

College Essay Writing Workshop 2019

*Example Essays and
Writing Activities*

The Writing Center and the CCO

*Online resources can be found
at PopulationMe.com*

1 Quick Look Examples

1A UCAS Example ([studential.com](https://www.studential.com))

Geography is the study of the world, and as geographers we hold the keys to the world's problems. Geography encompasses many things from natural disasters, ecosystems, to globalisation and development, all of which are areas which fascinate me. It is essential for deciphering and solving the issues that the world is faced with, and by furthering my geographical knowledge, it will enhance my ability to tackle the imminent problems such as overpopulation.

My studies have inspired me to further my knowledge. I am a member of the Royal Geographical Society and a regular attendee of their lectures. Sir Crispin Tickell's talk on the human future and his Malthusian view fascinated me, as it couples my passion for food with Geography. Due to this I have focused my Extended Project Qualification on agricultural sustainability. My research has led me to look into agricultural processes, destruction of ecosystems, and questions related to pesticide usage. Reading Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' highlighted the impacts of pesticides, because diseases such as cancer and Down syndrome are linked with their overuse. As part of my wider research I enjoyed reading periodicals such as *The Geographical Review*, *The Economist*, *The Guardian* and the *Geographical*. An article from the *Geographical* investigating how sustainable agriculture is implemented in low income countries intrigued me. A method used was vermicomposting, a procedure which allows farmers to create compost from waste. This is cost efficient and sustainable, demonstrating alternatives to current farming techniques.

I have been involved in a range of aspects in my fieldwork, from constructing the trip to the establishment of the initial hypotheses. These trips have enabled me to reinforce my geographical skills, particularly in relation to interpreting and analysing information and data. I was able to see the cross-curricular links my world cities unit had, consolidating my Economics and History knowledge, allowing me to understand how cities develop historically and their wider significance to the world economy.

In addition to my studies, I have taken advantage of numerous opportunities to refine my skills. At my internships at KPMG, Fidelity Worldwide Investments, and Ernst and Young, I assisted in the completion of reports and proposals under strict deadlines, whilst also presenting at partner meetings. Also, I have raised over £3,500 for various charities and completed my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. This has allowed me to apply both my navigation and map reading skills learnt in class to navigate the planned route for the expedition.

Furthermore, I was selected to represent the UK in the International Space Design Competition at the Johnson Space Centre in Texas. Competing with Argentine, American and British students, I was elected president of the international team. During the competition I was able to apply all the skills I had learnt in my extra-curricular activities. We produced an in-depth proposal, detailing everything about our space settlement, from the logistics of building and transporting resources into space, to the costing of the whole structure; all in an attempt to win the contract in just forty-eight hours.

Geography is constantly evolving and relevant. This drives my passion for the subject; I believe that the skills I have attained through my outgoing nature alongside my passion for the subject make me a valued addition to your institution. I am sociable, ambitious and academically able, but most importantly dedicated.

1B Common App Example from Fiske (W. Thanheiser, Princeton acceptance)

Before last year I had always thought of myself as a very shy, uncreative, introspective individual. And I was happy that way. I had found my little niche in the Kinkaid society. I was the jock who excelled in sports and also managed to make pretty good grades as well. But I wasn't an artist. I hadn't taken an art class since eighth grade, and I only took it then because it was required. I didn't think I was good at acting, or drawing, or playing an instrument. So I never did. Truthfully, it was because I was way too insecure about myself to risk humiliation. I was a perfectionist. I wasn't accustomed to failure, and didn't really see a point in trying it out now.

However, it is required that each student receive a fine arts credit before graduating from my high school. So, I decided to take Children's Theatre my junior year. A couple of my friends were going to do it with me, and I had heard that hardly any artistic ability was needed. So I gave it a shot. I started out very timidly, not volunteering for improvisational exercises or looking for a big part in our major production, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. I didn't want to make a fool out of myself. But for some strange reason, our teacher saw some sort of hidden talent inside of me. She had seen me play football in front of thousands of people, so she knew she could rid me of my stage fright. And besides, how could I be intimidated by children less than half my age? Slowly the whole acting thing grew on me. I went from speaking in my own deep-toned voice to adopting the personality and traits of one of the central characters in the play, Grandpa Joe. I found myself really enjoying performing for elementary students from my school as well as some underprivileged schools around Houston. And besides, they made me feel funny. They had no idea that I really wasn't a good actor or funny at all. They just enjoyed the show.

My newfound artistic confidence encouraged me to try other new things as well. I became a much more social person. Whereas I used to just hang out with a select group of friends, I began trying to associate with more and more members of my class, as well as meet new people from other schools. I began opening up more to my family instead of keeping everything bottled up inside of me. Now this didn't just happen right away, and I still hang out primarily with my same group of friends. In fact, our relationships were made even stronger. However, I am really trying to become a more approachable and personable young man. And I think I am doing a pretty good job up to this point. But this "transformation" is an ongoing process, and I hope the college experience will only help to facilitate its development. (499 words)

1C Supplemental (Nazlı Köylüoğlu, Stanford University acceptance)

Prompt: If you could only do one of the activities you have listed in the “Activities Section” of your Common Application, which one would you keep doing? Why? (150 word limit).

As a debater, I've faced circumstances where I had to defend the rights of believers to preserve their internal organs after death, but I also made incisive refutations against the right of individuals to commit suicide. I argued that the West had to pay reparations to Africa for its centuries-long exploitation, but I also claimed that violence was integral to the success of grassroots political movements. I saw how two completely opposite positions might both be warranted, meriting analytical dissection and sustained engagement.

While debating, I had to defend ideas I couldn't endorse and attack principles I wholeheartedly believed in, which was liberating as it forced me to critique the provenance of my assumptions and values, fostering my intellectual curiosity. Therefore, I would continue debating even if there were no clubs.

Common Application Essay Prompts for 2018-2019

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

2 Example Common App Essays that worked

2A Alara Değirmenci, Yale acceptance

I stood with my back to the class, trying to keep a smile as I stared at the little girl in front of me. She waved, and politely, but firmly, repeated, “I don’t want to join.”

“But why?” was the only thing I could think to ask.

“It’s boring,” she responded simply and gently.

I didn’t want her to leave. “You’ll see that it’s not, if you just come and try,” I said as softly as I could.

Finally, she shrugged and sat back at her computer.

For the third year in a row, I was in Gordes, a village in rural Turkey, trying to get this young girl, and several other students, to participate in STEM field activities I had designed. After volunteering in two school community projects, I had felt the curricula for these projects—designed back in 2007—needed improvement. We weren’t making enough of an impact with the children since the curriculum only included activities such as watercolor painting, playing football, and dancing — things children could already do by themselves. So, I wanted to introduce something new. With the project I initiated, the children who have never seen an amusement park before rode the world’s biggest roller coasters, travelled to cities they hadn’t even heard of, and became the first Turkish astronauts to walk on the Moon, all through a pair of Virtual Reality Glasses. As an aspiring computer scientist, I wanted to inspire as many children as possible to become engineers, scientists, and innovators of the future. Knowing that the best way to catch the attention of 12-year-olds was through fun and creativity, I embellished the project with such magical technological activities, in addition to teaching them how to code on Scratch. I saw how much they enjoyed the experience when their laughter and screams echoed through the classroom.

However, for some reason, I couldn’t pull that one little girl in. Trying to understand why, it dawned on me that it wasn’t this single girl from Gordes I was talking to — I was confronting a whole cultural notion in which she didn’t have a place in that room full of computers and electric cables.

Soon after, I saw that she was struggling. I assisted her and together we completed her labyrinth. While she liked the idea of creating her very own game, she still wasn’t as impressed as I’d hoped. I racked my brain for creative ways I could make this labyrinth game more interesting. Together we added new features such as display alerts and a two-player option. With every addition, I could see that little by little her frown was turning into a smile, which encouraged me even more! At the end, we transformed that basic labyrinth game into a colorful, interactive, and multiplayer game that she was proud of creating. After it ended, she approached me, and with a mixture of happiness and embarrassment, and said, “I thought I would hate coding, but now I love it after seeing all the things I can do with it!”

I realised that I enjoy being a changemaker. I was capable of, and in fact responsible for, changing the things around me — whether it was revitalizing the curriculum of a traditional project or shattering the glass ceilings put on girls.

And I am definitely not done yet. By being a member of my school’s Advisory Board for Community Projects and the Outreach Coordinator of our Robotics team, I am making sure that we establish the most impactful projects and touch as many lives as possible.

Now that I am about to start the computing education I have been dreaming of for years, I am more excited than ever to expand my own horizons and hopefully, in turn, share my passion with others.

2B Irmak K., Northwestern University acceptance

I spent my childhood being tormented by my brother's practical jokes. Yaman, the master prankster, and I, his perfect target. That's the way it always was. So I wasn't surprised the day he decided to push me to the bottom of the swimming pool. But I sure was angry.

I swallowed a gallon of water and swore my revenge. Trying to swim to the top, he just pushed me further down. His hands were too big. My attempts to win the fight were futile, but there was something I could do to gain advantage. I could hold my breath longer. I knew I could. The thrill I would get from defeating Yaman took my acting career to its zenith. Cunningly, I stayed under water and pretended to have drowned. I made sure that he was devastated, and waited until his legs fluttered in desperation.

I never would have thought that my younger, more ignorant self, whose only concern was taking revenge on Yaman, would eventually become so conscious and concerned about others' problems that she would devote herself to alleviate them.

However, three summers ago, I experienced the *déjà vu* phenomenon, which changed my world completely. Once again, I was pushed down to the bottom of the ocean. This time, however, in Yaman's place was a boy named Şiyar. He was one of the twenty children who experienced terrorist attacks in Diyarbakır. He was the oldest, which I did not realize, because he was clearly malnourished, until he blew the candles on the birthday cake I baked him. Şiyar's wish was to learn how to swim and he wanted me as his coach. I was terrified knowing that I lacked the experience to take responsibility for someone else's life. But, how could I say no to him? His parents were in prison, and he had the full responsibility of his three younger siblings. This was his only chance to enjoy being a child. I could not take that away from him. I could not be another disappointment in his life. No matter what, I was ready to jump in and teach how to swim. So, I held his hand and we jumped into the water.

Suddenly, all of Şiyar's weight was on me. I was thrashing for the top while Şiyar was pushing me to the bottom. At that moment, Archimedes' principle of buoyancy was invalid. This time, I was not acting. What was keeping me down was not my brother and I was not pretending to drown. What was worse, Şiyar was going down with me. Despite his young age, he was able to carry the weight of the world on his shoulders, but I was incapable of making his one small wish come true. As I hit the bottom, I realized I was the one who was supposed to learn how to swim. My brother Yaman's monstrous act in the pool was nothing but a drop in the ocean. There was no escape from reality anymore. I needed to push off and kick to get both of our heads above the ocean waves.

I realized that I was not swimming in my isolated "pool" anymore. I pulled us back to safety and I started teaching Şiyar how to swim. Almost drowning a second time made me think of these words from the former Superman Christopher Reeves: "Either you decide to stay in the shallow end of the pool or you go out in the ocean." My awareness of Şiyar's endurance pulled me out of the shallow end to the ocean. In that moment, witnessing Şiyar's happiness after his wish came true, I felt alive for the first time. Finally, I was living in the real world. That is when I knew that recognizing, understanding, and impacting the lives of the less-privileged is the only way to survive in the giant ocean without drowning.

2C Ayda Öktem , Washington University in St. Louis (16% acceptance rate)

“Mom, we forgot to get the puzzle again!” I said. I didn’t want to be late because I knew that Efe expected me to be there at 11 a.m. sharp. This time, I had promised to bring him the 200-piece Spiderman puzzle he had wanted for so long.

“Want to turn around and go to the toyshop?” my mother asked. I nodded, nervously glancing at my watch.

After the toyshop, we tried to go as fast as we could to reach our destination: Okmeydanı Research Hospital. I checked my watch, 11:24. I ran across the hospital complex until I arrived at the children’s oncology unit. I knocked on the personnel door twice like I do every Saturday for the Okmeydanı volunteering project since I started my junior year. Ufuk, the pediatric nurse, opened the door, greeting me like an old friend. After I disinfected my hands and put on my bonnet, robe, mask and gloves, it was time to visit Efe.

I opened the door to Efe’s room and saw him gazing out of the window, waiting for me. He saw me and smiled, revealing his toothless mouth. I sighed with relief, realizing that he wasn’t mad at me. While his mother offered me cookies, Efe and I finished the same jigsaw puzzle multiple times. As we were trying to find the right pieces, I could tell Efe was feeling better, regardless of the fact that he was hooked up to machines and IVs. When I left in the afternoon, he made me promise to come back next week at 11 a.m.

During the course of a year, I was lucky to be a part of the Cancer Warriors, where we visited Okmeydanı Research Hospital’s Children’s Oncology Unit and played with children who weren’t allowed to play with anybody else. For the first time in my life, I felt I was making a big difference in someone’s life. I listened to the dreams of these children, gossiped about their second grade classmates, understood their points of view, gave them advice, and shared their pain. I believe every time they played with me, they forgot the fact that they were stuck in an old state hospital. They forgot that they were away from their cities, their friends, their family members and their old habits. They felt like what they were supposed to: simple children with nothing but mischief in their minds.

My time spent with the children helped them cope a little better with their pain; in return, spending time with them helped me mature as a person. I learned to act both like a friend who would play and also like an adult who would set rules and act responsibly. I met a young refugee with lymphatic cancer who couldn’t speak Turkish but loved to play with puppets. She was silent at first, but by the end of the year her laughter could be heard even from downstairs. I saw children getting better every time I visited them, and celebrated it with their mothers. I saw children getting worse and felt insufficient because there was nothing I could do but play UNO and pretend to lose. I learned how to be understanding and compassionate when a kid was misbehaving because I knew he was having an especially painful day. I became acquainted with sadness when I found an empty bed in a room previously occupied by a smiling kid. I felt a deep relief when I learned he had been discharged because he was cured.

I was there when a doctor arrived and told Efe’s mother he was now well enough to go home to Konya. I felt as if his mother’s tears of joy were mine, or as if I had been cured of some great illness. He kept the Spiderman puzzle I bought for him and promised to finish it on his own.

2D Nazlı Köylüoğlu, Stanford acceptance (among many others)

Back in the day, when I wasn't fifty kilograms and my dad wasn't fifty years old, I would proclaim my kingdom on his shoulders, my chubby legs hanging on either side of his neck, out on our adventures conquering Istanbul past sleep time. We used to hit Istiklal Avenue, the magical *la Grande Rue de Péra*, a 1.4 kilometers long pedestrian street that was once the heart of Constantinople. On Dad's shoulders I used the word "billion" for the first time, albeit with a significantly distorted sense of magnitude, when he asked me to count how many people there were. I got my introduction to projective geometry when I then inquired why the countless number of heads converged to a single point at the end of the street.

On Istiklal were antiquarian bookstores beside crowded cafés, corn vendors settled before neoclassical façades, beggars laboring next to chic boutiques, concert halls competing with the live music on sidewalks. There were intellectuals getting drunk and drunkards shouting political slogans, musicians in protest and leftists singing the *Internationale*, and that vanishing specimen called the *Istanbul gentleman*, walking gracefully in his old-fashioned suit and felt hat. On Dad's shoulders I tried to make sense of people's indifference to the beggar on the sidewalk, wondering who would ultimately "rescue the drowning child." I questioned how one could reach self-actualization when doomed to carrying a cart full of chestnuts from morning till night, but then I debated whether the life of the bureaucrat working at the consulate across was more meaningful than the chestnut seller's. At times when we joined the crowd gathered around a *qanun* performer, I saw how five minutes of casual Turkish music could offer Istanbulites a respite from metropolitan life. Looking up, I imagined how beautiful the view must be from the balconies protruding from ornamented façades. I later discovered that this was precisely what triggered the wild mood swings of Orhan Veli, the unorthodox poet of a no less turbulent culture. With all its charming contrasts, Istiklal became my window to the world.

However, when I grew too heavy and my dad grew older, Istiklal too had changed. With Dad now too tired to walk 1.4 kilometers, and me no longer in need of his shoulders, I studied Istiklal from the ground. Instead of magic, I saw absences: the sloppy cement patches reminded me of the cobblestones that no longer were there, while the confluence of joy and sorrow that used to walk hand in hand was replaced by a homogeneity of frustrations. I learned what gentrification really meant when I stood before a giant shopping mall erected at the very center of Istiklal, a lifeless abomination against the disappearing small signature shops, whose owners were either deceased or displaced. And when I stopped before the run-down sign of my favorite patisserie, a high-ceilinged 19th-century place called *Markiz*, I cried. Not because I missed their *profiterole*, but because I felt my memories were being taken away.

"Things used to be much better in the old times," our grandfathers often say, signaling their discontent with the present more than their fascination with the past. If I had the chance to jump onto Dad's shoulders today, would the view from up there be any different? I doubt it. But it's pointless to speculate on the accuracy of my memories because nostalgia reveals more about the present than the past. For when I cried before that run-down sign, I was lamenting the fading away of my childhood, the evolution of Turkey into a construction site, and the onset of a life I could no longer experience atop Dad's shoulders. I wondered back then, and I still wonder, how ironic it is that us moderns drown in nostalgia and yearn for an uncertain future at once. For we confidently celebrate progress, while secretly fantasizing a return to an idyllic past, just like our grandfathers.

2E Ege Ozguroglu, Columbia, Northwestern, Johns Hopkins, U of Michigan acceptances

Order makes you stop.

There, a red light. Impersonal. Authoritative. In such dramatic contrast to the rowers, joggers, and endangered Australian Grayling swimming aimlessly in Melbourne's Yarra River that passes through the business district of the city. Red lights. In tune with the fast-paced men and women of business who kept slowing me down as I ran. So out of place with the calm, empty bridges I crossed along the way and the raindrops that kept falling on my shoulders as a reminder of Melbourne's cold breeze.

Until then, I had run in the ancient city of Myndos amidst smiling fishermen and Roman bathhouses. I had run in Nicosia along the barbed wires and artilleries that reminded onlookers about the war that divided Cyprus and my father's childhood in half. I had run in the crowded streets of my mother's hometown, Eskisehir, and imagined her as a 5-year old with braids holding the hands of her own mother I never got to meet. I had run in Palo Alto and Menlo Park in between my stops at the library and my temporary dwellings where I could finally enjoy the marionberries procured from the farmer's market, all the while listening to the choo-choo's of Caltrain and being enveloped by Californian eucalyptus scents that reminded me of our summer house in Myndos. I had run along the Embarcadero during the San Francisco Marathon as the breeze from the ocean made me shiver, helping me recognize in one split instant that I'm nothing but just another pebble in that same ocean.

But how can a person who used to categorically refuse running become absolutely obsessed with it? The answer might not be obvious to most, but to me, running is possibility.

The people I run by embody the totality of all experience, so much so that what I feel I'm destined to do in life, the research of esoteric happenings, loses its centrality. I could easily have been one of those businessmen I ran by, oblivious to their surroundings, or that particular geisha in Kyoto who could still preserve her sincerity under white paint and kimonos. When I was running alongside the Porsuk river in Eskisehir, the boundaries of nature forced me into the town's industrialized neighborhoods crowded with mechanic shops and day workers. I might well have been one of these guys devoting their existence to the manufacture of a bolt, right? Seeing how many different things I could have been makes my present self less important, but that much more free.

Have you ever felt so little and unimportant that if you were to disappear one day, no one would notice? When I was standing among thousands of people waiting for the San Francisco Marathon to start, I felt precisely that. In that chaos, there was neither order nor any semblance of it. It was almost as if in that moment the self-entitlement I carried with me since childhood disappeared just like that. I did not need to look okay. I did not need to worry about how someone might mock the silly red bandana I just can't avoid wearing while running. I did not need to pretend that the world hovered around me and that I was the final arbiter of things. There were all these people waiting for the gun to go off to start running, and when we began running, there was no I.

See, I used to be a man of order and structure, thinking that they stood at the pinnacle of a civilized state of affairs. I was the walking excel sheet, the fun killing organizer, the excessively serious leader, the tireless sprinter racing against the hour and the minute hands. So when I started to run, I started running away from perfection. Sometimes I run backwards just to mock order.

Just kidding.

The point is, I guess order also happens to make you run.

Questions over Common App Essays that worked

Answer these questions for essays 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D and 2E

1. Describe this student's opener. What technique was used?

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

2. What are the conflicts, complications, or problems?

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

3. Which prompt was the student answering? Was it answered?

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

4. How would you describe this student's narrative style? (overly academic? impersonal?) How about the tone? (exuberant? melodramatic?)

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

5. Do you see instances of variation in sentence length? Was it effective?

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

6. Was there a "something different" factor? Explain.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

A Common App Essay that DIDN'T work

2D (adapted from PrepScholar.com)

Unlike other teenagers, I'm not concerned about money, or partying, or what others think of me. Unlike other eighteen year-olds, I think about my future, and haven't become totally materialistic and acquisitive. My whole outlook on life changed after I realized that my life was just being handed to me on a silver spoon, and yet there were those in the world who didn't have enough food to eat or place to live. I realized that the one thing that this world needed more than anything was compassion; compassion for those less fortunate than us.

During the summer of 2006, I went on a community service trip to rural Peru to help build an elementary school for kids there. I expected harsh conditions, but what I encountered was far worse!! It was one thing to watch commercials asking for donations to help the unfortunate people in less developed countries, yet it was a whole different story to actually live it. Even after all this time, I can still hear babies crying from hunger; I can still see the filthy rags that they wore; I can still smell the stench of misery and hopelessness. But my most vivid memory was the moment I first got to the farming town. The conditions of it hit me by surprise; it looked much worse in real life than compared to the what our group leader had told us. Poverty to me and everyone else I knew was a foreign concept that people hear about on the news or see in documentaries. But this abject poverty was their life, their reality. And for the brief ten days I was there, it would be mine too. As all of this realization came at once, I felt overwhelmed by the weight of what was to come. Would I be able to live in the same conditions as these people? Would I catch a disease that no longer existed in the first world, or maybe die from drinking contaminated water? As these questions rolled around my already dazed mind, I heard a soft voice asking me in Spanish, "Are you okay? Is there anything I can do to make you feel better?" I looked down to see a small boy, around nine years of age, who looked starved, and cold, wearing tattered clothing, comforting me. These people who have so little were able to forget their own needs, and put those much more fortunate ahead of themselves. It was at that moment that I saw how selfish I had been. How terrible a person I am. How many people suffered like this in the world, while I went about life concerned about nothing at all?

Thinking back on the trip, maybe I made a difference, maybe not. But I gained something much more important. I gained the desire to make the world a better place for others. It was in a small, poverty-stricken village in Peru that I finally realized that there was more to life than just being alive.

1. What are some of the grammatical problems this student encountered?
2. Where did the student use really good parallelism, however?
3. What makes this essay, content-wise, problematic? (See "Common App Essay Advice" section of slide show)

[\(more examples\)](#)

Supplemental Essays/Answers Examples

Instructions: With these supplementals, determine **A)** if they addressed the prompt, **B)** if it's obvious they are speaking about THAT particular school, and **C)** places where the student as injected a little personality--or at least enthusiasm or positivity--where it's called for.

Be sure to place a letter beside the text as you find examples for each.

4A (Alara Değirmenci, Yale acceptance) Yale Supplementals

- 1. Students at Yale have plenty of time to explore their academic interests before committing to one or more major fields of study. Many students either modify their original academic direction or change their minds entirely. As of this moment, what academic areas seem to fit your interests or goals most comfortably? Please indicate up to three from the list provided.**

- 1.1. Computer Science
- 1.2. Cognitive Science
- 1.3. Computer Science and Psychology

- 2. Why do these areas appeal to you? (100 words or fewer)**

Ever since my first online programming course, I have been mesmerized by the world of algorithms and the ability to create and solve problems through code. This passion has given me a new perspective to approach the problems around us. Every year a new technological invention—SpaceX, Tesla Motors, Facebook, iPhone, Uber—revolutionises the way we live and think by providing solutions to our everyday problems. Having grown up in awe of these inventions, I dream of pursuing computer science, through which I can fulfill my ultimate goal: to make my mark on the future by creating innovative solutions for humankind.

- 3. What is it about Yale that has led you to apply? (125 words or fewer)**

As I wave my Y22 handkerchief for the first time, filled with excitement, I imagine the “bright college years” ahead of me, where I will finally be able to dive deep into the topics I have always wanted to explore.

Seeing my handkerchief fly in the air like a bird, I am suddenly struck by feelings of apprehension. I will be leaving behind my nest, my mom, dad, brother, aunts, cousins, and grandmas—a whole continent. But I think about why I fell in love with Yale: Big Sibs who will always be ready to support me, “college families” that will become an everlasting part of me, and I realise my worries are groundless. How could I feel homesick with my new family beside me?

- 4. What inspires you? (35 words or fewer)**

I watch the Moon from my window every night, and envision the daring ideas which led us to land there. Reminding myself that nothing is impossible, I, too, will always reach for the stars.

- 5. Yale's residential colleges regularly host intimate conversations with guests representing a wide range of experiences and accomplishments. What person, past or present, would you invite to speak? What question would you ask? (35 words or fewer)**

Elon Musk, your investments in neural lace technology will allow us to skip our normal learning stage by transferring skills through electric signals. How will this revolutionise our education system?

6. You are teaching a Yale course. What is it called? (35 words or fewer)

Technology for Social Good: Innovating and Transforming the Current State of Community Service Projects

7. Most first-year Yale students live in suites of four to six people. What would you contribute to the dynamic of your suite? (35 words or fewer)

In an attempt to substitute for long family dinners we might be missing, I would gather my new “family” together with “suite feasts,” where I would cook global traditional dishes for them.

8. Reflect on your engagement with a community to which you belong. How do you feel you have contributed to this community? (250 words or fewer)

Three years ago, I became a part of the international European Youth Parliament community of 35,000 young Europeans. For the past years, EYP has been a place where I stepped outside of my comfort zone to give speeches to hundreds of other youths, to exchange ideas with people coming from unique cultures, and to live 7/24 together with people whom I had never met before. At conferences, we discuss issues from environment to legislature. At the end, we decide unanimously on what we can do to better the world. I wanted as many youth as possible to experience similar life changing moments by becoming a part of this community. Hence, by being the vice-president of our school’s EYP Club I have spent hundreds of hours providing training sessions and presiding over mock conferences, so that my peers at school could be inspired by EYP the way I was. I didn’t want to limit my outreach to just students at my school, so I volunteered and spent sleepless nights to organise a conference that gathered 150 students from all around Turkey. I ensured that people could benefit from the most fruitful discussions, experience the liveliest activities, and deliver the most eloquent speeches. Now, my peers who were introduced to EYP through our club have, themselves, become the presidents of conferences in Europe. The delegates at the conference I organised have established even bigger conferences in their own cities, spreading the spirit and message of EYP far and wide.

9. Write on something you would like us to know about you that you have not conveyed elsewhere in your application. (250 words or fewer)

From the beginning of high school, obtaining expensive foreign textbooks and test prep books, taking weeks to get shipped, were significant challenges for those seeking further education abroad. As for domestic sources, only one website sold those materials and it wasn’t comprehensive. I realized there was a simple solution: upper grades selling their old books to lower grades.

Instead of simply complaining, I decided to make the change I wanted to see. Otherwise, the problem was going to continue burdening the students trying to improve their prospects. I opened an Instagram account and by following everyone at our school, I easily and quickly spread the word. Within days, I was getting lots of messages and phone calls from interested sellers and buyers. All I had to do was match those students and facilitate the buying process. In just two weeks, I was able to help over 30 students get the books they desperately needed to get a start on their test preparations. Although I couldn’t continue the project at school, I still believe that not only RC but many other foreign schools in Turkey need such a venture to assist students with buying and selling foreign books.

This was a small yet an inspiring and promising step for me. It marked not the end but rather the beginning of my entrepreneurial story — which I will continue once I graduate — as well as my long journey on bettering people’s lives through the initiatives and innovations I will create.

- What were some of the strengths of these supplemental essays?

Supplementals with problems

Essay Prompt: Why do you want to attend Beaugus University? 400 words.
(Feel free to circle problems as you go--such as mistakes and cliches.)

As a diligent, and self conscious individual I feel that my academic potential is at unique heights, and being accepted to the Beaugus University will only increase that prospective. Through my four years of high school, I have worked with my hardest effort, and striven for achievement, success, and difference.

Ever since I was young my dream has been to become a doctor, and I believe that Beaugus will help me become a well rounded, educated, and social/attentive pediatrician. I have been taking medical classes through my years of high school, including: Biomedical Technology, Medical Science one, and Medical Science two honors. Through these classes I have been exposed to much more information making me want to become a doctor. I wish to take as many medical classes as such as biology, genetics, and other subjects pertaining to the field I want to go into in the future. And I know I will be successful.

Being a student, I have always striven for greater than what I expected. In my 9th grade class I was recommended not to be in honors English. Despite the doubt that my teacher possessed I continued through my high school career partaking in many honors and AP classes; and did just fine in them. In life I have dedicated myself to being the best I can be. The atmosphere at Beaugus I believe is the perfect environment for the growth of my academic success and my sociality. With my elevated standards, in and out of school I feel that as a student I can excel, and be all that is expected of me, and maybe more.

Every wrong doing, every obstacle, every little mistake I have ever made has only made me a stronger person, because it taught me what is right or wrong. I attribute my devotion to being the best I can be, to Dnace, and the morals instilled in me from dance. I want to be a productive person in society, a person who makes a difference, and furthering my education at Syracuse is the next step to making that process successful.

- What makes the above essay problematic?

More Supplementals with Problems

A. You are teaching a Yale course. What is it called? (35 words or fewer)

Modern Art: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

B. Most first-year Yale students live in suites of four to six people. What would you contribute to the dynamic of your suite? (35 words or fewer)

Peace and Quiet. I leave people alone and they leave me alone. I've always found this to be the best policy with anyone I spend much time around.

- And what makes each of the above problematic?

UCAS Samples

See if all of the following suggestions are answered fully in the following examples (5A - 5D). When you find examples of A through K, write the letter near the text where you've found it.

From University of Sussex advice:

- A. Why you're interested in the subject. (*The subject should be obvious early on.*)
- B. Your enthusiasm for the subject.
- C. How your previous studies relate to the course(s).
- D. Relevant aspects of jobs, placements, work experience or volunteering.
- E. Activities or hobbies that show your interest in the subject.
- F. Any training or achievements that show your skills.
- G. Demonstrate you're a great candidate and you have skills and qualities they're looking for.
- H. Why schools in the UK? (Why are you leaving Turkey to study here?)

From the slideshow:

- I. Does the student's use of language and grammar *enhance* the essay?
- J. Is the student's mastery of the little things (like capitalization, quoting, italics, etc.) apparent.
- K. Did they still put some personality into it?

UCAS essay examples

5A Alara Değirmenci, many UK acceptances

The world of algorithms and the ability to solve problems through lines of code has amazed me ever since I began learning programming through Codecademy four years ago. I have grown up in an era where we fundamentally depend on technology to communicate, to eat, and to transport. It allows people to solve the most essential problems of our time and to improve the quality of others' lives. Therefore, I hope to pursue an education in computer science in the UK, where I would attain the academic and personal growth that will enable me to create solutions for humankind.

My fascination with programming led me to several school clubs from IOS Programming Club to Coder Dojo Club. I learned the basics of Swift and HTML. Later, during my junior year, I took introductory Java courses. In this course, I not only learned Java but also the key knowledge about how to code using the object-oriented programming principles. I was able to gain practical experience by coding dozens of projects during the year, which gave me the vision to think in terms of algorithms and the ability to solve problems in a systematic way. Also taking Calculus BC course at school has prepared me for the high level of mathematics involved in pursuing a CS degree. Currently, I continue to build upon this knowledge in my Advanced Programming course.

This past summer, I got accepted to the Microsoft Turkey's University Internship program, as a high school student. I acquired the basics of many programming languages as well as engines including C#, SQL, and Unity. I also had the chance to observe the workplace of a computer scientist and to learn about the technology sector and potential work opportunities through the seminars I attended from the technology leaders in Turkey. I was introduced to some of the latest technological developments and platforms. These have widened my horizons to see many of the most innovative global technologies, and more importantly their potential applications in our lives. I gained greater insight into the continuously developing side of the technology sector. The internship bolstered my desire to work in a sector where innovation is the main driver.

Having grown up aspiring to be a computer scientist, I wanted to inspire others to become engineers, scientists, and innovators of the future. I initiated and led a community service project with local children of a Turkish village in which I taught them the basic principles of programming and introduced them to resources like Codecademy with the hope of inspiring them about STEM. This included coding a labyrinth game on Scratch, experiencing Virtual Reality using Google Cardboard, and learning about conductivity via MakeyMakey. The project was a great success, with all the children enjoying the activities. Moreover, being the outreach coordinator of my school's robotics team made me a part of a young community of technology lovers, changing the world with innovative ideas and bettering people's lives using technology. During our time at competitions, we worked in true coordination and were awarded several awards by the FIRST organisation. Recently, thanks to the community project I led, I was chosen as one of the 100 FIRST Robotics Competition Dean's List Award Finalists from all around the world in 2017. As part of this recognition, I was invited to the FRC World Championship in Houston.

Studying computer science in the UK would be the ideal opportunity for me, as there is an established and developing technology sector in the UK. Also the diverse environment of the UK embodies the potential to foster very promising ideas, projects, and solutions by bringing together the ideas from all around the world. Throughout my academically challenging high school years, I have worked with perseverance and discipline, knowing that every step I take, every second I study, would benefit me in the end, which I believe has prepared me for the academically rigorous university education ahead.

5B Nazlı Köylüoğlu, Oxford Acceptance

Engineering is not simply about innovating the next iPhone or designing the most powerful automobile. The industrial revolution triggers social upheavals, instantaneous communication technologies speed globalisation, and AI reignites discussions on the ontology of the human soul. Indeed, engineering is a transformative discipline that dramatically impacts socio-economic, political, and environmental processes.

At university, I plan to study Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering, given their centrality in today's technology-driven world. As increasingly complex tasks are performed by intelligent systems, electronics and computational processes have become more crucial than ever. I want to be a part of this ongoing innovative revolution, acknowledging its responsibility to pursue the welfare of all.

Throughout school, I balanced my science-heavy academic studies with active engagement with social issues. While completing high-level courses such as Calculus BC, Discrete Math, Physics C, and Modern Physics as the valedictorian of Robert College, I also sharpened my analytical mindset as an integral member of our school's Debate Society and was selected for the national debate team. I became the School Winner of the "American Mathematics Contest 12" in 2015, but was also involved in contemporary politics as an MUN member for 4 years. In 2016, I received the "Excellence in Science for Girls" award at school, but that very year I attended international conferences promoting Universal Basic Income, which addresses universal ills such as unemployment and poverty especially in the face of automation. In other words, I took advantage of all available opportunities to combine my enthusiasm for the sciences with my concern for global political and socio-economic problems.

After freshman year, without any prior calculus or advanced physics coursework, I took three college-level summer courses at Sabanci University: "Advanced Mechanics I & II," "Quantum Mechanics & Quantum Computers," and "Intro. to Computer Programming & Data Analysis." Following my success, I was invited to be the TA for "Advanced Mechanics II" the subsequent year. Last summer, I took lessons on Machine Learning from an Asst. Prof. at Koc University. Following his advice, I took Discrete Math, as the algorithmic thinking embedded in computational systems singularly piqued my academic interest in electronics.

In 2016, I conducted research with Prof. Nihat Berker, Emeritus Prof. of Physics at MIT, and wrote a paper on "interdisciplinarity," where I analysed the frequency of cross-science citations in a sample of academic journals on Physics, Chemistry, and Molecular Biology. During research, I built upon the knowledge of Python I acquired at Sabanci in retrieving information from thousands of data files, which furthered my grasp of programming languages. The following year, I participated in another research project with Prof. Gunay Anlas, Prof. of Mech. Eng. at Bogazici University, on the uses of geothermal energy in Turkey. There, I wrote literature reviews and analysed different cycle configurations for efficiency optimization.

My research on interdisciplinarity with Prof. Berker was key not only for recognising the holistic nature of scientific inquiry, but also for getting an insider's view on academic practice. My collaboration with Prof. Anlas, on the other hand, demonstrated the power of engineering applications in tackling key environmental issues. Together with my growing interest in electronics and computers, these projects enhanced my enthusiasm for engineering.

I find the focused nature of academic programs in the UK to best fit my interests. Due to their rigorous admissions process, UK universities recruit a selective group of students who are both passionate and knowledgeable about their chosen courses of study. I expect this to create a rich intellectual environment where peers learn from each other to expand their collective knowledge.

5C “Economics Personal Statement” from Studential.com

Having been born in the UK, with parents from Delhi and Kenya, I feel my background has given me an internationally diverse outlook. In my travels, I have met with both the affluence of Europe and the poverty existing in India. Such contrasts have compelled me to seek an understanding of the forces that drive the world economy, and why after centuries of economic theory such inequalities continue to exist.

Over the summer, I have been researching India's economic development, partly stimulated by the issues above. The Indian economy is a fascinating topic for me, not just due to my heritage, but because of the juxtaposition between rapid increases in wealth on the one hand and the Sub-Saharan African levels of poverty on the other. Another part of economics I find appealing is the use of theories. I have been introduced to the Tragedy of the Commons and the Coase Theorem's take on externalities. My interest in strategic decision-making has been boosted by Game Theory, which has developed an understanding of the situations faced by oligopolies and the implications of Nash equilibrium. Such theoretical models have led me to Experimental Economics and Charles Holt's 'Markets, Games and Strategic Behaviour', in an attempt to see if people actually behave in the way theory predicts.

Being awarded the 2007 Kirk Cup for Mathematics at school, encouraged me to take A-level Further Maths. My problem solving skills and ability to manipulate algebraic variables have since been enhanced, which is beneficial considering the numerical analysis involved in economics. Given the problematic nature in conducting controlled experiments, I am eager to explore the range of statistical tools available to economists.

Presently, I offer tutoring for GCSE Maths students, and have taught an adult how to use various PC applications in the past. Such an experience has stressed the need for planning, patience and presenting work coherently for others to follow. I have also used graphical design software to produce adverts for my Mother's beauty business, and have assisted with book-keeping for annual tax returns. It has been noticeable how economic factors affect such a business; for example how demand for different treatments has changed with the credit crunch.

My internet browser's homepage is set to prompt me with the latest headlines from the BBC Business website, as it is a priority for me to keep up-to-date with the world around me. In addition, for different opinions, I also frequently read articles on economics in various newspapers. Reading books by economists, such as John Kay, has led me to appreciate better how concepts have developed over time. These include 'The Penguin History of Economics' by Backhouse and Levitt's 'Freakonomics', which I found entertaining, but thought lacked true economic substance. Besides reading, my other hobbies include remixing music on the computer and using Investopedia.com, on which I have a virtual portfolio of shares. As a representative of my college's debating team, my communication skills have greatly improved. At our next debate, I will be arguing for the wider use of congestion charges.

The recent economic turmoil has reinforced my belief in how economics is truly an integral part of our lives. University will provide the ideal environment in which to strengthen and test my understanding of such a discipline, whilst being a place where I can formulate and contribute my own theories to the subject. After receiving full marks in AS-level Economics, I have set myself a high standard, and I wish to continue my ambitions in the finance industry. However, I recognise that my passion for economics will lead me to many more career horizons.

Acceptances: Oxford University, London School of Economics, The University of Warwick
(<https://www.studential.com/personal-statement-examples/economics-personal-statement-19>)

5D An example with problems from The University of Sussex, Economics

Since starting my AS-level studies in Economics, I have been eager to continue to a higher level. I am particularly interested in the behaviour of firms and organisations from an economic point of view and I have focused my coursework in this field. I regularly read newspapers and economic publications such as The Economist to keep upto-date with developments in the field, and I find it easy to use my mathematical and analytical skills to apply different economic theories to a range of real-life economic situations. I also take Maths and Politics at AS-level and know that the skills I am acquiring from these will prepare me well for university-level study. I recently enjoyed the chance to put some of my business economic theory into practice when I took part in an economics and business project called Young Enterprise. With a group of peers I set up a small company and sold stationery packs to students at our school. It was an excellent experience and I was able to enhance my management, communication and teamwork skills. I also achieved a distinction in the associated exam.

I would consider myself to be a very hard worker both in and out of school. Since the age of 16 I have worked part-time at Tescos and have enjoyed positions of increasing responsibility. I now co-ordinate a small group of staff on the shopfloor and have learnt a lot about the way businesses operate in the real world. I would be keen to continue working part-time within this company while at university, as I know I would be able to manage my time successfully and would enjoy being self sufficient. I have a real passion for all kinds of sport and regularly represent my school in various activities ranging from tennis to football. I have played tennis at county-level for two years now and am looking forward to trying new sports at university. Music is also very important to me and I am a member of the sixth form rock band 'Chaos'. I am thrilled at the prospect of facing new challenges, including working and living independently. I also believe that I will gain a highly marketable set of skills from the study of economics at university, which will prepare me well for the exciting future ahead.

What do you think they did well?

What did they do poorly?

Strengths

The strong involvement in sport and music demonstrates dedication.

This student has succeeded in conveying enthusiasm without going overboard.

Weaknesses

Attention needs to be paid to style; the paragraphs are far too long and could be broken down into at least four separate ones.

There are a few typing errors and missing letters in this personal statement.

This student does not mention any current economic issues such as the recession or UK housing market, which somewhat undermines his claim that he keeps up-to-date with developments in the field.

(From the [University of Essex pamphlet "How to Write Your Personal Statement"](#))

Writing Activities
and
Brainstorming Techniques

5 Adjectives that describe me: Show, Don't Tell

Adjective: _____

Prove/Show

Adjective: _____

Prove/Show

Adjective: _____

Prove/Show

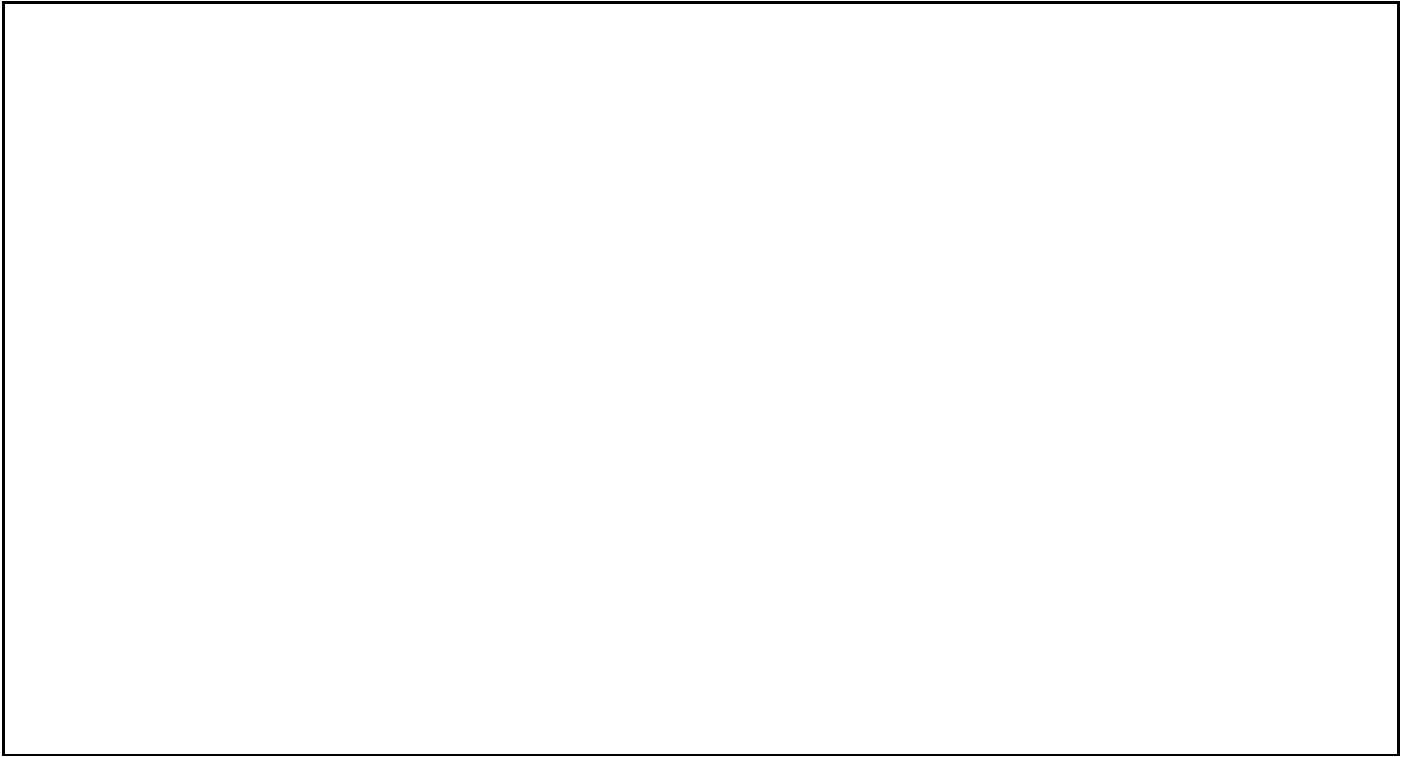
Adjective: _____

Prove/Show

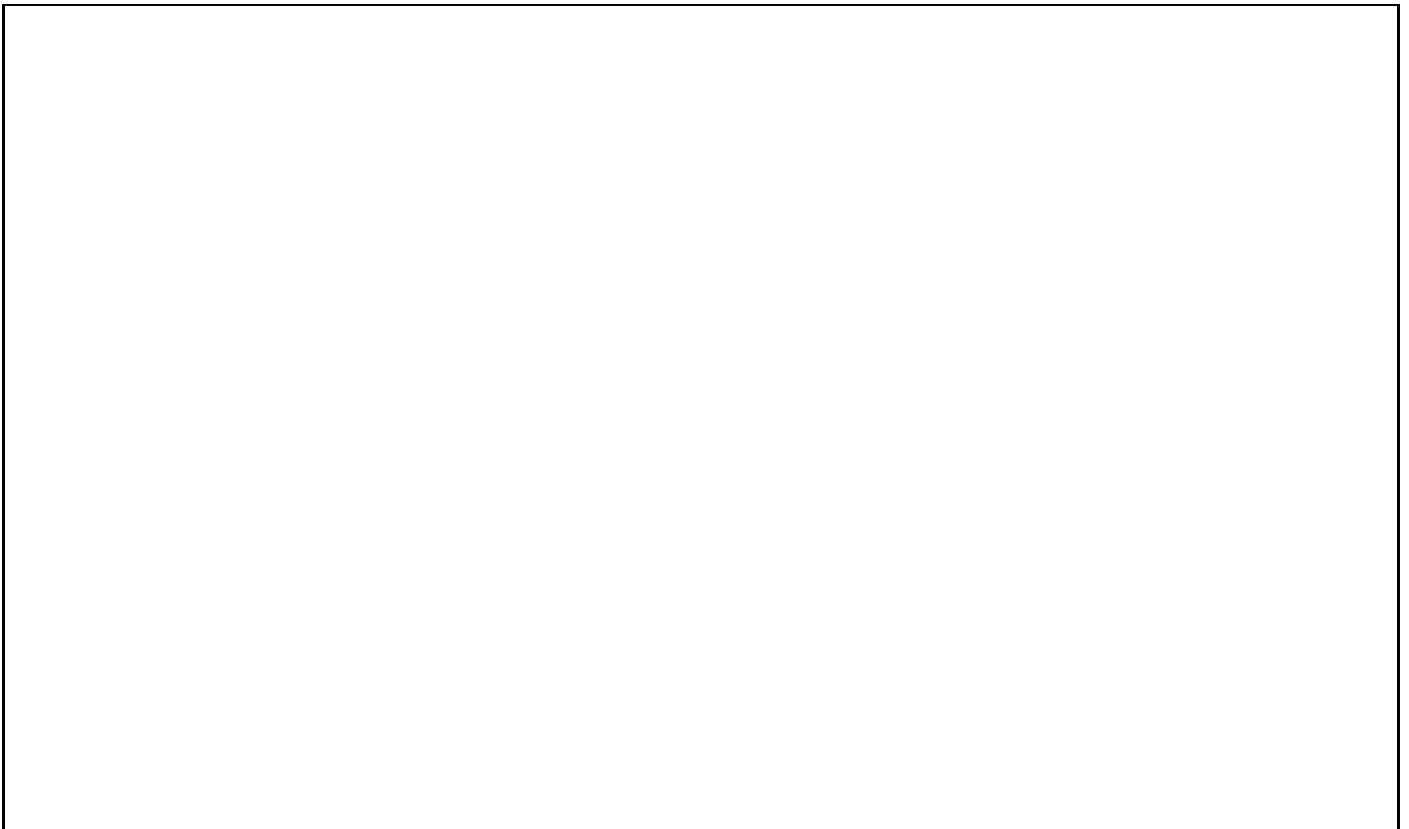
Adjective: _____

Prove/Show

These are the coolest, most exciting, most important, or most profound things about me:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their responses to the prompt above.

These are the most boring, mundane, average, ordinary everyday things I do:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their responses to the prompt above.

Idea Generator for Common App or Personal Statement Essays

The first is an example, as if Alara filled it out. The remaining blanks are for you to brainstorm.

<p>Prompt number: Event:</p>	<p>Personal story to include. Other ways to personalize the essay.</p>	<p>A. What you want to convey, which should answer prompt. B. What you feel you MUST have them know about you.</p>
<p>(Alara) #2. A challenging week teaching computer coding in the small, traditional town of Gordes.</p>	<p>She couldn't get a young girl interested in computer programming--even gaming. Realized she had even bigger challenges to face: overcoming the traditional idea of the role of women in society.</p>	<p>A. That she can face a challenge involving things she's interested in (coding, roles of girls in society), adapt to difficulties, and learn from the experience. B. That she was teaching coding to village kids. That she did it for three years.</p>

