**Essay #1**

**Prompt #1:** *Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.*

***Draft #2***

As I clicked on the Gmail tab to do my last email check for the day, my mind jolted as two new emails from underclassmen wanting to join my debate club stared back at me. These were the seventeenth and eighteenth emails I received from people wanting to join my club. Every single time I got one of these emails, the excitement of getting to mentor these students to reach their fullest potential as debaters overwhelmed me.

Five years (and counting) of experience doesn’t make teaching beginners and newbies an easy task. What I initially thought was going to be a breeze ended up being a thunderstorm full of surprises. As each session went on, I started realizing how difficult it was to teach certain skills because they could only be obtained through experience.

Setting up weekly practice debates was the best way to get my members to get into the rhythm of debating. This was especially helpful for a junior-high team who came to me to prepare for an international debate tournament they were going to join. They all had incredible potential; they were on the right track in terms of arguments but held back as speakers. Wanting to harvest that potential, I utilized their team chemistry by doing guided sessions on case-building and taught them not to hold back during rebuttals by giving tips on attacking the opposition.

By their fifth practice or so, that team had become much more charismatic, establishing their speaking styles. Their arguments had become much more convincing; with more practice debates still to come, I am confident that they will make great strides and achieve a lot in their upcoming international tournament and in their journey as debaters. As a leader, this meant so much to me; even though debating is an experience unique to the individual, I could still guide my members to unlock their fullest potential as debaters.

Hi Evangeline,

I think your second draft is starting to get in a better direction.

However, I think you could do better by being more direct and concise in the way that your mentees struggled and how you tackled those issues. What kind of tips or practice/drills did you do with them?

All the best,

Johana

***Previous Comments***

As I clicked on the Gmail tab to do my last email check for the day, my mind jolted as two new emails from underclassmen wanting to join my debate club stared back at me. These were the seventeenth and eighteenth emails I received from people wanting to join my club. Every single time I got one of these emails, the excitement of getting to mentor these students to reach their fullest potential as debaters washed over me.

Mentoring these students has been fun and full of surprises. As someone who has done debate for five years (and counting) now, it did not occur to me how incredibly difficult it would be to teach someone how to debate, as it took multiple years and competitions for me to mold the unique way in which I spoke and argued.

Teaching this concept to my club members was a tedious task that took lots of patience. From years of experience, I learned that debate is not something one can learn in the span of two weeks, for example. Debate is an individual experience; by joining competitions and doing regular practices, each student gets to develop and mold their own unique debating style. Because of this, the most I could do as a leader was to give speaking structures, set practices, and give as much detailed feedback as I could.

However, as time passed, I noticed that a lot of my members had gotten into the flow of debating, crafting their own speaking styles. As a leader, this meant so much to me; even though debating is an experience unique to the individual, I was still able to guide my members to unlock their fullest potential as debaters.

Hi Evangeline!

In the first prompt, your work ethic and passion for helping your juniors truly shines through. You’ve also taken charge as a leader in your debate team to help fellow members practice through visible means. The intro is also engaging and unique ☺

One way that you can elevate your essay is to focus more on the highlighted parts in the last two paragraphs. Try to be more descriptive in the ways how your set practices, speaking structures, and detailed feedbacks improved your teammates’ debate skills. For example, you can include a short anecdote about how you helped unveil your juniors’ potential. They had good ideas but had troubles delivering their thoughts. Through your practices, they were able to.. (insert end results)

**Essay #2**

**Prompt #2:** *Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.*

***Draft #2***

I felt like a witch from a fairytale as I mixed my strained strawberry juice with my almond milk. Pretending my bowl was a cauldron, I stirred in the juice, tablespoon by tablespoon. However, unlike some of the beautifully colored potions in fairytales, my strawberry-juice-almond-milk potion would probably fail to entice Snow White to take a sip.

Interning at a start-up called Potion Bar, I set out to create a new, tropical flavor of Indonesian candle-shaped popsicles known as *es lilin*. I also had to make sure my creation was up to par with the flavor, presentation, and texture standards. After freezing it, I took my samples out and tasted them. Bite by bite, the small sliver of optimism slowly seeped out of me. They tasted bland, and the texture felt like that of an ice cube: rough and hard.

Drastic changes had to be made, so I set off to formulate a new recipe. Mangoes were used this time, and honey was added as a sweetener. To create the perfect, creamy texture—I researched the effects of certain ingredients, such as cornstarch. Observing all the different ingredients I used in my previous recipe led me to use oat milk instead of almond milk since the texture was thicker. I also added cornstarch into the mix to level up the creaminess.

The new potion was a vibrant yellow. Unfortunately, upon tasting the samples after freezing, they tasted starchy. While I had already gotten the texture and presentation right, the taste had to be improved. I eventually found that my samples tasted much better by mixing cornstarch with water, fulfilling all the previous requirements for a good product.

It was during this internship that I learned the amount of creativity needed to work in research and development, especially in the food industry. Conducting multiple trials allowed me to focus on certain issues and experiment new ways to improve my recipe. By closely scrutinizing the ingredients I used, I brewed a potion more scrumptious than anything that could come out of the beast’s kitchen in *Beauty and the Beast*.

***Previous draft***

I felt like a witch from a fairytale as I mixed in my strained strawberry juice with my almond milk. Pretending my bowl was a cauldron, I stirred in the juice tablespoon by tablespoon. However, unlike some of the beautifully colored potions in fairytales, mine potion did nont turn out as vivid.

My internship at a start-up called Potion Bar required me to create a new, tropical flavor of Indonesian candle-shaped popsicles known as *es lilin*. I also had to make sure my creation was up to par with the standards for flavor, presentation, and texture. After freezing, I took my samples out and tasted them. Bite by bite, the small sliver of optimism slowly seeped out of me. They tasted bland, and the texture felt like that of an ice cube: rough and hard.

I knew that changes had to be made, and I set off to formulate a new recipe. I substituted strawberries for mangoes, and used honey as a sweetener. To create the perfect, creamy texture, I did research on the effects of certain ingredients, such as cornstarch. Observing all the different ingredients I used in my previous recipe led me to using oat milk instead of almond milk since oat milk was thicker. I also added cornstarch into the mix so the final product would be creamier.

This new potion was a bright yellow. Unfortunately, upon tasting the samples after freezing, they tasted starchy. While I had already gotten the texture and presentation right, the taste had to be improved. I eventually found that by adding a mixture of cornstarch and water instead, my samples tasted much better, fulfilling all the previous requirements for a good product.

It was during this internship that I learned the amount of creativity needed to work in research and development, especially in the food industry. Conducting multiple trials allowed me to focus on certain issues and experiment new ways to improve my recipe. The devil is in the details—by looking at every single component I had, I was able to innovate and create something spectacular.

Your second prompt is nicely written. Through your multiple attempts at perfecting your popsicle recipe, you’ve explained and illustrated how creativity was essential in a R&D setting.

One aspect of your essay that could be improved is the use of language. Try to incorporate slightly more colorful language to keep in tone with the wonderfully written introduction. To make your essay more exciting, it would help to reduce the use of “I was/ I had/ I found…” In the ending, you can circle back to the fairytale-like intro to make your essay more enticing. ☺

**Essay #3**

**Prompt #3:** *What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?*

***Draft #2***

The Mahjong scene in *Crazy Rich Asians* is one of the most intense scenes I have ever watched. The speed of the game, along with the conversation between the two main characters—heightened its suspense. The *click-clack* sound of the Mahjong tiles being moved around was music to my ears.

I got to experience the *click-clack* of Mahjong tiles firsthand during a family visit when my uncle decided to buy a complete Mahjong tile set and table. It would take an entirely different essay to explain Mahjong rules, but needless to say, I was beyond confused when I first started playing. The rules and scoring system were incredibly complex but winning big always filled me with pure exhilaration that I eventually bought my own Mahjong set and table and practiced at home.

Mahjong is not simply about luck; much strategy is required to win. I have yet to unlock the perfect Mahjong strategy. However, with each game I played, I started noticing more details about the game. Prioritizing being the first to win, or getting the best set, was something I learned from watching tournaments online. I realized that the set I obtained at the end was dependent on other players. Each tile other players discarded was my “make it or break it” moment, so I learned to estimate the chances of getting better sets by observing the discard pile. Discarding my tiles required thinking; the next tile I discard could be someone else’s winning tile. Again, by looking at the discard pile, I was able to roughly predict the sets that other players are trying to obtain. This method, which I honed over years of playing Mahjong, brought me many wins.

Mahjong has held its place in Chinese culture among other Asian cultures for hundreds of years—making it an extremely huge part of my cultural heritage as someone of Chinese descent. The usage of traditional symbols and the pacing make Mahjong stand out from my other hobbies. That, along with the time I get to spend with loved ones, makes Mahjong meaningful to my cultural identity.

***Previous draft***

The Mahjong scene in *Crazy Rich Asians* is one of the most intense scenes I have ever watched. The speed of the game, along with the conversation between Rachel and Mrs. Young, heightened its suspense. The *click-clack* sound of the Mahjong tiles was music to my ears.

I got to experience the *click-clack* of Mahjong tiles firsthand during a family visit when my uncle decided to buy a complete Mahjong tile set and table. It would take an entirely different essay to explain Mahjong rules, but needless to say, I was beyond confused when I first started playing. Each set of Mahjong tiles that could be made scored differently; some sets scored higher than others, and even though my goal during the first few games I played was getting the simplest sets to finish the game, the times where I did obtain high-scoring sets filled me with intense satisfaction. I eventually bought my own Mahjong set and table and practiced at home.

Mahjong is not simply about luck; much strategy is required to win. I have yet to unlock the perfect Mahjong strategy, but with each game I played, I started noticing more details about the game. I realized that the set I obtained at the end was dependent on other players. Each tile other players discarded was my “make it or break it” moment, so I learned to estimate the chances of getting better sets by observing the discard pile. Discarding my own tiles required thinking; the next tile I discard could be someone else’s winning tile. By looking at the discard pile, I was able to predict the sets that other players are trying to obtain. This method, which I honed over ages of playing Mahjong, brought many wins for me.

Mahjong is a huge part of my cultural heritage, and the risks and rewards during the gameplay have motivated me to continue playing, even though Mahjong is not widely known in Indonesia. The genuine joy I experience while playing Mahjong has continued to make it extremely meaningful to my identity.

The largest strength in this essay is your pacing. From the beginning, you have shared clearly when your affinity toward *mahjong* began. I truly enjoyed reading the steps you’ve taken to develop this passion. Overall, this is a strong essay ☺

One part that you can improve on is clarification on some parts in the ending. To make your talent appear more significant and unique, do mention how *mahjong* enriches your cultural identity (read the comments above).