colors

And singing with non-stop noise

My journal from eleventh grade not only chronicles a year of my life, but it tells the story of who I am. It is the closest I can get to even beginning to answer that difficult question:

Tell them she says just tell them who you are let them know what makes you tick tick tick the clock is counting down I can't wait to get out of here just a far more minutes smile and pretend you care tell them who I am in 358 words double-spaced 12 point font as if I even know as if I could even if I did on a single sheet of paper why I cry why I laugh why I want so badly to go to their lovely school

I guess I do know one thing about who I am.

I am a writer.

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ANALYSIS

“Pieces of Me” is an admissions essay with attitude – a personal statement that takes a risk.

Like many college applicants, Pullman is interested in writing. Her essay stands apart from the pack because she doesn't simply tell the admissions officer she likes to write. Instead, when used excerpts from her journal to show the admissions officer how much she loves to write, how much she depends on her writing to help her explain and understand life.

But Pullman's decision to include creative writing – i.e. cummings style – in her personal statement is not a decision for the meek of heart or the semi-talented. Every high school

senior has heard stories of college applicants who, in the quest to stand out among the hundreds of other essays an admissions officer must sort through, submitted an original screenplay, musical composition, or videotape of an interpretive dance as their personal statement. In cases like Pullman's where real talent show through, those risks may pay off. For others, a more conventional piece with a strong, clear thesis and well-written supporting arguments may be the better road to take.

Of course, no piece is perfect, including Pullman's. As original as many of her journal excerpts may be, Pullman prefaces many of them with somewhat cliché transitions which weaken the underlying premise of the piece – that Pullman's unique writing help articulate her unique personality. Her creative writing is exciting and interesting; her more academic writing is less so.

Still, "Pieces of Me" is a risky endeavor that works. Pullman succeeds, without the use of a 3-D visual aid or live performance, in making her application stand out.

"Who Am I?"

"Who Am I?"

--by Michael Cho

I wish I could write about the Michael Cho who stars in my Walter Mitty-like fantasies. If only my personal statement could consist of my name followed by such terms as Olympic athlete, master chef, boy genius, universal best friend, and Prince Charming to every hopeful woman. These claims would be, at worst, outright lies, or at best, gross hyperbole. My dreams, however, take their place alongside my memories, experiences, and genes in the palette that constitutes who I am.

Who am I? I am a product of my reality and my imagination. I am innately depraved, yet I am made perfect. I plan my day with the knowledge that "Everything is meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 1:2), but I must "make the most of every opportunity" (Colossians 4:5). I search for simple answers, but find only complex questions.

Once, on my way to a wrestling tournament, I was so engulfed in thought over whether living in an abode which rotated near the speed of light would result in my being younger (utilizing the Theory of Relativity) and stronger (utilizing the properties of adaptation along with the definition of centripetal and gravitational force) that I failed to realize that I had left my wrestling shoes in my locker. My mother says that my decision to wrestle is indicative of the fact I don't think. Through working in a nursing home, the most important

lesson I've learned is that I have many lessons yet to learn. Thus the most valuable knowledge I possess reminds me how little knowledge I have.

Often times people make the mistake of assuming that mutually exclusive qualities bear no relationship to one another. Not so! These dichotomies continuously redefine each other. In some cases one is totally dependent on the other's existence. What is faith without doubt? Without one, the other does not exist. When juxtaposed, opposites create a dialectic utterly more profound and beautiful than its parts. Walt Whitman embraces this syncretism by stating, "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes)." My qualities, though contradictory, define who I am.

Although I can't make fantastic claims about myself, I must still acknowledge and cherish the dreams that I have. Admittedly, it is tragic when one is so absorbed in fantasy that he loses touch with reality. But it is equally tragic when one is so absorbed in reality that he loses the ability to dream. When a healthy amount of reality and fantasy are synthesized, the synergy is such that something beautiful will undoubtedly result.

ANALYSIS

This applicant addresses the proverbial question of "Who Am I?" In doing so, he expresses, both implicitly and explicitly, his hobbies, extracurricular activities, and outlook on life. The writer not only reveals his participation in wrestling, work at a nursing home, and knowledge of Quantum Mechanics, but he also exposes the reader to many aspects of his personality and inner thoughts on life. His questioning of the meaning of life and evaluation of his own identity reveal an inquisitive side to his personality.

Overall, this essay is well written and easy to read. The introduction is strong in that the applicant levels with admission officer by admitting he does not consider himself to be a spectacular individual, giving the impression that what follows is written honestly. Another strong point of the essay is that it reveals many of the activities in which the writer is involved. This serves to give the admissions officer a more personalized picture of the applicant. The biblical and Walt Whitman quotations are very well used and demonstrate the strong intellect of the writer.

While the essay does provide some insight into the philosophical thoughts of the applicant, in many ways it is too theoretical. The writer could improve the essay by specifically listing the dreams or goals he cherishes or perhaps by writing in more detail about one of the many experiences he mentions in the statement. The flow of the essay is also hindered in a number of ways. First, the word choice seems slightly unnatural – almost as if the applicant relied on a thesaurus when writing the essay; as a result, the tone seems to be a bit contrived. Second, while the overall theme of self-identification is maintained throughout the essay, the individual paragraphs jump from one topic to the next in a disjointed fashion. For example, it is interesting to know that the applicant worked at a nursing home, but mentioning such does not seem to fit with the overall progression of the essay. It is important that the personal statement convey to the admissions officer a sense of who you are and what you are like in person, but it is not necessary to cram every extracurricular activity or accomplishment into the essay; there are other sections of the application for listing such things.

An Incomplete Story

An Incomplete Story

During the Middle Ages, a ritual existed which dictated how an individual introduced himself or herself. This introductory process was threefold: first, it demanded that the individual's religion be named; next, the individual's town or community was stated; and finally, the family name was said. Even today, this method of introduction can be effective in conveying the character or identity of an individual. If I were to introduce myself, I would simply state that I am a scholar (learning is my religion); I am a contributor to the greater well-being of my community; and my family will be determined by my future plans and goals (since family includes, but is not limited, to blood relations).

While my gender is extremely important to me, I first identify myself as a scholar because intellect does not have a sex. Knowledge transcends gender. Therefore, I am a thinker, a learner, and a scholar. To me, the process of learning is religious. Words are my "bible," teachers are my "priests." I respect and revere words like others respect, revere, and fear the idea of God. I understand that words are alive and I must wrestle them down and tame them in order for them to become my own. Hence, I make it a habit to collect words. Then, like bangles and crystals that possess psychedelic and prismatic qualities, I hang the words

in my mind for illumination. The meaning of my precious-words are revealed to me by teachers == not just those who have a “teaching certificate,” but those who awaken my mind, who ignite my senses, who alter my perception of the world; together, as Walt Whitman says, we “roam in thought over the universe,” seeking to enlighten ourselves and one another.

The college experience, as I perceive it, in addition to it being the next stop on my journey for self-enlightenment, is to be the crescendo of my intellectual revolution catalyzed by professors who can awaken my mind, ignite my senses, and alter my perception of the world. I hope that my perception of the world will be slightly turned on its head and that I will be made to defend my beliefs and experience the true meaning of intellectual discovery. Thus, my only real expectation for college is to be challenged. I look upon the next four years of my life as an opportunity; I can either seize the chance and significantly better myself through the accumulation of new knowledge or I can merely go through the paces, achieve good grades, but never really feel the excitement of the words themselves. Obviously, I am looking for the former scenario == a place where mental gymnastics are applauded.

But mental contortions should not be done just for the sake of doing them; rather, they should be understood and applied to everyday life. For this reason, my quest for self-enlightenment is not limited to the sphere of academics because the college experience itself is not limited to classes – it is the formation of the complete individual, which means developing both social and academic personalities. I have confidence that the people I will meet in college will show me and share with me their enormous zest for life. This extended family will help me to forge my identity as a scholar, as a contributor to my community, and as a member of a family.

But neither my family nor my extended family nor my teachers could comprise my entire identity. Rather, I will remain like the first page of a book with the first line incomplete – a story waiting to be told.

ANALYSIS

Levey’s essay is very much a self-exploration of being an intellect. Her idea of emphasizing her love of learning is solid and she clearly has a sophisticated grasp of prose, but the overall package might have done better with a little more understated elegance. The introduction is intriguing with the use of an unobvious historical fact about customs in the Middle Ages. She successfully introduces herself and her perception of her role in the world. The first two paragraphs are an easy read, except that the use of too many polysyllabic adjectives can become a little bit distracting. Personal essays that are “show me rather than

tell me” tend to be more convincing. What mental gymnastics has she experienced before? Where has she really pushed for self-growth? The section which describes college as “the next stop on my journey for self-enlightenment” and “the crescendo of my intellectual revolution catalyzed by professors who can awaken my mind, ignite my senses, and alter my perception of the world” is a little bit over the top. You don’t have to tell the reader that college is the next step-in intellectual growth, the reader should be able to sense it from the essay itself.

“Myung!”

“Myung!”

--Myung! H. Joh

The hot-blooded Spaniard seems to be revealed in the passion and urgency of his doubled exclamation points...

-----Pico Lyer, “In Praise of the Humble Comma”

Are you a member of the Kung! Tribe? is a commonly asked question when people see my signature, which has an exclamation point at the end of it. No, I am not a member of any tribe, nor am I putting the mark at the end of my name to be “cute.” It is not simply a hiccup in my handwriting; it is there for a specific reason. But before I elaborate on why I believe the exclamation point is such an appropriate punctuation mark for me, let us explore the other marks I might have used:

Myung?

Although the question mark bears a certain swan-like elegance in its uncertain curves, it simply does not do the job. While it is true that I am constantly discovering new things about myself and changing all the time, I know what I stand for, what my weaknesses and strengths are, and what I would like to get out of life. I know that I want to major in English, attend graduate school, learn as much as possible from those who are wiser than I, and eventually teach at a university. I am headed for a career in English; there is no question about it.

Myung,

I admit that I do pause and contemplate decisions before leaping in and rushing ahead of myself – spontaneity is perhaps not my strong point. But the comma, with its dragging, drooping tail, does not adequately describe who I am, because I know that life will not pause for me; nor do I want it to. Mid the chaos of a hectic schedule that balances clubs, activities, and AP courses, I always feel the rush of life, and I love it. I do not linger over failures; due to my passionate nature, I am crushed by disappointments, but I move on. No prolonged hesitations or pauses.

Myung:

I constantly look forward to the surprises that college and my future life promise me; graduation seems like the beginning of a whole new chapter. But the colon, though I will not deny its two neat specks a certain professional air, does not do my justice. I know how to live for today, have fun, and enjoy life instead of just waiting for what the next chapter may bring. The future is unpredictable. My present life is not simply the precursor to what may follow.

Myung.

Perhaps this is the most inaccurate punctuation mark to describe who I am. The drab, single eye of the period looks upon an end, a full stop == but with the greater aspects of my education still ahead of me, my life is far from any kind of termination. Myung!

However, the exclamation point, with its jaunty vertical slash underscored by a perky little dot, is a happy sort of mark, cheerful, full of spice. Its passions match mine: whether it be the passion that keeps me furiously attacking my keyboard at 4:50 in the morning so that I might perfectly capture a fantastic idea for a story, or the passion that lends itself to a nearly crazed state of mind in which I tackle pet projects of mine, such as clubs or activities I am especially devoted to.

One of my greatest passions, my passion for learning, engenders in me a passion for teaching that I plan to satisfy fully as a professor. I want my students to feel the aching beauty of John Keats's words, his drawn-out good-bye to life. I want them to feel the world of difference in Robert Frost's hushed "the woods are lovely, ark and deep," as opposed to his editor's irreverent "the woods are lovely, dark and deep." I want them to feel the juiciness of Pablo Neruda's sensually ripe poetry when he describes the "wide fruit mouth" of his lover. With the help of my exclamation point, I want to teach people how to rip the poetry off the page and take it out of the classroom as well. I want them to feel poetry when they see the way the sharp, clean edges of a white house look against a black and rolling sky; I want them to feel it on the roller coaster as it surges forward, up, as the sky becomes the earth and the ground rushes up, trembling to meet them; I want them to feel it in the neon puddles that melt in the streets in front of smoky night clubs at midnight. I want them to know how to taste life!

My exclamation point symbolizes a general zeal for life that I want to share with others. And I know that it has become as much a part of me as it has my signature.

ANALYSIS

This essay uses a small punctuation mark to make a big point, loudly and forcefully. It answers the question “who are you?” in a notably creative, exciting, and elucidating manner. Through an unconventional presentation, the author manages to captivate the reader’s attention, while informing him/her of substantially revealing personal qualities. The strong, energized voice that is used delivers both a general, palpable sense of enthusiasm and a glimpse into specific ways that it manifests in the author’s life.

The technical writing in this essay demonstrates skill. Each paragraph expresses one idea with cogency and brevity. A personified punctuation mark is presented through an interesting image and is then related to in light of the author’s character. The final lines of each paragraph then cleverly bring a close to the ideas presented therein.

Though the addition of an exclamation mark could be seen as gimmicky, the author demonstrates that she has the energy and thoughtfulness needed to back up her unusual choice, in real life and on the page. It is obviously not a decision she has made lightly, not just to make her application stand out, although one gets the impression that Myung! would stand out in any crowd, regardless of her name. It’s a risky move, but for her, it works.

“Myself”

“Myself”

--by Jamie Smith

A teenage girl, JAMIE, walks out on stage alone from stage left. She has brown hair that falls to her shoulders and deep blue eyes. She is wearing a white blouse and blue jeans and in her right hand is a pair of binoculars. The stage is dark except for a single spotlight following JAMIE across the stage. When she reaches the center, she sits down on the edge of the

stage, her feet dangling over, and raises the binoculars to her eyes. She proceeds to stare at the audience through them for a few seconds, then slowly moves them away from her face.

JAMIE: With these binoculars I can see each one of you on an extremely personal level. (She brings the binoculars to her eyes then down again.) Do any of you audience members by any chance have your own pair handy? (scanning the audience) I was afraid of this. Well, here, why don't you take mine for a while? (She jumps off the front of the stage, hands a front row audience member her pair of binoculars, then resumes her previous position.)

Now look through those and tell me what you see. Be honest now, I could use a good session of constructive criticism. Wait, maybe if I stand up you could get a better look at my true self. (She stands and gracefully turns around.) Make sure you get every angle now.

Okay, now tell me everything you know about me... not much to tell, is there. I mean, you really don't know what kind of person is standing up on this stage in front of you blabbering on about binoculars and constructive criticism. Well, I guess I have my work cut out for me today; I must describe who I am. Fortunately, I did come prepared. I have provided myself with a prop – and the influence of a very special person – to assist me throughout one of the most difficult performances of my life, an interpretation of a piece I call “Myself.” (she steps off the stage and returns to the audience member in the front row.) Do you mind if I take these back now? (She returns to the stage.)

the one prop is, you guessed it, a pair of binoculars. Not just any binoculars, they are one of the few reminders I have of my great-grandmother, Gran. No, she wasn't an infamous spy at large during World War 2 nor was she an avid birdwatcher. In 1986, when I was six and she was ninety-four we both watched Halley's Comet make its celestial appearance through these binoculars. I remember she said that she and I were truly blessed because we both were able to see Halley's Comet twice in our lives. She told me about seeing it out in her backyard in 1909, when she was the same age I am now. there we were together, seventy-seven years later, watching the same comet shoot across the same sky. I think of all the things that have happened during those seventy-seven years, the triumphs and setbacks Gran achieved and endured, and it has given me strength to deal with the challenges in my own life. I imagine how much life had changed since 1909 and wonder how my life will change by the time I see Halley's Comet again. What will I become? I will not, like Gran, be a part of the Oklahoma land run or witness the birth of the automobile. I will probably not be quarantined for tuberculosis or listen to the progression of two world wars over the radio.

But I know I will do and be something. And the determination and success of my great-grandmother will help me reach this something. She is more than a memory or a story, she has become a part of me: my family, my history, my source of knowledge and my source of pride. Her struggles and achievements are reflected in mine. She is with me when I rise and fall and always there to make sure my feet are still on the ground. She is with me backstage and with me in the spotlight. She is a woman. She is my great-grandmother. And that's truly what she is – great, grand, everything. Gran. It's amazing how a simple name can inspire so much.

She sits down, returning to her initial position with her feet dangling over the edge. She brings the binoculars to her eyes and looks through them. But instead of looking at the audience, she is attempting to look beyond them, almost as if there is some invisible sky behind the rows of seats. She slowly moves the binoculars away from her face, but her eyes are still fixed on some object off in the distance.

JAMIE: Only sixty-xi years to go. I've got to make them count.

ANALYSIS

Written in the format of a play script monologue, both in style and overall structure, this essay addresses the concept that it is difficult to evaluate a person from strictly superficial appearances. In order to truly know someone, no matter how closely you study their outer appearance, it is what's inside that counts. Emotions, thoughts, dreams, and personal goals are the most important and telling aspects of one's identity. The writer does not just theorize about such ideas, but makes a logical progression by giving a concrete, vivid example to back up her thesis. Without having to explicitly list interests or personality traits, the style of the essay reveals a good deal about the applicant: she probably enjoys acting or playwriting and is highly creative and optimistic about life.

One of the strongest aspects of the essay is the fact that it is written as a monologue. The creative format is going to stand out from the thousands of other application essays that admissions officers must read. The use of binoculars as a linking device between the present and the past is highly effective – it produces an overall coherence within the essay. The applicant's use of a very specific moment to frame her love for "Gran" increases the naturalness of the passage. In many cases, essays written about family member can sound contrived. The use of a specific event adds to the realism of the applicant's emotion. The creative use of stage directions addresses the adage "show – not tell" head-on. It is an effective way of creating a mental picture of the applicant in a reader's mind. The essay also ends strongly as the last line clearly identifies that the applicant is ambitious, hard-working, and eager to make something out of her life.

The monologue of the essay is effective, but it is important to point out that such attempts to be overly creative can backfire. This applicant's familiarity with this style of writing is apparent. If you attempt to write your essay in a nonstandard manner, make sure you have a similar comfort level with the techniques you are using.

哈佛 50 篇 essay--2。观点

哈佛 50 篇 essay

第二部分 观点 point of view

“Introducing Clark Kent and Willy Wonka”

“Introducing Clark Kent and Willy Wonka”

By Daniel G. Habib

My childhood passions oscillated between two poles: St. Catherine’s Park and the 67th Street branch of the New York Public Library. Located across Sixty-Seventh Street from one another, the two crystallized the occupations of my youth. On a typical day, I moved between a close-knit group of friends at the park to largely solitary stays at the library. My recreational pursuits were communal; my intellectual pursuits were individual. The gulf was pronounced: friends rarely joined my mother and me as we meandered among the stacks, and the books I obtained from the library never accompanied me to the basketball courts or the jungle gym. Generally, I slipped away from the park during a lull in the action and returned as stealthily as I had gone, foisting Roald Dahl paperbacks on my mother and scrambling to rejoin my friends in arguing the relative merits of the Hulk and Superman. I never thought to integrate these passions; they remained firmly segregated. That Clark Kent and Willy Wonka should never cross paths was a given; the giants existed in separate realms of my life.

More than anything else, my Regis career has reversed that assumption. I now recognize that my intellectual growth and my peer community are inextricably linked. I have come to regard those who surround me not simply as a network of friends, but most vitally as components in the ongoing work of education. I understand that an individualized process of learning is intellectually impoverished. The most startling of my educational epiphanies have occurred in the context of fellow students. Case in point: my acquaintance with Albert Camus’ absurdist manifesto, *The Stranger*. My first reading of the classic, in sixth grade, came in an atomized intellectual climate. As a result, my understanding of Camus’ philosophy was tenuous, so much so that, feeling incapable of defending or even articulating my interpretation of the work, I eschewed any discussion and shunned the chance for error. Satisfied in my ignorance, I disdainfully explained to my inquiring parents, “Oh, it wasn’t much of a murder mystery. You know who kills the Arab all along. And that

whole mother angle just doesn't fit." My second encounter with Camus came in my junior French elective, this time in the company of an insightful octet of Francophones. As we grappled with Camus' vision of the absurd world and Meursault's statement of revolt, an understanding emerged from the sundrenched Algerian beach. Each member of the class offered his insights for consideration, risking the scrutiny of the group but confident in its intellectual generosity. The rigorous standards of the class, and our common desire for understanding, led eventually to firmer comprehension. My balanced interpretation of Camus derived only from the intensity of discussion, the contributions of my peers, and our mutual willingness to share our insights.

Through my participation in Regis' Speech and Debate Society, I have continued in my quest for the acquisition of knowledge through the group. Extemporaneous Speaking requires that a speaker provide a thorough analysis of a current events/policy proposition, after considering and synthesizing numerous sources. Speakers engage each other on subjects ranging from democratic and free-market reforms in Boris Yeltsin's Russia to the prospects for a Medicare overhaul in the Republican Congress. Practices involve evaluation by fellow team members and success depends intimately on an accurate common understanding of the issues Lincoln-Douglas Debate, similarly, entails team formulations of argument based on philosophical principles. We prepare as a team, and I have been privileged to benefit from teammates' sophisticated applications and elucidations of issues as diverse as social contract theory and international ethical mandates.

The group character of the team's intellectual strivings was brought to bear most strongly at the Harvard Invitational, in the winter of my junior year. Debaters were asked to evaluate the proposition that "American society is well-served by the maintenance of a separate culture for the deaf." The evening before the tournament began, sixteen debaters massed in one hotel room at the Howard Johnson's on Memorial Drive, and, fueled by peanut butter and marshmallow sandwiches and gallons of coffee, we wrangled over the specifics of the unique resolution. The assimilationist camp suggested that the achievement of group dignity and a private identity for the deaf had to occur against the backdrop of a larger public identity. The separatism inherent in ASL or deaf schools fatally divorced the group from meaningful participation in the American democracy. True cultural uniqueness required a common frame of reference. Conversely, the deaf separatist partisans maintained that this decidedly marginalized minority deserved a distinctness of culture commensurate with the distinctness of its experience. Separation allowed dignity and empowerment. • •

As the hours wore on—and the dialectic raged out of control, positions became more entrenched, but paradoxically a truer comprehension arose. The eloquence and persuasiveness with which each side advanced its interpretation furthered the exchange. We acknowledged and respected the logic of those with whom we disagreed, and we reinforced our own convictions by articulating and defending them. At 1:30, bedraggled,

exhausted, and happily not unanimous in perspective, we regretfully dispersed to our rooms, to sleep off the effects of the session.

If I began my educational career as an intellectual monopolist, I have evolved into a collectivist. On our last day of summer vacation, a dozen Regis students spent an afternoon in the Yankee Stadium bleachers, arguing the possible outcomes of the American League pennant race, then returned to Manhattan's Central Park to attend the New York Shakespeare Festival's arresting and hyper-controversial production of *Troilus and Cressida*. As we exited the Delacorte Theater, we reflected on the modernization of Shakespeare's message. Some praised its transmission of bleakness and pessimism; others joined critics in attacking its excesses and its artistic license in manipulating the original. Our consensus on the Bronx Bombers' chances in October was firmer than that on the Greek conquest of Troy, but the essential truth remains. Regis has wonderfully fused the communal and the intellectual phases of my life.

ANALYSIS

Writing about an outstanding learning experience is a fairly common approach to the personal statement. But while many applicants may choose a defining and distinct moment – winning the state speech tournament or setting the school record for the highest GPA – as an experience worth retelling, Habib instead chooses to chronicle the gradual process of intellectual maturation. By choosing this topic, Habib has the opportunity to reflect on his education and recount several formative experiences, not just resort to trite descriptions of winning or losing.

Habib's thesis – that one's communal life and intellectual pursuits are only enhanced when fused together – is a somewhat abstract and difficult argument to make, at least for a high school senior. The fact that Habib makes the argument successfully, through the use of details and concrete examples, makes the essay all the more impressive.

Still, the essay isn't perfect. It's long. The sentences can be complex and a bit convoluted. The language used, while enough to impress any Kaplan SAT instructor, could be toned down to make the essay more readerfriendly. Habib could have easily shortened his statement by using fewer examples of real-life learning experiences. Or the experiences he shares could have been shortened: the admissions committee may not need to know the exact arguments and counter-argument Habib's Lincoln-Douglas debate team drafted for the Harvard tournament. • •

Overall, Habib's essay helps distinguish him from other applicants by taking an interesting approach to a common theme and using concrete supporting arguments. All in all, it is a well-written essay enhanced by personal insights, examples, and the all-important details.

"On Diplomacy in Bright Nike Running Tights"

"On Diplomacy in Bright Nike Running Tights" By
Christopher M. Kirchhoff Beepbeep.
Beepbeep.

Beepbeep. With a series of subtle but relentless beeps, my faithful Timex Ironman watch alarm signaled the start of another day, gently ending the pleasant slumber I so often fail to enjoy. With the touch of a button I silenced the alarm, falling back on my bed to establish a firmer grasp of where I was and why on earth I had set my alarm for 5:45 A.M. Slowly the outline of my soundly sleeping roommate came into focus. Beyond his bed was the window. Across the Neva River the view of the Hermitage and Winter Palace, illuminated brightly with spotlights, faded in and out of the falling snow. I was definitely still in St. Petersburg, and no, this wasn't a dream. "Oh yes, running," I remembered. "Must go running."

Temperature??? I dialed the front desk. "Kakoy temperatura pozholsta." Not fooled by my Berlitz Russian, the voice responded, "Negative 7 degrees" in crisp English. I reached for my running tights, glad that meant negative seven degrees Celsius. I took another look into the darkness outside. Negative seven degrees Fahrenheit and I would not be running. The hotel lobby was empty except for the guard and the woman at the desk. As I stepped outside, I pressed the start button on my Timex Ironman and began jogging.

It was a pristine morning. The November wind promptly reminded me just what winter meant at 60 degrees north latitude. With the sky awaiting the break of dawn, I started making my way through the newly fallen snow. Soon the sound of my labored breathing came through the rhythmic swooshing of running shoes dancing through the snow. As clouds of breath collected in front of me, I passed slowly through them, marking my forward progress with each exhale. Around the corner I found a freshly shoveled sidewalk. Following the inviting path, I soon came upon the shoveler, an old man sporting the classic Russian winter outfit: fur cap, long coat, and mittens. Time had left its mark on his wrinkled face and worn clothing. Despite the falling snow, which accumulated at a far greater pace than the man could keep up with, he continued to shovel relentlessly, barely glancing up as I jogged by him. I respect his perseverance. He was working fiercely in the Russian spirit. And as the war medals proudly displayed on his coat indicate, he had been doing so for a

while. Perhaps this man was one of the few that survived the Nazi siege on Leningrad, a living reminder of why the United States must remain deeply involved in world politics.

As I turned and ran across the bridge leading downtown, the battleship Potemkin came into view. The Potemkin began the second Russian Revolution by training its guns on the Winter Palace. Still afloat as a working museum, young sailors in full military dress cleared its decks of snow. While I ran past the ship, a sailor stopped to wave. As his inquisitive eyes stared into mine, we both recognized each other's young age. I waved back, shouting, "Dobroyah ootra," wishing him a good morning. A few seconds later I glanced back, noticing that the same sailor was still looking at me. I must have been quite a sight in my brightly colored Nike running suit treading through a foot of new snow. "How ironic," I thought, "here stands a high school aged Russian sailor shoveling snow off a ship which I studied in history class, while each of us is equally bewildered at the other's presence."

By the time I reached the Hermitage the sky was clear enough to see my reflection in the cold black of the Neva River. While running past the Winter Palace, I quickened my pace, half expecting the Tsarina to step out and stop my progress. I sprinted through Revolution Square, glancing left to see the spot where Tsar Nicolas abdicated and right to see the monument commemorating the defeat of Napoleon. While trodding through historic St. Petersburg, I reflected on the last discussion I had with Sasha, my Russian host student. Sasha, top in his class in the "diplomatic" track of study, had talked about his political beliefs for the first time. What began as a question-and-answer session about life in the United States became a titanic struggle between political ideals. Sasha's tone and seriousness clearly indicated that our discourse was not for pleasure. He wanted to know about our government and what democracy meant for him and his people. Being the first U.S. citizen Sasha had ever met, I felt obligated to represent my country as best I could. Realizing that my response could forever shape his impression of democracy in the U.S., the importance of my mission as a student ambassador became even more apparent. For Russians, democracy remains a new and untrusted method of government. Clearly, Russia is still in a state of change, vulnerable to the forces of the past and skeptical of the future. Sasha, unable to share my faith in the democratic political process, listened patiently to my explanations. I tried my best to help Sasha conceptualize what the United States is about and just what it means to be an American. For the sake of both countries I hope he accepted my prodemocracy argument. It was conversations like these that brought a new sense of urgency to my time in Russia. Through the course of my visit, Sasha and I came to know each other and each other's people. His dream of serving as a diplomat may very well materialize. Perhaps someday Sasha will be in a position to make decisions that affect the United States. I hope my impression will in some way affect his judgment in a positive manner.

After jogging up the hotel steps, I pressed the stop button. Not bad for a morning run I thought. Sixty-four minutes in deep snow, about seven miles' worth. Press Mode button.

Time zone one: E.S.T. Columbus, Ohio. It was Saturday night back home Thinking of home, I remembered the student in my homeroom who cried, “You mean you’re gonna go and meet those Commies? So you think you can change the world?” Press Mode button.

Time zone two: St. Petersburg, Russia, November 4, 1995. greeting the dawn of a new day I thought, “Perhaps! Perhaps in some small way I can change the world, one conversation at a time.”

ANALYSIS

The month that Christopher Kirchhoff spent in Russia as a “student diplomat” undoubtedly provided him with more than enough experiences to include in an admissions application. But in his essay “On Diplomacy in Bright Nike Running Tights,” Kirchhoff successfully avoids falling into the trap of many applicants whose statements are based on once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

Kirchhoff easily could have written something along the lines of, “My time in Russia provided me with a rare opportunity to witness an emerging democracy grappling with its newfound freedom. Armed with a keen interest in the post-Communist plight, I set forth to learn from my Russian brethren and to teach them about their American peers.” These statements are not necessarily untrue, but they are also not especially original. Such an essay would hardly stand out among a stack of statements written by students retelling the glory of winning the state debate/football/academic challenge championship.

Instead, Kirchhoff tells the admissions committee about the Russia he has come to know on his early-morning jogs. We learn that he is a disciplined runner, a perceptive observer of human nature, a willing learner of the Russian language. Bright Nike running tights, his Time Ironman, and the rhythmic swooshing of his running shoes are details that his audience will remember. They also provide the perfect segue into the more substantive issues Kirchhoff wants to address in his essay – the conversations he has had with Russians his age. The reader gets to know Kirchhoff before we get to know his views on such weightier subjects as diplomacy and the American role in international relations.

While his supposedly verbatim thoughts after waving to the young sailor sound stilted, Kirchhoff’s understated and personal approach throughout the majority of his essay makes up for his waxing a bit too eloquent at times. Ideally, it would have been nice to hear just as much detail about his conversations with Sasha as we do about St. Petersburg at 6 A.M. The essay loses the details when it matters most. Also in terms of detail, Kirchhoff makes a slight error in his statement that “the Potemkin began the second Russian Revolution by training its guns on the Winter Palace.” It was in fact that Aurora that fired mostly blank

rounds on the palace – the battleship Potemkin was the scene of a 1905 revolt by sailors in Odessa. These mistakes are rather minor since the essay is not particularly centered on the ship. However, let this serve as a valuable lesson: it is important to extensively check all facts used in your essay.

Still, Kirchhoff's essay works.

“Salade Olivier”

“Salade Olivier”

By Svetlana Rukhelman

For as long as I can remember, there was always the salade Olivier. It consisted of boiled potatoes, carrots, eggs, bologna and pickles diced into tiny cubes and mixed into a giant enamel pot together with canned peas and mayonnaise. It was considered a delicacy, and prepared only on special occasions such as birthday and dinner parties. But it was also a ritual, the only component of the first course which was never absent from a dinner table, no matter which of our relatives or friends was throwing the feast.

Ironically, the salade Olivier was never my favorite food, though the attitude of my taste buds to the dish did evolve through the years. In my earliest childhood, I favored the compliant potatoes, then began to lean toward the pickles and bologna – that sweet-and-sour, crunchy-and=soft combination that never loses its appeal – and next passed a phase in which the green peas appeared so abhorrent that I would spend twenty minutes picking every pea I could find out of my serving. Only recently did I resign myself to the fact that all the ingredients must be consumed simultaneously for maximum enjoyment as well as for the sake of expediency.

It may seem odd, then, to be writing in such length in praise of a dish one does not particularly like. But culinary memories are determined not so much by whether we found a food tasty, but by the events, people, and atmospheres of which the food serves as a reminder. In my mind, the very making of the salade has always been associated with the joyful bustle that accompanied the celebrations for which the dish was prepared: the unfolding of the dinner table to its full length, the borrowing of chairs from neighbors, the starched white tablecloths, simmering crystal wineglasses, polished silverware, white napkins, delicate porcelain plates of three different sizes stacked one on top of another, the aroma floating from the kitchen all through the apartment, my father taking me on special shopping errands, the wonderful dilemma of “what to wear?” and myriad other pleasant deviations from the monotony of everyday existence. Though simple in theory, the

preparation of the salade Olivier was a formidable undertaking which occupied half the morning and all but one of the stove burners. At first it was my responsibility to peel the boiled potatoes == the one task which did not require the use of a knife or other utensil, and one which I performed lovingly, albeit inefficiently. As I sat at the kitchen table, my five-year-old fingers covered in several layers of potato skin, my mother and I would lead heart-to-heart discussions, whose topics I no longer remember, but of which I never tired.

Eventually, my mother introduced me to the Dicing of the Potatoes, and then to the Dicing of the Bologna, the Dicing of the Pickles, the Shelling of the Eggs and the Stirring in of the Mayonnaise as well. But there was one stage of the process I found especially mesmerizing. It was the Dicing of the Eggs, carried out one hard-boiled egg at a time with the help of an egg-cutter. Nothing was more pleasing to the eye than the sight of those seven wire-like blades, arranged like prison bars, slicing through the smooth, soft ellipsoid.

Today, we still make the salade Olivier on some formal occasions, and, as before, I sometimes participate. And every time I see the eggslicer or smell the pickles, I am reminded of our Kiev apartment, of those much-anticipated birthday parties, of the joy I felt as I helped my mother cook: of all the things which made my childhood a happy one.

ANALYSIS

This essay seeks to introduce us to the author via a description of the author's childhood conditions and family experiences as well as experiences from the author's cultural heritage. The salade Olivier, a delicacy in both Ukrainian and Russian diets, serves as the central organizational motif for this description. The essay's power comes from its amazing descriptive qualities. The reader is given a vivid and detailed picture of both the salade and much of the author's childhood. The essay also entices the reader by deliberately omitting a description of the salade's cultural origins until the very end of the text. This technique forces the reader to move through the essay with puzzling questions about the salade's origins and the reader's unfamiliarity with such a dish, motivating the reader to remain engrossed in the work and seek out the answers of interest. Only in the end are things revealed, and even then the reader may not be fully satisfied.

Despite the essay's great descriptive power, however, the reader is given few specific details about the author or the Ukrainian culture that serves as the backdrop for the author's childhood. Including more such details could dramatically increase the essay's strength, especially given the unfamiliarity of most readers with the culture that stands at the core of the author's heritage.

“The Tug of War”

“The Tug of War”

I stand between two men. The caramel-skinned man on my left holds his cane as if the world is waiting for his entrance. On my right the taller vanilla-skinned man stands erect as if he must carry the world. Each man reaches for my hand and before long, a tug-of-war ensues between them. Each tries to pull me over the line of agreement but my body stays in the middle. During this struggle I hear their voices saying:

“Cast down your bucket where you are!”→

“The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line!”

“It is at the bottom we must begin, not at the top!”

“The only way we can fully be men is with the acquisition of social equality and higher education!”

Their voices blur. My torso stretches wider and wider. My arms grow in length as each man pulls and pulls. Finally, I yell, “I can’t take it anymore!”

This is the scene that plays in my head when I contemplate the philosophies of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, two foes attempting to answer a question that never seems to go away: “How shall the African-American race be uplifted?” their answers represented the right and left of the social spectrum in the early 1900s. I attempted to present their views in the IB Extended Essay. While I wrote the paper something inside of me felt the need to agree with and choose one philosophy over the other. I couldn’t. So this struggle developed.

In the beginning, Washington looked as if he had already lost the tug-of-war. When I first encountered the ideas of Washington I wanted to grab him and ask him, “What was going through your head?” The former-slave-turned-leader-of-a-race, Washington advocated industrial education over higher education, When he said, “cast down your bucket,” he meant relinquishing social equality in the name of economic prosperity. When I read this, one word popped into my mind, “Uncle Tom.” I felt that Washington had betrayed his race when he renounced social equality. Wasn’t that a right every man wanted?

After examining Washington, examining Du Bois was like jumping into a hot bath after sliding headfirst through a field of cow dung. The intellectual’s ideas of higher education and social equality sat well with my middle-class African-American stomach. Du Bois

represents everything I grew up admiring. Du Bois was the radical who attended Harvard University. His idea of a “talented tenth” to lead the African-American race starkly resembles the black middle class today. I had no choice but to agree with Du Bois.

So enamored with Du Bois was I that I forgot about Washington’s practical ideas of self-help and economic power. I witnessed Washington’s ideas acted out in everyday life. I bought my “black” hair products from an Asian owner in the middle of the ghetto and the corner store owned by Iranians supplied me with chips and candy. These facts made me feel that maybe African-Americans had shoved Washington too far back into the closet. At this juncture, Washington began to give Du Bois competition in a formerly one-sided war. Economic prosperity means power; a race with economic power cannot be denied social equality, right?

In order to resolve the dilemma presented by this tug-of-war, I looked at the ingredients of my life. Washington appealed to the part of me that wanted to forget about social equality. That part of me wanted to live as it came and focus only on self-advancement. Du Bois appealed to the part of me that felt no man was a man without social equality. Either way, both appealed to my life as an African-American. The fact that two early twentieth-century advocates affected a ‘90s African-American girl shows that their message was not lost in the passage of time. Neither man won the tug-of-war. Maybe this tug-of-war in my head was not meant to be won because their philosophies influenced me equally. Washington provided the practical ingredients for social advancement while Du Bois provided the intellectual ingredients for such advancement. African-Americans must evaluate both philosophies and determine how both views can facilitate the advancement of the race. I still stand between two men but now I embrace them equally.

ANALYSIS

The question of racial identity can be an enormous one for many people and often makes a great college essay. Writing an essay about this part of your development is insightful into your person and your views. Admissions officers are trying to get to a portrait of who you are and what you value, and little is more revealing than a struggle for racial identity. Freelon chose to write about two black leaders to show what her racial identity means to her. Her essay also shows a keen interest in how history can be applied to her life – an interest that would appeal to admissions officers trying to pick thoughtful individuals.

Freelon’s essay is well written and well organized. She moves smoothly from her opening thoughts into the body of the essay and devotes equal time to each philosophy. She also shows clear examples of why she originally liked Du Bois and why she changed her mind

about Washington. Her essay show important elements of human nature – she admits that as a “middle-class African-American,” she has a bias, and she is also wrong from time to time.

The main danger in this essay is oversimplification. It’s difficult to condense the arguments of two leaders into a few paragraphs, and Freelon doesn’t present the total view of their philosophies. She also assumes a familiarity on the part of the admissions officers with issues of racial identity, which may or may not be true. Overall, however, Freelon’s essay is an excellent example of how a personal identity struggle can reveal a lot about the person inside.

“Thoughts Behind a Steam-Coated Door”

By Neha Mahajan

Till taught by pain Men really know not what good water’s worth.

-----Lord Byron

A light gauze of steam coats the transparent door of my shower. The temperature knob is turned as far as it can go, and hot drops of water penetrate my skin like tiny bullets. The rhythm of water dancing on the floor creates a blanket of soothing sound that envelops me, muffling the chaotic noises of our thin-walled house. Tension in my back that I didn’t even know existed oozes out of my pores into streams of water cascading in glistening paths down my body. I breathe in a mist of herbal scented shampoo and liquid Dove soap, a welcome change from the semi-arid air of Colorado. In the shower I am alone. No younger siblings barging unannounced into my room, no friends interrupting me with the shrill ring of the telephone, no parents nagging me about finishing college essays.

The ceramic tiles that line my bathroom wall have the perfect coefficient of absorption for repeated reflections of sound waves to create the wonderful reverberation that makes my shower an acoustic dream. The two by four stall is transformed into Carnegie Hall as Neha Mahajan, world-renowned musician, sings her heart out into a shampoo bottle microphone. I lose myself in the haunting melisma of an aalaap, the free singing of improvised melodies in classical Indian music. I perfect arrangements for a capella singing, practice choreography for Excalibur, and improvise songs that I will later strum on my guitar.

Sometimes I sit in the shower and cry, my salty tears mingling with the clear drops upon my face until I can no longer tell them apart. I have cried with the despair of my friend and mentor in the Rape Crisis Team when she lost her sister in a vicious case of domestic abuse, cried with the realization of the urgency of my work. I have cried with the inevitable tears after watching *Dead Poet's Society* for the seventh time. I have cried with the sheer frustration of my inability to convince a friend that my religious beliefs and viewpoints are as valid as hers. Within these glass walls I can cry, and my tears are washed away by the stinging hot water of the shower.

The water that falls from my gleaming brass showerhead is no ordinary tap water. It is infused with a mysterious power able to activate my neurons. My English teachers would be amazed if they ever discovered how many of my compositions originated in the bathroom. I have rarely had a case of writer's block that a long, hot shower couldn't cure. This daily ritual is a chance for me to let my mind go free, to catch and reflect over any thoughts that drift through my head before they vanish like the ephemeral flashes of fireflies. I stand with my eyes closed, water running through my dripping hair, and try to derive the full meaning conveyed in chapter six of my favorite book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. I'll be lathering shampoo into the mass of tangles that is my hair as I work on a synaesthesia for the next two lines of a poem, or the conditioner will be slowly soaking through when I experience an Archimedean high, as a hard-to-grasp physics concept presented earlier in the day suddenly reveals itself to me. Now if only they had let me take that AP Calculus test in the shower...

The sparkles of falling water mesmerize me into reflection. Thoughts tumbling in somersaults soften into a dewy mellowness. Do these drops of water carry a seed of consciousness within them? As I watch the water winking with the reflected light of the bathroom, it appears to glow in the fulfillment of its karma. Then, for a split second, all thoughts cease to exist and time stands still in a moment of perfect silence and calm like the mirror surface of a placid lake.

I know I have a tendency to deplete the house supply of hot water, much to the annoyance of the rest of my family. I know I should heed my mother's continual warnings of the disastrous state of my skin after years of these long showers; as it is, I go through two bottles of lotion a month to cure my post-shower "prune" syndrome. But my shower is too important to me. It is a small pocket of time away from the frantic deadline and countless places to be and things to do. It is a chance to reflect, and enjoy—a bit of welcome friction to slow down a hectic day. The water flows into a swirling spiral down the drain beneath my feet. It cleanses not only my body, but my mind and soul, leaving the bare essence that is me.

Analysis

This essay illustrates how something as ordinary as a hot shower can be used auspiciously to reveal anything of the author's choosing. Mahajan could have focused on the academic subjects or extracurriculars she mentions in her essay, such as physics or the Rape Crisis Team, but instead she chooses a daily ritual common to us all. Though everyone can relate to taking a shower, doubtless few shower in quite the same way Mahajan does or find it to be such an intellectually and emotionally stirring experience. The intimacy of the act sets an appropriate stage for her personal description of unraveling from life's stresses by singing into a shampoo bottle microphone.

There is no signal, clear focus to the essay, but this accurately reflects the shower experience itself—"to catch and relect over any thoughts that drift through my head before they vanish." Mahajan touches on schoolwork, classical Indian music and contemplation about her favorite book, all with humorous flair, and she even goes into emotionally revealing descriptions of crying in the shower. Unfortunately, she dwells on crying for an entire paragraph, and reader cannot help but wonder whether she could survive without her shower to cleanse her "mind and soul." Ultimately, that Mahajan derives literally so much inspiration and relief from the shower seems rather hard to believe. The notion that she could have done better on her AP Calculus test had she been allowed to take it in the shower is amusing, but doesn't seem to add much beyond the suggestion stand that vague "hard-to-grasp physics concept" seems excessive. Already she distinctly conveys her interest in science through her language—"the perfect coefficient of absorption for repeated reflections of sound waves"—and a supposedly subtle reaffirmation of this interest seems unnecessary.

Mahajan's vivid language and unusual description are principle qualities of this essay. She deftly avoids the temptation of resorting to clichés, and most everything is entirely unpredictable. A relatively minor point is that her economy of language could be improved, as otherwise fluid sentences are occasionally overdone with an excess of adjectives and adverbs. Nonetheless, Mahajan conveys her talent for creative writing, and this carries her essay for beyond the lesser issues mentioned earlier. And, of course, her distinctive showers theme helps this exhibition of talent stand out. ■

哈佛 50 篇 **essay--3**。难忘的时刻

Sensibility

-- by Amanda Davis

The putrid stench of rotten salmon wafts through the boardwalk, permeating the Five Star Café with a fishy odor. I stand, chopping red peppers for tomorrow's soba salad, in the back of the minuscule kitchen. Adam, a pretty boy with cropped hair, stands beside me, relating tales of snowboarding in Sweden while slicing provolone cheese. Tourists walk by the café, some peering in through the windows, others interested only in fish swimming upstream – clicks of cameras capture the endless struggle for survival. It is 3:00 in the afternoon, the lunch rush has died down, the evening rush has not yet started. I relax in the rhythmic trance of the downward motion of the knife, as I watch the red peppers fall into precise slices. The door opens. A customer.

Adam looks toward me. "Your turn."

I nod, pull myself away from the peppers, and turn to the register. A man stands, looking at me. His eyes, hidden under tangled gray hair, catch mine, and my eyes drop, down to his arms. Spider lines of old tattoos stand out, words and pictures and symbols sketched on thin, almost emaciated arms. I know I am staring. I look up.

"Can I help you?" I brightly ask.

He looks at me warily. "A cup of coffee."

Adam hands him a cup and goes back to slicing.

"That will be one dollar, sir." He fumbles in his pocket, and pulls out a wrinkled dollar bill. He extends his hand, then – suddenly – pulls back. His face changes, and he leans toward me, casting a frightened glance at the cash register.

"Is that – is that --" he stumbles over his words. "Is that alive?"

I look to the machine. Its common gray exterior rests on the counter, the green numerals displaying the amount owed. I think of my first days at the Five Star, when I was sure that it was alive – a nefarious machine manipulating the costs to cause my humiliation. As the days proceeded, we slowly gained a trust for one another, and its once evil demeanor had changed – to that of an ordinary machine. I think of the world – controlled by machines, the cars and computers and clocks – would they, could they, rise up against us? The espresso machine is behind me, it could attack – the hot water spurting forth, blinding me as the cash register falls and knocks me onto the floor as I – No, of course not.

Sensibility wins again.

"No, sir. It's just a machine," I explain. He eyes me, untrusting of my words, in need of reassurance. "It takes money." I take his dollar, and show him how, with a push of a button, I can place the money inside. He takes his coffee with both hands, and sips it. • •

“A machine...” he quietly repeats.

The cash register sits, silent on the counter.

ANALYSIS

In both subject matter and style, “Sensibility” is a breath of fresh air. Imagine reading stacks of essays about mundane topics, and then coming upon one about red peppers, provolone cheese and a cash register – how could it not stand out? Rather than describing a life-altering experience or an influential relationship, the writer reveals herself and her talents indirectly by bringing us into a captivating scene.

With the skills of a creative writer, the author uses crisp detail to make the Five Star Café spring to life and to place us in the seaside kitchen. Even if all the essay does is grab our attention and force us to remember its author, this essay is a success. But “Sensibility” has other strengths. The dialogue with the emaciated man raises provocative questions about modern life. How do we relate to the machines around us? How does “sensibility” change in this new environment? And how do machines affect our relations with people of different classes and backgrounds? The essay does not pretend to answer these questions, but in raising them it reveals its author to possess an impressive degree of sophistication and, at bottom, an interesting mind.

All the same, “Sensibility” is not without its faults. For one, the scene seems so surreal that we are led to wonder whether this is a work of fiction. And admissions essay will be stronger the more we can trust that we are hearing the author’s honest, personal voice; the fictional quality here jeopardizes that. Moreover, although the author proves that she is thoughtful and talented and has a vivid imagination, many questions are left unanswered. Does the author want to be a writer? How would her creativity translate into a contribution to the community? We would need to rely on the rest of her application to fill in those gaps. Still, on the whole, “Sensibility” is successful both because of and in spite of its riskiness.

A Memorable Day

A Memorable Day

-- by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson

Walking through meadow and forest and mud, helping and being helped across streams, looking at lakes, stars and trees, smelling pines and horses, and generally traveling through a half-seen world, all happened before four A.M. The ten of us stopped near a waterfall to absorb the beauty of the rising sun. The sky was on fire before the embers died out and only the blues and yellows remained. I saw the beams of the sun slide down from the sky and into a meadow, and felt my happiness slide down my cheeks. To the sky I sang my thanks.

As our journey to the Grand Pyramid continued, I met new flowers. At the base of its peak, I looked up with excitement, and then out for stability. Intimidated and yet determined, I started to crawl up the mountain. I found geodes, and that big rocks aren't always stable. I wasn't alone, but I was climbing by myself. At the top, the four of us who had continued from the base were greeted by the beauty of needle peaks and mountain ranges and miles of a clear view in every direction, without the bitterly cold winds and the fear of heights I had expected would be there too. There was simply nature and sunshine and friendship, and the elation they bring. Balloons were blown up and attached to me. People danced around me and shouted, and a smile I couldn't control burst forth.

On the way down, instead of tears of joy that had accompanied the sunrise, there were songs of joy, and I thought. I realized that the rewards and thrills and memories are in the journey and not in reaching the destination. I had believed this before and even said it out loud, but this was different. I looked at everything along the way. I stopped and rested and attempted to etch each different view into my memory. The hackneyed phrase of "enjoying every step along the way" was something I lived, and as a result I felt richer than I had ever been. I promised myself that this lesson I would never forget, but as I was descending from the highest point to which I'd ever journeyed, my thoughts too returned to a more pragmatic level. I remembered that each journey in my life wouldn't be as challenging or exciting or rewarding as this one had been; nevertheless, it is the flowers and geodes and smiles and balloons that make the journey worthwhile. I had only been singing for myself and for the mountains, but everyone had heard me, and, when I reached the bottom, I was greeted with congratulations and laughter – after all, I did have balloons tied to me.

And the journey continued. The waterfall we had only really heard before day-break was now visible, and I was convinced to jump in and make it tangible too. I plunged my head under its torrential flow, only to receive a headache from its coldness as a reward for my boldness. I removed my-then-numbered-self from the water and was lacing up my boots when it began to hail. I had been wishing that snow would fall on this August day, but hail was close enough. The few of us who had braved the waterfall then ran to catch the group in the forest before the imminent thunderstorm arrived.

I saw in the daylight what I had (or rather hadn't) seen in the moonlight. The streams we had helped each other cross in the dark were no more than rivulets through a field in the light. The mysterious woods were turned serene by the rays of the sun, and I thought of the

great chasm that often exists between appearance and reality. The mud puddles that had been obstacles were now only another detail of the landscape, and I thought about things that are a challenge to me which others find simple. The meadow where I had tripped while trying to star-gaze and walk, became a place to cloud – gaze and wonder at the storm, and I thought of the many ways different people can appreciate the same thing.

The humbling thunder approached. It growled. Suddenly, the frighteningly beautiful companion of the thunder struck a hill not so far ahead of us. A friend, the only other person who had seen it, and I ran screaming and laughing into the trees, but knew we would be all right because we were together.

A trek by moonlight, a sky on fire, leaking eyes, 13,851 feet up, balloons, geodes, songs, icy waterfalls, hail and lightning were my seventeenth birthday.

ANALYSIS

This essay is effective because it carries the metaphor of the journey of life from the climb up the mountain all the way through. The essay is well organized and structured, designed to represent the reconstruction of the author's exciting day, starting with her initial reaction to the scenery to her elation of finishing at the end. Each paragraph, though varied in length, tells a part of the journey and a change in the author's growing perspective on life.

The author uses a lot of active description, which the reader can easily relate to and almost experience a part of her journey. Phrases such as "only to receive a headache from its coldness as a reward for my boldness," speak poignantly because the reader can almost feel the sting of the dip in the waterfall. The comparison between daylight and moonlight also works well because it allows the writer a chance to demonstrate her ability to describe contrast.

The reader may be slightly disoriented by the lack of context for the story, as we are not told where the author is or why she is climbing a mountain. However, through the carefully controlled description the author reveals her reflective nature and personal realization as she ascends and descends the mountain, hence, showing the parallel physical and emotional progression. Her concluding sentence, though not particularly poignant, serves as a strong summary of a well-written piece.

A night Unforgotten

By Frederick Antwi

An hour before the commencement of the personality contest, I deposited my bag carefully in a corner of the changing room. From my vantage point, I could see the muscular seniors comparing their lovely three-piece suits and musing about which one of them would win the title. A bony, stuttering junior with no suit and no new shoes, I swallowed hard and resolved to give the pageant my best shot. Since the first round of the program was a parade in traditional wear, I nervously pulled out my kente, draped the beautifully woven red and yellow fabric around my thin frame, pinned on my “contestant number five” badge and hurried to take my place in line.

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Wishing hopelessly that my mother was among the spectators and not working in some hospital in a foreign country, I stepped out onto the polished wooden stage. Immediately, one thousand two hundred curious eyes bore into me. My cheeks twitched violently, my throat constricted and my knees turned to jelly. I fought for control. Bending my arms slightly at the elbows, I strutted across the stage in the usual fashion of an Asante monarch and mercifully made it back to the changing room without mishap. The crowd erupted into a frenzied cheer. As I returned for the “casual wear” round, something magical happened.

It was singular emotion that no words can describe. It began as an aching, beautifully tenderness in the pit of my stomach, gradually bubbling into my chest, filling me with warmth and radiance, melting away all the tension. Slowly, it effervesced into my mouth, onto my tongue and into words. As I spoke to the crowd of my pastimes and passions, words of such silky texture poured out from my soul with unparalleled candor and cadence. The voice that issued from my lips was at once richer, deeper, stronger than I had ever produced. It was as though an inner self, a core essence, had broken free and taken control. Severed from reality, I floated through the remainder of that remarkable evening.

One hour later, the baritone of the presenter rang out into the cool night air. “Mr. GIS Personality 1993, selected on the basis of confidence, charisma, cultural reflection, style, eloquence, wit and originality, is Contestant number...”

“Five! One! Five! Five!” roared the electrified crowd.

My heart pounded furiously. My breathing reduced to shallow gasps.

“Contestant number five!” exploded the presenter in confirmation.

For a few sacred moments, time stopped. My ears screamed, and my lower jaw, defying the grip of my facial muscles, dropped like a draw-bridge. Then I rushed forward, bear-hugged the presenter and embraced everyone else I could lay my hands on! Amidst the tumult, the Manager of KLM Airlines mounted the stage, presenting me with a meter-long Accra-Amsterdam-London return ticket. As I stood brandishing my sky-blue cardboard ticket, posing shamelessly for the cameras and grinning sheepishly at the throng, a pang of regret shot through me. If only my mother could have been in that crowd to witness and indeed be a part of this most poignant of all memories.

ANALYSIS

“The unusual experience” is a staple of college entrance essays, but in this case the experience is truly unusual—a personality contest for men. It’s also interesting to see Antwi’s transformation from shy to superstar. Antwi concentrates on a fixed event in time and uses it to show the spectrum of his personality—shy, confident, excited, lonely—in an amusing and entertaining way.

It’s no wonder Antwi won the contest. He’s a great storyteller. He has an acute sense of detail—“one thousand and two hundred curious eyes,” “the fashion of an Asante monarch”—and is good at heightening drama. The essay is also upbeat and fun to read.

It would have been nice to know what Antwi said in the third paragraph instead of simply reading about the “unparalleled candor and cadence” with which he spoke. Also, Antwi does not explain the what, where, or why of the contest, which are all important to know. Overall, however, his personality shines through as stellar.

Banana

By Nathan W. Hill

I was hungry and the sun impaled me on its searing ray. I wore a wool coat, black with red cotton lining. It had served me well in the misty foothills of the Himalayas, where His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, gave his blessing. The coat had recently returned from a long absence. I wore it despite the heat.

The humid weather and the final wilting blossoms of late September conspired to fill my head with snot. The mighty hammer, Mjollnir, pounded his lament between my ears.

I walked down to The Barn, our cafeteria, but it wouldn't open again until three. Then, I remembered Clint, my junior year English teacher, and walked back to the Upper School. Clint always kept a few overripe bananas in the fruit bowl with the past due vocab tests. Laura, who shared the office, complained of the fetid smell of rotten fruit and that Clint made grunting noises as he worked hunched in his bow tie, over a mound of disheveled papers. On occasion, he stretched his arm towards Laura's desk and asked her, with a bruised banana dangling from his hand, "Would you like a banana, Laura?" With a crinkled nose, Laura always politely replied, "No, thank you, Clint," and watched in disgust as he wolfed it down.

The heavy wooden door to Clint's office stood propped open because of the heat. Inside, a small electric fan sat on top of the computer, it made an obnoxious noise between the sound of buzzing bees and chomping teeth. A tiny strip of paper darted before the spinning blades. Clint looked up from his work and asked with nasal condescension, "Can I help you, Nate?"

I responded phlegmatically, "May I have a banana?" the sweat dripping off the end of my nose.

With a mixture of pity and reproach, he raised his arm to point at the wooden bowl on top of the gray file cabinet. I lifted three vocab tests away.

I grabbed it, soft and brown. Its sweet aroma distracted me from the throbbing of my head. I held the banana in my right hand, and moved my left hand to its stem, ready to divest my prey.

A thin sticky liquid started seeping through my hand. Not expecting a banana to leak I dropped it, and heard a low thud, followed by splattering.

The banana burst open; its mushy yellow guts flew. A dripping peel remained of my search for happiness.

ANALYSIS

Hill has taken the basic narrative form in this essay and transformed it into something memorable. While Hill has alluded to the fact that he was in the Himalayas and that he was given a blessing by the Dalai Lama, he does not dwell on those events, however significant or unique. Rather, he chooses to concentrate on simple topics: hunger and a coveted banana.

The strength of Hill's essay rests with his descriptive language. The end of the essay particularly impacts the reader with vivid imagery. Few who read this essay will forget the image of an overripe banana exploding. Hill's phrasing is at times perfect: "...ready to divest my prey," is one such example of convincing, powerful language. Hill has conveyed the exact magnitude of his hunger and desire for that banana with this phrase.

A few areas could be strengthened, however. Hill is somewhat meandering in his opening, touching on topics like the Dalai Lama and the Himalayas, which though interesting are not significant to the main thrust of the narrative. Also, Hill's use of dialogue and the description of Clint and Laura are a little awkward. He might have done better to have simply expanded upon the latter paragraphs of his essay, focusing more on the banana and his hunger and omitting this dialogue and the description of Clint. Despite these small complications, Hill has done the trick and produced an essay that demands attention and respect.

A Lesson About Life

By Aaron Miller

Finally the day had arrived. I was on my way to Aspen, Colorado. I had heard wonderful stories about the Aspen Music School from friends who had attended in previous years, and I was certain that this summer would be an unbelievable learning experience. I was especially excited to be studying with Mr. Herbert Stessin, an esteemed professor from the Juilliard School.

After just a few lessons with Mr. Stessin, I knew that I would not be disappointed. Mr. Stessin is so incredibly sharp that no detail gets but him. He notices every turn of each musical phrase, catches wrong notes in complex chords, and interjects his wry sense of humor into every lesson. As I was preparing Beethoven's Sonata, Op.31, No.3, for a master class, he warned me at the end of a lesson, "Don't play this too well, Aaron, or I'll have nothing to say!"

The master class went quite well considering that it was my first performance of the sonata. A few days later, as I walked across the bridge over the creek which winds through the music school campus, I saw Mr. Stessin's wife, Nancy, who was also on the Aspen faculty. I waved to her, and as I walked past she said something to me which I didn't catch over the roar of the rushing water. I stopped for a moment as she repeated, "That was a very nice Beethoven you played the other day." We had a brief conversation, and I was touched by her thoughtful comment.

On July 15 I had my last lesson with Mr. Stessin, and walked with him to the dining hall. As I was sitting down with my friends to have lunch, someone whispered to me, "Mrs. Stessin passed out!" we naturally assumed that she had fainted from the altitude or the heat. However, we soon realize that the situation was more serious, as an ambulance was called to take her to the nearby hospital.

Nothing could have prepared me for the news that two distraught friends brought late that night to my roommate and me. Mrs. Stessin had never regain consciousness and had died of a ruptured aneurysm. That night, my roommate and I could not sleep; we talked about our memories of Mrs. Stessin for hours on end. In the morning, Dean Laster called us together to officially announce the sad news.

Numb with disbelief that this vibrant and dedicated woman was gone, we wondered how Mr. Stessin could possibly cope with this terrible tragedy. Surely he would be heading back to New York as soon as arrangements could be made.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Only days after, Mr. Stessin was back in his studio, teaching!

Initially shocked by Mr. Stessin's decision to stay, I soon began to understand his thinking. He and his wife had been teaching at Aspen for many years and had built a strong sense of community with the faculty and students. Furthermore, I realized that he found comfort through his love of music and his commitment to his students. Leaving Aspen would have meant leaving behind his fondest memories of Nancy.

After studying a Mozart piano concerto with Mr. Stessin all summer, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to dedicate my performance to the memory of Mrs. Stessin. At the end of the concert, my last evening in Aspen, I was greeted by friends and faculty members backstage. When I saw Mr. Stessin approaching me, he was beaming. "That was a wonderful performance!" he said, and gave me a hug. He continued, "And thank you for the dedication. I'll miss you." We hugged again.

Last summer did indeed turn out to be an unbelievable learning experience. Although Mr. Stessin taught me a great deal about music and the piano, in the end his greatest lesson about life.

ANALYSIS

Miller builds a strong essay around two big stories: a phenomenal accomplishment and a moving death.

He has a good ear for coupling dialogue and narration, and projects himself with attractive modesty. Miller offers the reader a chance to appreciate an especially wide range of qualities: empathy, virtuously, wisdom, and generosity, although he misses a good opportunity to describe how he feels about the music he performs, and his conclusion is somewhat trite.

Miller limits his essay to allowing the reader to appreciate one's maturity, but one must have a gentle touch and health emotional distance.

哈佛 50 篇 **essay--4**。经验之歌

“Should I Jump?”

-- Timothy F. Sohn

As I stood atop the old railroad-bridge some six stories above the water, my mind was racing down convoluted paths of thought: Logic and reason would oblige me to get off this rusting trestle, run to my car, fasten my seat belt, and drive home carefully while obeying the speed limit and stopping for any animals which might wander into my path. This banal and utterly safe scenario did not sit well with me.

I felt the need to do something reckless and impetuous.

“Why am I doing this?”

I backed up to where I could no longer see the huge drop which awaited me, and then, my whole body trembling with anticipation, I ran up to the edge, and hurled myself off the bridge.

“Do I have a death wish? Will my next conversation be with Elvis or Jimmy Hoffa?” The first jump off the bridge was like nothing I had ever experienced. I do not have a fascination with death, and I do not display suicidal tendencies, yet I loved throwing myself off that bridge, despite the objections of the logical part of my brain. Standing up there, I recalled from physics that I should be pulled toward the earth with an acceleration of 9.8m/s/s. G-forces meant nothing to me once I stepped off the edge of the bridge, though. I felt like I was in the air for an eternity (although I was actually only in the air for about three seconds).

This leap was at once the most frightening and most exhilarating experience of my life. That synergy of fear and excitement brought about a unique kind of euphoria. Jumping off and feeling the ground fall out from underneath me was incredible. I have rock-climbed and rappelled extensively, but those experiences cannot compare, either in fear or in thrill, to jumping off a bridge.

Once I conquered my initial fear and jumped off, I did it again and again, always searching for that tingling sensation which ran through my limbs the first time I did it, but never quite recapturing the astonishing bliss of that first jump. I have jumped many times since that first time, and all of my jumps have been fun, but none can quite match that first leap. The thrill of that first jump, that elusive rapture, was one of the greatest feelings of my life.

“Wow, I can’t believe I did that!”

When I jumped off that bridge, I was having fun, but I was also rebelling. I was making amends for every time I did the logical thing instead of the fun thing, every time I opted for the least dangerous route throughout my life. I was rising up and doing something blissfully bad, something impetuous. I was acting without thinking of the ramifications, and it was liberating. My whole life, it seemed, had been lived within the constrictive boundaries of logical thought. I overstepped those boundaries when I jumped. I freed myself from the bonds of logic and reason, if for only a few seconds, and that was important.

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ANALYSIS

In this essay, Sohn presents a captivating narrative of an experience that has significantly shaped his attitudes and outlook on life. In order for this narrative form to be successful, the writer must use descriptive language to set the scene and transport the reader to the location and even into the thought process of the narrator. Sohn does this remarkably well. The reader can envision the railroad trestle upon which he stands and even feel the weightlessness of his free-fall thanks to clear, descriptive language. Sohn uses a mature vocabulary and incorporates an internal dialogue to aid the flow of his essay successfully.

The inevitable goal of such a format is for the writer to convey something about his or her personality or individual qualities to the reader. In this case, Sohn wanted the reader to know about his freewheeling side; his ability to take risks, defy logic, and experience danger. The conclusion is also a particular strength of this essay. Sohn takes the isolated event he has described so well and applies it to a broader scheme, showing the reader just how this event was truly significant to his life

“History”

“History”

--by Daniel Droller

The day had been going slowly. On other days I had been more successful in my research on the connection between Switzerland and Nazi gold. However, today I hadn't found anything substantial yet. I couldn't stop myself from looking at my watch to see if a time had come when I could take the shuttle back to Washington. Josh, the other intern, had been luckier. He had found a new piece of information dealing with Herman Goering. Like other information we had uncovered at the National Archives 2, it could be extremely important for the Senate Banking Committee, or just a widely know fact with which we would be wasting our supervisor's time. At any rate, he flagged it for copying and kept on searching his box.

I finished my box of files, checked my watch again, and decided that I could search through one more box before I had to take the hour-long bus ride back. The group of records on the next cart was marked “Top Secret Intercepted Messages from the U.S. Military Attaché in Berne, Switzerland, to the War Department in Washington D.C.” Following the Archives' procedures, I took one box off of the cart, then one folder out of the box, put the box in the middle of the table, and started looking through documents in the folder.

In this folder there was one document that caught my eye. It was dated “23 February 1945” and contained information sent to Washington on bombings of the previous day. Many of the documents I had gone through had recounted battles and bombings as well as the areas affected by these. What was different about this document was that the cities listed as being bombed were Swiss cities. This was very strange because Switzerland was a neutral country and its cities shouldn't have been bombed. I recognized the names of many of the cities that were mentioned in the message, since I had gone to visit these when I had visited my mother's family in Switzerland. They were listed as follows:

B-17's. Fighters at 1240 machine0gunned military post near Lohn north of Scahffhausen. 3 wounded.

At 1235 Stein on Rhine bombed. 7 dead. 16 wounded. 3 children missing.

About halfway through the list I saw the following:

At 1345 BB-17's bombed Rafz. 8 dead, houses destroyed.

I was shocked. My mother is from Rafz, and most of her family still lives there. Even more disturbing was the date of the message. My mother would have been only four years old.

“Josh, you’ll never guess what I just found! The town where my Mom grew up was bombed. She was ... four years old! This is so weird!”

“Yeah, that is pretty weird.” Obviously, Josh wasn’t as enthusiastic as I was. I stayed until the last shuttle at 6:00 to go through the rest of the boxes on the cart, but didn’t find anything nearly as good. I really couldn’t believe it, my Mom had never mentioned anything about a bombing, and I assumed that she didn’t remember it. This made me even more excited because I had uncovered a piece of my history. I couldn’t wait to call home that night.

When I got to the dorm, I said “hi” to a few of the ballerinas and other interns I had met that summer, and ran up to my room. As soon as I got in, I picked up the phone and called home. “Yallo?”

“Hey, Moms!”

“Hi, Daniel. How was work? Did you find anything for Alfonse?”

“Not really, Moms, but...”

“How are the ballerinas?”

“Fine, but Moms. Listen. What do you remember about February 22, 1945?”

There was slight hesitation on her end of the line. It was only for a few seconds, but I thought that I had stumped her. She was only four years old at the time of the bombing; she shouldn’t remember. But in a few seconds she spoke. The jovial manner of before had been replaced by one solemnity. She had remembered.

“That was the day the Americans bombed Rafz.” •

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ANALYSIS

“History” is about the discovery of one’s past. Droller describes his findings of a small, yet significant, piece of history concerning his mother. The reader is not given a complete picture of the applicant’s background. Instead, the essay succeeds in revealing one personal and meaningful moment in Droller’s life that would otherwise not have been captured by the rest of his application.

Through his essay, Droller describes how he accidentally came across a part of his history. What most stands out is the shock and surprise that he feels with his newfound information. While Droller does tell us outright about his excitement, “I had uncovered a piece of my history,” he also illustrates his enthusiasm with the description of his telephone conversation and his impatience to reveal his findings. This leaves the reader wanting to learn more about the details of the bombing and how it affected his family.

The essay’s form could, however, be made stronger. Despite the defining moment found at the very end of the essay, the opening has little direction. There isn’t much indication as to the main point of the essay. A reader would probably be more interested in the details surrounding the bombing, shedding more light on the relationship between mother and son. We are not shown how this discovery affected their relationship or if Droller now thinks differently about his mother based on what she went through during her childhood. A detailed account of the author’s interactions with his mother, and his knowledge of his mother’s childhood, might have made the final realization about the bombing more emotional and revealing about Droller’s character.

“To Soar, Free”

“To Soar, Free”

--by Vanessa G. Henke

A cold, blustery winter storm swept my grandparents and I into the warmth of my aunt’s living room, where she was hosting her traditional Christmas Eve party. My hat and cape were taken from me, revealing the Victorian party dress, which had been designed and painstakingly tailored just for me. The music lifted me, and chills surged through my body. I was enthralled, ecstatic with the power of the orchestra. My excitement mounted as I realized that, for a few brief moments, the audience at the opening night of *The Nutcracker* at New York City’s Lincoln Center was focusing on my performance. At nine years old, this was my long-awaited debut. Any vestige of uncertainty about my performance had dissipated. I was transformed from a shy young girl into a confident performer. ●●

Over the years, as my technique improved and I spent increasing amounts of time each week practicing and performing, I learned to value the discipline required of a professional. Without so many hours dedicated to practice, I would never have been able to execute powerful leaps across the stage in performance. In class, or on stage, the music would pulse through every fiber of my being, my body resonating to every note of the score. I

discovered that discipline and dedication gave me the confidence necessary for me to refine my technique and style, and to fulfill my potential and dream – to dance like another instrument in the orchestra.

This past summer, I taught ballet and choreographed dance at Buck’s Rock Camp for the Creative and Performing Arts. There, I discovered that fulfillment can come not only from soaring across the stage, but by communicating what I have learned to others. I emulated the good techniques of my best teachers, so that my students could find pleasure in dance. For my more advanced students, I offered well-deserved praise and helped them to refine their skills. For students with less experience, I tried to foster self-confidence and create an environment in which they could learn, ask questions and make mistakes without feeling ashamed. The rewards for my efforts were the students’ improved self-confidence and skills. The discipline I learned during my five years with the New York City Ballet helped me understand that with freedom comes responsibility. When I performed at Lincoln Center, I danced across the stage, free, because of the hours of preparation and thoughtful consideration I put into planning classes and rehearsals, inspiring students to be their best. I now have a greater appreciation for the value of my experiences as a performer, I am a more fulfilled person and I feel confident and enthusiastic about future endeavors. I will continue to soar, free.

ANALYSIS

In her essay, the author of “To Soar, Free” demonstrates an understanding that if an essay about a “significant experience or achievement” is to be successful, it must distinguish itself from a pack of surely similar essay topics. Although the author’s chosen topic is not all that different than writing about playing sports or performing other types of art, this essay stands out. The author gracefully highlights the personal importance of performing and teaching ballet, using her progression in the art to reflect her personal and physical growth. Beginning with a childhood memory about her first ballet performance, the author begins to paint a picture for the reader of just how dance has influenced her life. From there, the reader gets a sense of the increasing significance of this activity, to the point where he or she learns that this love for ballet has inspired the author to instruct others in her art form. In her final paragraph, the essayist closes with general conclusions about the lessons she learned through dance.

By beginning her passage with an anecdote about her first major ballet performance, the author distances her piece from a more straightforward

“what-dancing-means-to-me” essay. Instead of spelling out the reasoning behind her love of ballet, the author encourages the reader to continue reading. Not until the end of the fourth sentence does he or she know what exactly has been causing the chills and excitement that the author illustrates so well in the opening sentences. With a setting firmly established, the author is then free to proceed with her narrative. The reader observes the author’s love of dance grew more intense as she got older and became more serious about this activity. Moreover, in the third paragraph, the author introduces an interesting twist to the essay, as she chronicles her experiences on the other side of dance, as a ballet teacher at a summer camp. This complication works well at illuminating the way in which the author learns to see that ballet can offer more fulfillment than just that from the thrill of performance.

Although this essay is effective at highlighting the many ways in which ballet has affected the author’s life, it lacks flow and does not efficiently link its varied points and ideas. The connection between the second and third paragraphs is especially abrupt. This spot is an ideal juncture to suggest the many ways in which dance – aside from its direct performance and practice – has influenced her life. Especially in essays about significant personal experiences or achievements, it is extremely important to make effective use of transitional phrases and words to connect the individual points with the overall theme. Be that as it may, after compiling a solid essay with unique perspectives and dimensions, the author subtracts from her piece by offering clichéd conclusions in the final paragraph that are easy to incorporate into any essay of this form. The challenge is to identify and highlight conclusions unique to the situation.

“One Hundred Pairs of Eyes”

“One Hundred Pairs of Eyes”

--by Patricia M. Glynn

Awareness. An awareness that all eyes from one hundred yards of green grass are focused on a certain point in space is what drives through my thoughts as I stand poised. These eyes disregard the peripheral chatter of spectators, the cold wind whistling in the night air around them, and the harshness of the white lights over the field. They focus only on this one spot before my hands and, to begin their show, they wait for a simple motion, a mere flick of the wrist. As a tingling sensation arises in my fingertips, I lift my hands in preparation.

One hundred pairs of eyes breathe in unison across the hundred yards, and my hands descend in a practiced pattern toward that one point in space. It is that point where the hundred pairs of eyes release their breath into their various instruments, where the music is created, and where the show begins. • •

This experience is one that I get to relive every Friday night while conducting the Plymouth High School marching band in its weekly half-time performance for the football fans. While I have performed as one of the pairs of eyes, as conductor and Senior Drum major I feel a greater part of the show than I ever did before. I feel every note and every phrase of music from every instrument, and I pull even more music from those instruments. Their intensity is sparked from my intensity, and mine builds on theirs. The intensity is not only from the music; it comes from the eyes. It's my eyes scanning the field, scouting for problems, and brokering confidence that command an intensity in response. This is the greatest feeling in the world.

As my motions become larger and larger and my left hand pushes upward, I demand volume from the band while it crescendos toward its final notes. Building volume and drive, this music sends a tingling sensation from my fingertips through my wrists and pulsing through my body. My shoulders ache but keep driving the beat, and my emotions are keyed up. As the brass builds and the band snaps to attention in the last picture of the show, the percussion line pushes the music with a driving hit. Musicians and conductor alike climax with the music until reaching that same instant in time. With a rigorous closing of my fists, the music stops, but the eyes hold their focus, instruments poised, until a smile stretches across my face and my features relax, tingling with pent up emotion. Applause.

ANALYSIS

An essay that asks for discussion of an important extracurricular activity may be just the place for an applicant to discuss in greater detail why participating in student government makes his or her world go' round. But as in this case, the essay may also offer an opportunity for an applicant to further describe a unique or unconventional interest. "One Hundred Pairs of Eyes" details the author's experiences as conductor of her high school football band – a position that on paper may not carry much weight, despite its many responsibilities. Through her description of leading one hundred musicians in the complexities of a half-time show, the reader gains unique insight into being at the helm of a marching band – a position from which few people have observed the perspective.

The author begins her essays with rich description –she is the point of focus for one hundred sets of eyes. By personifying the eyes, the author paints a marvelous picture of the scene. The reader can almost sense the position from which she must be standing and the enormity of the group at her feet. But he or she is left to wonder what sort of awkward situation may be causing this unique scenario. Just as the author creates an intense sensation of tension in the essay, the reader too holds his or her breath in advance of the announcement that Glynn is the leader of a marching band. As she continues, the author contrasts her-experiences as conductor with those of being a performer, shedding light on the exhilaration of holding the gaze of the hundred musicians who look to her for rhythm and tempo. And with descriptive language in the third paragraph, the author encourages the reader to push onward, toward the finale of both the music and the essay. The passage ends with an impressive sense of relief both for the band members and the reader.

“The Lost Game”

“The Lost Game”

--by Stephanie A. Stuart

When I was little my father used to play a game with me driving home. Its main substance was something like this: he would say, oh no, I seem to be lost; how shall we get home? And then he would ask, which way? Gleefully, I would crane my neck above the seat; according to the game, his befuddlement was hopeless, and I alone as navigator could bring us home. No doubt I seemed contrary as I directed him further and further down back streets, but my secret incentive was exploration. As a small child there is very little one can control in one’s world; to have control over an entire grown-up – not to mention a whole car – was tremendously appealing. The real allure, though, was in going the “wrong” way – as soon as we turned left where we usually turned right, the world was so brand new it might have only appeared the moment we rounded the corner. My heart would beat below my throat as I gave the direction to turn, stretching my neck from my place in the backseat, eager and afraid: suppose I did really get us lost? The secret desire to discover always won out over the fear, but I can still recall the flutter of my heart on the inside of my ribs as I navigated the roundabout connections which was as mysterious as the Northwest Passage, lone link between the cul-de-sacs.

Exploration was a quest I took to heart; alone, I would set out on expeditions into our back yard, or down the street, creating a mental map concentric to our doorstep. Discovery

bloomed magical for me; marked on the map were the locations of abandoned tree houses, bell=blue flowers and plants with flat powdery leaves the size of silver dollars.

The other night it fell to my brother and me to return a movie. After we left it on the counter, though, our sense of adventure got the better of us. Oh dear, I said, I seemed to be lost. Where shall I go? Eager to discover the town which smoldered at one o'clock under the orange and violet of sodium street lamps, he chose the road less traveled, at least by our wheels.

We wound into the pine forest in the dead of night; moonlight feel eerie across our laps, stiated by tree trunks. I crested a hill slowly: Monterey spread in a lighted grid below us, down to the darkening sea.

Above, the Milky Way sprang apart and arched like a dance. I angled my ear for a moment to Gatsby's-tuning fork, that pure, enticing tone that echoes from the spheres. Think, remember, I wished upon him, what it is to explore, and the explorer's incentive: discovery.

"Which way?" I asked him, and he grinned slowly, moonlight glinting far-off mischief in his eyes. The streets spread orthogonal before us; the pure realm of possibility opened from them.

"Straight ahead," he said, and I smiled.

ANALYSIS

Stephanie's essay falls into the life experiences category. However, rather than focusing on a single life-changing experience, Stephanie shows her approach toward personal discovery by relating the story of riding in a car and changing the standard directions as a means of stumbling upon unexplored worlds. The essay is well controlled – at no point does she stray toward overstating the significance of these individual events, but deftly uses them as a tool to illustrate her adventure-seeking attitude toward life and her unwillingness to be satisfied with the routine. Stephanie further highlighted the importance of discovery when she submitted the essay to the admissions office on U.S. Geological Survey maps – a thoughtful touch.

The essay's greatest asset is the sense of personal development Stephanie conveys.

What begins as a cute story of her childhood is used wonderfully to highlight her personal development as she writes of a tenet in her life: "Think, remember ... what it is to explore, and the explorer's incentive: discovery." Stephanie avoids listing her accomplishments in a resume put into sentence form, but still captures important aspects of her identity, namely her inquisitiveness. The essay is well-paced and calm, with a solid development from

beginning to end. Stephanie describes sensory aspects of her story (“flat, powdery leaves the size of silver dollars”) with great word choice without overdoing it. It is clear that every word in the essay was carefully chosen to accurately and succinctly describe her subject. Not only does her essay successfully paint a picture of her as an curious little child, it shows that the same inquisitiveness she exhibited then she still possesses, now coupled with more responsibility, as she drives her brother and encourages his inquisitiveness.

The biggest risk in this essay is that it does not adequately showcase her accomplishments, normally a standard part of a college essay. While it worked for her, this has much to do with the extraordinary level of care she took in crafting the essay; her diligence shows, and the essay is an insightful, well-written, and well-paced piece of work.

“Warm Hearts and a Cold Gun”



“Warm Hearts and a Cold Gun”

--by James A. Colbert

If a six-foot-tall man slinging a semi-automatic rifle had approached me in Greenfield, I probably would have screamed for help. However, being in a foreign land, unable even to speak the native tongue, my options of recourse were significantly limited. The looming creature, dressed mostly in black, with short, dark hair, proceeded to grasp my right hand. As a smile furtively crept across his face, he mouthed, “Time to get on the bus.”

“What?” I nervously sputtered at the cold weapon before me.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t introduce myself,” he said. “I’m Ofir, your counselor.”

Completely unnerved, I hurried onto the bus to be sure the gun remained at his side. “Did you know one of our leaders is a guy with a gun?” I asked a girl from Philadelphia, sitting beside me.

“What did you expect? This is Israel, not New England.”

At the end of my junior year I decided to go to Israel to escape from the stimulating but confining atmosphere of Deerfield Academy. I yearned for a new environment where I could meet students unlike the ones I knew, where I could explore a foreign culture, and where I could learn more about my religion. The brochure from the Nesiya Institute had mentioned a “creative journey” featuring hikes in the desert, workshops with prominent Israeli artists, dialogues between Arabs and Jews, and discussions on Israeli culture and

Judaism, but nowhere had it mentioned counselors with rifles. I suddenly wondered if I had made the right decision.

Weeks later, sitting outside the Bayit Va'gan Youth hostel as the sun began to sink in the Israeli sky, I smiled with reassurance. As I looked up from writing in my journal, a group of misty clouds converged to form an opaque mass. But the inexorable sun demonstrated her tenacity. One by one, golden arrows pierced the celestial canopy to illuminate the lush, green valley between Yad Vashem and the hills of western Jerusalem. I could feel holiness in those rays of golden light that radiated from the sun like spokes of a heavenly wheel.

That moment was one of the most spiritual of my life. The natural grandeur of the sight seemed to bring together the most meaningful experiences of my five weeks in Israel: watching the sunrise over the Red Sea, wading chest-deep through a stream in the Golan Heights, looking up at the myriad stars in the desert sky, exploring a cave in Negev, and climbing the limestone precipice of Masada. These natural temples far surpassed any limestone sanctuary built by man.

Shifting my gaze downwards, I noticed Ofir standing beside me with his eyes fixed on the sacred valley. At age twenty-five, his head was already balding, but the expression on his face, with his eyes stretched wide and his jaws parted, reminded me of a child starting with delight at a fish in an aquarium. For over a minute neither of us spoke. That poignant silence said more than a thousand words could ever express.

Being an empirical person, I need confirmation, to prove to myself that I understood.

• •

Finally, I said to Ofir, "This is holiness." His weapon bounced as he swiveled to look me in the eye. As he nodded in affirmation, a beam of light transcended his pupils to produce a telling spark of corroboration.

Emerson said in "Nature," "The sun illuminates only the eye of man, but shines into the eye and heart of the child." I carried an L. L. Bean backpack, and Ofir carried an Uzi, but that afternoon as the sun warmed our hearts, we were both children.

ANALYSIS

The topic of this essay works well because it conveys the author's personal growth from an experience unique to most American students. His declaration of his decision to leave the atmosphere of his boarding school to travel abroad establishes him as a student willing to broaden his horizons and venture to the unknown. The initial comparison of Israel to his hometown is thoughtfully phrased and expresses his honest feelings.

The author is extremely concise in this essay, describing everything that is necessary and leaving out unnecessary details. His personal voice is evident. Rather than give plain descriptions of the places he visited, the author recalls his personal reaction to seeing such places, therefore allowing the reader to get to know the writer's own perspective.

The dialogue in this essay is also succinct, but complete. The author integrates other voices in his essay because those voices are part of his experience abroad. Finally, the closing quote from Emerson's "Nature" is well used and ties together with the poignant imagery of the contrasting L. L. Bean backpack and Uzi, leaving the reader with a vision of what the writer experienced.

"In the Waiting Room"

"In the Waiting Room"

By Carlin E. Wing

You will not think, my mind firmly informed me; you are much too busy being nervous to think. I sat in the mother of all waiting rooms. My pen traveled frantically across the pages of my black book, recording every detail of the room in fragments that passed for poetry. I tried to write something deeply insightful about the procedure I was about to undergo but failed to produce even an opening sentence. These were the final minutes before my hand would be separated from my pen for ten weeks. Even if I could not think, I needed to write. My eyes became my pen and I wrote:

Waiting Room

The name dictates the atmosphere The walls,
papered in printed beige, ●● Are dotted with pastel
picture. Two square columns interrupt the room,
Attended by brown plastic trash bins.
An undecided carpet of green, black, gray, red, blue Mirrors
the undecided feelings of the occupants.

And none of these mask the inevitable tension of the space.

I paused and lifted my head to stare at The Door that led to my fate.

My fate was to have wrist surgery. Three years before, I had been told that the fracture in my wrist would heal. Earlier this year, I was again sitting in front of X-rays and MRI results listening to the doctor say that the old fracture had been an indication that the ligaments

and tendons were torn. I could have declined to have surgery and never played competitive squash again. It was never an option.

I am a jock. My competitive personality finds a safe place to release itself on a playing field. My strongest motivation is the prospect of doing what no one expects I can do. However, the hardest competition I face is that of my own expectations. Squash allows me to put the perfectionist in me to good use. The beauty of squash, and sports in general, is that I never reach an anti-climax because there is always a higher level to reach for. Squash requires a healthy wrist. Surgery would make my wrist healthy. My immediate reaction to the doctor's words was "Yes, I want surgery. How soon can it be done? How long until I can play squash again? Can I watch?" No one understood that last part. My parents jokingly told their friends about my desire to observe the surgery, and the doctor was adamantly opposed to the idea.

But I had not been joking. It was my wrist they were going to be working on. I thought that entitled me to watch. Anyhow, I had never seen an operation and was fascinated by the idea of someone being able to sew a tendon back together. I had this image of a doctor pulling out the needle and thread and setting to work, whistling. Perhaps subconsciously I wanted to supervise the operation, to make sure that all the little pieces were sewn back into the right places (admittedly not a very rational thought since I wouldn't know by sight if they were sewing them together or tearing them apart). I understood the doctor's fear that I would panic and mess up the operation. Still, I wanted to watch. I felt it would give me a degree of control over this injury that had come to dominate my life without permission. Unfortunately, the final decision was not mine to make and the surgery was to go unrecorded by my eyes, lost in the memories of doctors who perform these operations daily.

The Door opened and I looked up, tingling with hope and apprehension. In response to the nurse's call a fragile elderly lady in a cashmere sweater and flowered scarf was wheeled towards The Door by her son. As she passed me I overheard her say, "Let's rock and roll." The words echoed in my ears and penetrated my heart. As I watched her disappear beyond The Door, I silently thanked her for the sudden dose of courage she had unknowingly injected in me. If she could do it, I could do it. I was next and before too long I was lying on a gurney in a room filled with doctors. I told the anesthesiologist that I did not want to be put to sleep, even though a curtain hid the actual operation from my sight. I said "Hi" to Dr. Melone and, as the operation began, sang contentedly along with the Blues Brothers.

ANALYSIS

Chronicling an intimate moment or other personal experience requires particular attention and care in the essay-writing process. An author must be conscious that he or she creates an appropriate sense of balance that at once captures the reader while allowing for a sense of genuine personal reflection to show through. To be sure, the risk of turning the reader off with overly personal details or unnecessarily deep conclusions is a constant threat. However, “In the Waiting Room” reflects a successful attempt at convincing the reader that the author’s wrist surgery merits his or her attention. Although unfocused, this work demonstrates that an essay about an otherwise insignificant topic can in fact be insightful and even touching. By establishing a strong sense of tension at the beginning of the essay, “In the Waiting Room” succeeds where other personal reflection works often falter. The author does not begin with a topic sentence or other device that states the essay’s point right away. To do so in this sort of essay would be to make the piece too much like a “what-I-did-last-summer” narrative. Instead, the reader is kept in suspense until the second paragraph of the piece of that which is causing the author’s angst. Only then does the author spell out that it is his impending wrist surgery – and not a shot or test results – which has caused such great anxiety. As the essay continues, the author uses the occasion of waiting for the surgery to reflect on many of his complementary attributes: writer, athlete, coward and stoic. Overall, the writing is clear and unpretentious.

Yet in illustrating his multiple roles, the author tends to lose focus of the essay’s overall point. Where it seems like the author portrays himself as an avid writer from the flow of the first paragraph, the reader is surprised to learn that the author is actually a self-described “jock” who plays squash. Before returning to the topic of the operation, the author takes another moment to reflect on his motivation for participating in sports. The essay loses significant steam and regains it only with the announcement that the author hopes to observe his own surgery. While interesting independently, these complications distract from the overall point. An essayist must be aware of the need to ensure that the flow of writing maintains a definite sense of direction – and doesn’t meander too far from that path.

“My Responsibility”

“My Responsibility”

--by David J. Bright



When she hung up the phone, she immediately burst into tears and grabbed out in all directions for something to hold onto as she sank to the floor. I stood there motionless, not

knowing what to do, not knowing what to say, not even knowing what had happened. It wasn't until I answered the door moments later and saw the police officers standing in the alcove that I finally discovered what had taken place. My fifteen-year-old brother had been arrested. It was only ten days before Christmas, a year ago today when it happened, but still I remember it like yesterday.

Robert had always been a rambunctious as a child – wild and lively, as my mom always said. He was constantly joking around, playing pranks, and causing mayhem, but his engaging personality and small stature always seemed to save him from the firing line. This gave him the notion that he could cause any amount of trouble without feeling the repercussions. As a youngster growing up in Ireland, he had found few opportunities to get into a great deal of trouble. But four years ago at the age of twelve, the rules changed for him when he, my mother and I moved to America.

The same short stature that had been his ally in Ireland was now Robert's enemy in America. He was bullied and beaten on a daily basis. Since I couldn't be there all the time, Robert sought the protection from others. By the end of his first year in America, he had already joined a gang.

His appearance deteriorated, personality disappeared, and aggressiveness increased, leaving him an angry, hollowed out, manic depressive. After a year or so, his frighteningly self-destructive behavior and terrifying appearance forced my mom to send him to a suicide treatment center. There he received round the clock attention, counseling, and medication for his depression and aggressiveness. He was released after a couple of months.

Only a few short weeks later, supposedly after mixing his medication with alcohol, he went out with his friends to go to the store. There they robbed, shot and killed a store clerk Robert, as an accomplice to the crime, was charged with armed robbery and second degree murder.

Looking back now, I realize not what Robert had done wrong, but what I had done wrong. I had taken no interest in his welfare, and I never intervened when he needed me to. I just sat back and let it all come crashing down around me. It's in this respect that I guess I've changed the most. I'm now a much more involved person. I no longer allow things to just happen' I must be a part of everything that affects me. I'm also a more caring and better person. To make up for what I did – or rather, didn't do – I look out for those around me, my family and my friends. I act like a big brother to them to compensate for not being any kind of brother at all to Robert.

The experience hasn't only made me better. In a strange way, it was also the best thing that could have happened to Robert. He's turned his life around and is presently preparing to take the SATs in anticipation to go on to college, something the old Robert would never have done.

I guess it's sort of weird, isn't it. Such a dreadful experience can change an entire family's life, and how-such a tragic situation could give birth to such great things.

ANALYSIS

Bright's intensely personal essay shows us the positive outcome of what seems like an overwhelmingly negative experience, that is, the arrest of his brother. Through his talkative, intimate writing style, Bright is able to reach his readers because he does not take a sentimental or moralistic tone. The strength of this essay lies in its honesty and its ability not only to criticize his brother, Robert, for his transgression, but to reprimand the author for his, as well. What makes this essay so unique is that Bright finds himself at fault and demonstrates his personal growth from his mistakes, unlike most college essays that are highly self-adulating in nature. Through accurately assessing where he went wrong by not acting like a true brother to Robert, Bright's piece is more impressive than most college essays.

Another great strength of Bright's essay is the maturity he displays by being able to take the blame for his brother's demise. This is a characteristic of a true big brother, one who knows how much his siblings admire and respect him, as well as value his judgment. Instead of harshly reproaching Robert for his crime, Bright turns to himself and how he "had taken no interest in his [Robert's] welfare." Furthermore, Bright illustrates how he was mature enough to learn from his errors and improve himself: "I act like a big brother ... to compensate for not being any kind of brother at all to Robert." Bright is able to see that there are positive aspects of this bad experience and then applies them to his life; he shows to us that he is willing to change himself and make up for what he did not do for Robert by becoming "a much more involved person." In his essay, many aspects of Bright shine through: his maturity and strength, as well as his capacity to see a bright silver lining on what looks like a black thundercloud. Qualities such as these are ultimately the most important in terms of measuring who one is.

The only thing that Bright might have added to his essay is more of what happened to Robert. We learn that Robert was arrested, and is now studying for his SATs and preparing to go to college, but we are not told what happened to him between his arrest and his self-improvement. How did Robert decide to turn his life around? What challenges did he face? The second to last paragraph might need a little more detail as to how Robert went through the process of becoming who he is today. Yet, aside from this one minor comment, the essay stands on its own – it jumps out at the reader for its uniqueness, for its quiet, yet powerful, personal revelations.

“The Line”

“The Line”

--by Daniel B. Visel

“There is no chance,” wrote Ella Wheeler Wilcox, “no destiny, no fate, that can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul.” These words are from her poem “Will,” a favorite of my Aunt May. Though Mrs. Wilcox’s words on chance and destiny never really caught my ear when Aunt May read it to me so many times, those words resonated in my head December 9, 1994, a day that I will never forget. On that day, I stood before Judge Stanley Pivner to testify against my best friend, Wyatt. The workings of fate are strange indeed: Wyatt and I had been friends since kindergarten, when we went to Suzuki violin lessons together. We had been the best of all possible friends in grade school, helped each other through the troubled junior high years, and have remained close through high school. Our paths, though, had led us in different directions: I spent all my time studying for classes, while he invested time and money in soaping up his 1986 Dodge Ram. College didn’t seem the necessity to him that it did for me: Wyatt lived for the moment. The future, for him, would be dealt with when he came to it.

Wyatt’s crowd was a wild bunch. I was wary of them – they did dangerous things. Somehow, I didn’t associate Wyatt with any of this, thought: he was Wyatt, my friend, a known quantity. I guess I had been too busy studying to notice how much he had changed. It didn’t hit me until a Thursday night my senior year == the night that Wyatt pulled up in his truck and asked if I was doing anything. I had finished my math homework for the week, and had a good start on a draft of the term paper I was writing on Dutch painters, so I said that I wasn’t. I got in the truck with Wyatt, and we hit the road, heading to Barberton.

“Why are we going to Barberton?” I asked Wyatt.

“I got a plan,” he replied, sounding dark. I noticed that there was a funny odor in the car – it smelled like beer. Had Wyatt been drinking? I wondered. I didn’t say anything, though; I didn’t want to lose face in front of someone I respected. There was a pained silence in the car as we sped towards Barberton. As I kept a firm eye on the road, making sure that Wyatt wasn’t swerving or driving too fast, I recollected that Friday was the day of the Barberton football game.

We pulled up in the lot of the Barberton high school. I remained silent. To this day, I wonder why I didn’t say something, why I couldn’t find words to stop him. We got out of the truck;

Wyatt got a pair of lockcutters out from under his seat, and I followed him around the back of the high school. You could puncture the silence with a stiletto.

I realized, too late, what was happening. Barberton was our high school rival; every year, people from our school talked about kidnapping the Barberton mascot, a male baboon named Heracles that they kept in a shed behind the school. Nobody actually did anything about it, though. Wyatt, though, seemed intent on changing that. I followed dumbly, my heart heavy with angst.

“Wyatt, this is lunacy,” I told him. He said nothing, only smiled menacingly. I could smell the alcohol on his breath. I didn’t know what to do; I followed his directions when he told me to stand guard. Quickly and skillfully he cut the lock holding the door shut, then opened the door. It was pitch-black inside the shed; Heracles was evidently asleep. He called out the beast’s name; something stirred inside, there was a yawn, and Heracles came shambling out. I had never seen the monkey before; I was surprised at how friendly and well-mannered he was. He scrutinized us, looking for some kind of a handout I guess – how was he to know what Wyatt had in mind? Wyatt was impressed with Heracles’s friendliness: he told me that this was going to be easier than we had thought. The monkey good-naturedly followed us back to the parking lot. With a little work, we succeeded in getting him into the back of the pickup truck. Wyatt threw a tarp over him, we got in the cab, and we started off, my brain full of anxiety.

Heracles, though, didn’t seem to like the back of the truck that much. Somehow, he managed to get out from under the tarp; with a bound, he had jumped from the truck to the parking lot. Something tripped in Wyatt right then; to this day, I’m not sure what it was. I suspect it was the alcohol.

You have to draw the line somewhere. On that day, what started off as a simple high school prank went horribly wrong. It’s important to support your friends, but there are some things that are simply not allowed – and running over a monkey with a pickup truck is one of them. Wyatt was out of control that night. Rage took hold of him: he was no longer my friend, he had sunk lower than the ape crushed beneath the wheels of his truck. And so, on a chilly day in December, I found myself on the witness stand, forced to bear witness against my best friend. Ella Wheeler Wilcox’s words coursed through my blood that day: fate had taken the paths of our lives apart, but I was determined to do what was right. To follow the truth is a difficult path: it requires determination, a determination that I did not have the night we drove to Barberton. I learned something that night. It’s a lesson that will stay with me my whole life.

ANALYSIS

Every application, just as every applicant, is unique. Everyone has a different story to tell. This applicant does a good job of telling the story of an experience that changed his life; although his story is a bit longer than is usual for an application, it is generally tight. The language is somewhat flowery: the number of superfluous adjectives and adverbs could be cut down. Some details might be thought of as extraneous. Nobody needs to know that the name of the mascot was Heracles, for example. However, such details as these put a human spin on the essay; the reader has an easy time constructing a mental picture of the applicant.

While this application has a strong story, the structure which brings it together is somewhat weak. The quote, while it may have deep personal significance to the author, seems like it could have been a random motivational quote grabbed off the internet. Though the author tries hard to integrate it into the story, he never really succeeds; it seems, finally, irrelevant.

♦♦

This essay shines in that it gives the reader an idea of some qualities that would not be brought out in the rest of the application. Loyalty, determination, and honor are not virtues that can be exhibited in a resume. The author presents a difficult situation: torn between friendship and honesty, he chooses the latter. A few questions remain unanswered. Where is “Wyatt” now? Why does the author’s resolution of principles take so long to come about? Nonetheless, Dan remains a poster boy for honesty, a virtue colleges are all too happy to rally behind.

“Entering a Shaded World”

“Entering a Shaded World”

-- by Ezra S. Tessler

Bending my head to pass through the low doorway I blinked deliberately, allowing my eyes to adjust to the dim light of the cavernous room. Everything was a clouded dream, one that you are unable to disentangle as it spins through your unconscious, but which somehow begins to unravel and become clearer only after you have awakened. As my eyes adjusted to the darkness into which I had just entered, I caught sight of the seated figure illuminated

by the dim light. I was unable to tell if he was miles away in my world or inches away in a distant world.

I approached the dark figure, knowing that his eyes had felt my presence but were occupied and could wait to meet my nearing figure with a familiar face. Then, he raised his head slowly from the drawing in his lap, his soft dark eyes focusing on mine as he gave a slight nod and a gentle smile, acknowledging me with a few muffled words in Spanish. I studied the face and noticed the subtle details. He was barely thirty, but his face was creased with lines of struggle, pressed into a clay mask by many hard years. His dark countenance transported me through time to a place where I stood in front of a noble Aztec leader.

I had come to this land to experience a different culture, to learn a foreign language, and to encounter new people. I had arrived in his studio like a blank canvas: he had found it, stretched it, and prepared it for the transformation that would soon take place. With a gentle hand he had lifted his paintbrush from his palette, and passionately sweeping his brush across the canvas, he had created a new composition in me. He then carefully handed me the new painting, and with it, his palette and paintbrush, still holding the paint he had used. I left containing the shades of his world and holding the tools needed to face my world.

His eyes shaded by memory., he had told me with humble pride the stories of his people. He had recounted his struggles his fighting in the revolution, and his combat in the countryside of Chiapas. He had described the oppression he and his family had suffered from the government, all with the gentle breeze of hope blowing through his words. ■

He had looked at me one day as we both sat hunched over our sketchbooks, and whispered in his lingering Spanish a single thought: even if things did not change, even if his hope was not fulfilled, he still had something that no government could take away, something that was his own and would wither away only after he had breathed his last breath. His soul was his, and he wanted to share it through his artwork.

My mind floated back into the cave, where it blinked, rubbed its eyes, and soared above the scene. The scene had two figures facing each other, inches away in place and time, but years away in experience, slowly connected inwardly as they proceeded in being amidst each other, joined by a connecting truth and by the soft light which threw its buoyant flicker over the two masses, distorting and twisting them into infinite and amorphous shapes wavering on the muted wall.

ANALYSIS

This is an example of how an essay doesn't necessarily have to tell something about the author forthright. Although he succumbs occasionally to the use of clichés, Tessler is talented at writing, and he exhibits this talent unrestrained in a piece at once mysterious and engaging. It doesn't try to be an ordinary essay, nor does it try to sneak in a list of achievements. Tessler constructs the essay as though it were a painting, filling it with detailed color and showing – not telling – everything he observes and imagines, unafraid to delve into the abstract.

Subtle aspects of Tessler's writing style produce a sense of enigmatic fantasy which emphasizes his ability to write and yet may confuse the reader./ the first paragraph sets the stage for the essay by casting a "clouded dream" of confusion even on the part of the author, unsure of who is in what world, vacillating between the conscious and subconscious. And in the last paragraph, he separates his mind from himself and refers to this mind in the third person. Through such techniques, he envelops the reader in his imagination. The story is likely to be different from most college essays and would help instill a lasting impression on his critical readership.

Unfortunately, some might find this mystery to be too extreme. Certain fundamental ideas, such as where Tessler is and with whom he is interacting, are unclear. And the point of the essay seems lost if one does not consider the exhibition of writing style and imagination to be a major aspect of the piece. This may be to Tessler's disadvantage if the admissions staff reading this essay is left more in a state of bewilderment at what the essay was about than of admiration at Tessler's writing aptitude.

For the most part, however, the reader is likely to be left with a sense of satisfaction after reading this work, particularly due to its unusual nature. Taking the risk of slightly confusing the reader, in this case, is not inadvisable. If the reader is confused, the writing-style will certainly make up for this. And if the reader is not confused, the essay succeeds in strengthening Tessler's application.

哈佛 50 篇 **essay--5**。影响

"Dandelion Dreams"

By Emmeline Chuang

My big sister once told me that if I shut my eyes and blew on a dandelioin puff, all of my wishes would come true. I used to believe her and would wake up early in the morning to

go dandelion hunting. How my parents must have laughed to see me scrambling out in the backyard, plucking little gray weeds, and blowing out the seeds until my cheeks hurt.

I made the most outrageous wishes. I wished to own a monkey, a parrot, and a unicorn; I wished to grow up and be just like She-Ra, Princess of Power. And, of course, I wished for a thousand more wishes so I would never run out.

I always believed my wishes would come true. When they didn't, I ran to my sister and demanded an explanation. She laughed and said I just hadn't done it right.

"It only works if you do it a certain way," she told me with a little smile. I watched her with side, admiring eyes and thought she must be right. She was ten years older than me and knew the ways of the world; nothing she said could be wrong. I went back and tried again.

Time passed, and I grew older. My "perfect" sister left home – not telling my parents where she had gone. Shocked by her apparent fall from grace, I spent most of my time staring out the window. I wondered where she had gone and why she hadn't told us where she was going. Occasionally, I wandered outside to pluck a few dandelions and wish for my sister's return. Each time, I hoped desperately that I had done it the right way and that the wish would come true.

But it never happened.

After a while, I gave up – not only on my sister – but on the dandelions as well. Shock had changed to anger and then to rejection of my sister and everything she had told me. The old dreamer within me vanished and was replaced by a harsh teen-age cynic who told me over and over that I should have known better than to believe in free wishes. It chided me for my past belief in unicorns and laughed at the thought of my growing up to be a five foot eleven, sleek She-Ra. It told me to stop being silly and sentimental and to realize the facts of life, to accept what I was and what my sister was, and live with it.

For a while I tried. I abandoned my old dreams, my old ideas, and threw myself entirely into school and the whole dreary rat race of scrabbling for grades and popularity. After a time, I even began to come out ahead and could start each day with an indifferent shrug instead of a defeated whimper. Yet none of it made me happy. For some reason, I kept on thinking about dandelions and my sister.

I tried to forget about both, but the edge of my anger and disillusionment wore away and the essence of my old self started to seep through again. Despite the best efforts of the cynic in me, I continually found myself staring out at those dandelions – and making wishes.

It wasn't the same as before, of course. Most of my old dreams and ideals had vanished forever. Certainly, I could never wish for a unicorn as a pet and actually mean it now. No, my dreams were different now, less based on fantasy and more on reality.

Dreams of becoming a princess in a castle or a magical sorceress had changed into hopes of someday living in the woods and writing novels like J. D. Salinger, or playing Tchaikovsky's Concerto in A to orchestral accompaniment. These were the dreams that floated through my mind now. They were tempered by a caution that hadn't been there before, but they were there. For the first time since my sister's departure, I was acknowledging their presence.

I had to, for it was these dreams that diluted the pure meaninglessness of my daily struggles in school and made me happy. It was these dreams and the hope of someday fulfilling them that ultimately saved me from falling into the clutches of the dreaded beast of apathy that lurked alongside the trails of the rat race. Without them, I think I would have given up and stumbled off the tracks long ago.

It took a long time for me to accept this truth and to admit that my cynical self was wrong in denying me my dreams, just as my youthful self had been wrong in living entirely within them. In order to succeed and survive, I needed to find a balance between the two.

My sister was right; I hadn't been going after my dreams the right way. Now I know better. This time around, when I go into the garden and pick my dandelion puff, my wishes will come true.

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