At the age of 5, I bought my very first animal encyclopedia. Within the first few pages of it, I immediately became hooked, and brought it everywhere with me, to family dinners and meetups with my friends. My parents saw my fascination with animals, which then led them to bring me to all sorts of zoos all around the globe, as one of their hobbies includes traveling. I got to see a diverse range of animals, ranging from commonly found birds to native animals such as the platypus, which is only found in Oceania. However, when COVID-19 hit, I was unable to travel as much anymore. Not wanting to limit xyz, I turned my exploration to documentaries and TV shows.During my time in the quarantine, I had discovered and watched multiple documentaries relating to that of animals, and the most memorable one being Our Planet, a documentary made by David Attenborough. It is a series in which they talk about the different ecosystems around the world, and its inhabitants. Through this, I had discovered many fascinating species of animals, which includes the orangutan and the toucan, just to name a few. However, after watching the documentary, I could not help but observe that I was slightly dissatisfied, as I felt like too little was talked about the animals. So, I went ahead of myself and examined the animals that I found the most interesting in the series, most notably the velvet worms found mostly in the continent of Oceania, and Papua’s birds of paradise. In the documentary series, they were both briefly brought up, but enough to pique my interest. In the show, it was mentioned that the velvet worms would spew out a liquid similar to that of glue, so I would acquire information regarding this substance in particular, and the glands that produce them in the book “Invertebrate Zoology : a functional evolutionary approach” by Ruppert, Edward E; Fox, Richard S; Barnes, Robert D. For the birds of paradise, more specifically the Western Parotia, in the documentary, it is shown to do a multitude of feats in order to impress a mate, one of them being changing the colour of its eyes. However, for this particular species, not much was known about it before the series, so with it being brought up to light, there were multiple theories to suggest this phenomenon. An example that I had found of a theory is that the yellow colour comes from its sclera, and when the eyes dilate, the colour yellow becomes even more prevalent in its eye.

Hi Leighton,

It appears that you have not selected a specific Common App prompt yet. To provide some context, US universities have a distinctive approach to admissions, where your essay serves as a crucial component akin to a personal interview. While your academic performance and extracurricular activities are visible through your report card and school involvement, the essay offers the admissions committee an opportunity to understand your true personality. They aim to discern whether you align with the values and qualities sought in an ideal candidate for their institution, and whether you have the potential to make a positive impact within their academic community.

A strong Common App essay delves into your emotions, thought processes when facing various situations or challenges, and your approach to decision-making, ultimately showcasing your personal growth and character development.

Though there are 7 prompts for the Common App, I think that based on your story, you might want to work on this prompt:

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

This prompt offers a compelling opportunity to delve into your favourite extracurricular or academic subject, providing a platform to showcase personal growth within that specific area. Crafting an essay that genuinely reflects your personality and highlights a distinct passion can be highly captivating, especially if your interest is unconventional. Your affinity for exotic animals, combined with your unique background growing up in Indonesia, a country with rich fauna, could serve as an excellent starting point. You can delve into your experiences of growing up, how your family's support nurtured your interest through visits to zoos, and ultimately, how your passion for exotic animals has played a pivotal role in shaping your identity and values.

In your Common App essay, you must tackle four essential inquiries:

1. "Who Am I?" - This involves exploring your personal identity, delving into your distinctive traits and attributes.
2. "Why Am I Here?" - This revolves around your developmental journey throughout high school, emphasizing your growth and evolution.
3. "What is Unique About Me?" - Addressing this question requires a profound understanding of how your individual personality traits, thought processes, areas of interest, and concrete skills interweave to form a distinct character.
4. "What Matters to Me?" - Serving as a concluding reflection, typically found in the essay's conclusion paragraph, this part offers an opportunity to concisely express what holds significance in your life.

By addressing these four questions throughout your essay, you will provide the admissions committee with valuable insights into why your interest in exotic animals matters to you and how it has shaped your character. Through your exploration of this passion, the committee can gain a deeper understanding of who you are as an individual. You can elaborate on your proactive efforts to learn more about these animals, demonstrating your genuine curiosity and commitment. Additionally, by sharing your aspirations and goals, such as becoming a wildlife explorer, biologist, or documentary producer, you can showcase your ambition and the potential impact your interest may have on your future endeavors.

Best of luck!

Melinda