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. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
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.

### Draft 1 Prompt 5

**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.**

Ideas

* Music
* Art
* Selflessness -> Living in a clinic
* Disconnected -> remote island
* Baking
* Travel Trip (google maps)
* TV shows? (madam secretary -> learning how the government works)
* Books (murakami, asian tv shows, movies)

realizing it's okay to be wrong -> being wrong means more room to learn, initially thought if I was wrong, thought less of myself since other people were better/correct -> love for learning and exploration

Dari dulu slalu dikasi tau what to do. Jadi bingung ga tau how to make decision. And there’s a fear of getting things wrong.

* Podcast -> listening to other people’s stories/advice
* Background -> always told what to do, couldn’t make own decisions

Plan:

P1:

* Hook -> holiday trip to napa
* Taking the wrong turn

P2:

* Connect to remote island
* The beauty of being disconnected, no signal
* Being wrong about expectations
* Being wrong about how to cook in remote island, felt like i didn’t belong, i thought less of myself, like i couldn’t do anything right

P3:

* Another path is another learning opportunity
* Became more intellectually curious

As the right turn approached closer, the google maps woman spoke “Turn right in 200 meters”. How far is 200 meters? Should I tell her to turn now? I hate being in control of directions. I sweat my legs off as I hold my mom’s phone in my hand with google maps open. We were on the way back from Napa Valley in the winter and I started to feel car sick as I wrongly told my mom to continue straight, leading us to the mountains. I can’t do anything right. “My Love” by Westlife was playing in the background as my sister sitting calmly beside said, “Ria switch the song”. As I attempted pressing the forward button on the home screen, the song didn’t switch and the signal bars began to disappear. I can’t do anything right. Skinny branches fell on the narrow roads of the mountain and I nervously closed my eyes as my mom passed through. “Where do i go now, coba cek” (coba cek: “try check” in indonesian). I pulled down the screen of my phone trying to refresh it multiple times but nothing worked. I can’t do anything right.

Just like the anxiety I faced when I told my mom to take the right turn, I felt the same anxiety as a 5-year-old at Yamaha lessons every Monday when I was told to freely choose a piece I wanted to perform for the recital. “Is this the right song to perform”, “I feel like this piece is too easy, people are going to think I’m not a good piano player”. Until today, I needed approval from other people for the research question I previously did on Tuberculosis at the International Research Institute. Dr Malkin who assisted me with my research said “Feel free to pick whatever research topic you want”. Being wrong was my biggest fear. For example, I remember playing F instead of F sharp in a big crowd at the Singapore Harp Fest for the Indonesian minister for Singapore, my harp coach, Heidi Awuy, my grandparents, and my friends. I thought people thought less of me and I was a total failure. I was stuck on a fixed mindset and closed off from “success”.

As Dr Malkin told me “There’s no such thing as right or wrong, it’s your choice”. He was right, playing the wrong key wasn’t a dead end. Instead, it allowed me to learn from it. Just like my mom staying calm when I gave her the wrong directions. It led to a scenery of nature, something I couldn’t experience in a bustling city. Tugging on the strings of my ripped jeans, I looked outside the new Camry window and realized taking a wrong turn doesn’t mean that it would be a dead end. Similarly, I would not have earned myself an award without facing shame in front of a crowd in a Model UN nor would I have been able to learn how to improve my part in the orchestra without nervously plucking my harp strings. My love for learning grew just like my mom approaching Lake Berryessa. I would have not been able to learn how to make my own cookie recipe without accidentally measuring 500g of butter instead of 50g of butter.

Being wrong was something I began to embrace. I taught myself how to play the guitar on youtube or paint watercolor which makes great gifts and cards. There was a lingering thought of failure but I began to become brave in trying out new things and exploring. For example, spending 2 weeks of summer at a remote island. I grew out of my fear for red worms, lost my sandals in the woods, learnt new slang, drew a patient’s blood, planted rambutan seeds and have ultimately exposed myself to a new person. I was no longer scared of taking a right turn or playing the wrong notes on a piano, I learned to “carpe diem” or seize the day for my love for learning.

### Draft 2 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.**

**Plan**:

Main idea -> learned to have a mind of my own, decide for myself, became more brave to explore, become more curious

Character strengths -> curiosity, perseverance, adaptation

P1:

* Hook: being afraid of doing things wrong -> did not dare to do anything “creative” or “out of the box” -> always practical, i had a fixed mindset
  + Example: we were assigned to make our own “puns” in 4th grade, but i was so eager to get the perfect pun or the best pun, that i was afraid of making my own because i thought less of myself ->thought i was not enough for my own expectations -> so i googled puns and took a pun from the internet -> my teacher questioned whether i made it or not -> i said yes -> always thought i could not do things myself, always had to get approval from someone
  + Pun - > what gets wetter the more it dries, a towel
  + Riding the hoverboard -> never wanted to ride the hoverboard because i was too scared of getting hurt, falling down
* Background: people always told me what to do:
  + What song to perform
  + What show to watch
  + I was shaped by other people’s thoughts instead of myself
  + Because everyone told me what to do: i grew a fear of failure and doing things wrong
  + I was told to take piano lessons -> which i enjoy playing until now -> inspired me to teach other children music (music from youth)
  + I was not a creative child -> i took puns from google, asked my friends for opinions on powerpoint styles and “copied” art from pinterest
  + My dad told me to take tennis lessons, swimming lessons
  + Never asked for something i wanted to do (was closed, quietly curious, scared of failure)
  + People had their “thing” they were creative -> “why didn’t i think of that”
* Growth -> quarantine led me to view things differently, i spent more time on youtube and fell more into podcast and music (i became more open minded, unafraid of what people thought because i was “disconnected” from the world -> led me to start a podcast, now we know)
  + ULTIMATE TURN -> podcast called Now We Know (i started a podcast because i’ve become more active in listening - emma chamberlain) : during quarantine, talking to people, listening what they had to say implanted a certain mindset to me -> inspiring people who have showed care to the world, expressed their failures from adults, to high school seniors
  + Got published on spotify, more platforms
  + Motto was: “connecting others through curiousity”
  + One thing they all had in common -> “always try new things, you’ll never know until you try because when you fail, there will always be another way”
    - Clifton tan who is a feng shui architect from singapore (bonded over singapore)
    - Christine yaromich who worked for elon musk
    - Veterinary microbiologist -> Melina Jonas
    - Carys mihardja, an indonesian, who won the diana award
  + That summer, i joined a research institute not knowing what i was doing (assisted by Dr Malkin from Duke) -> he told me i could pick whatever topic i could and he would help me brainstorm more
  + Example: tried harp lessons when i was invited to a harp recital -> made me enjoy music and find myself through expressing music -> joined orchestra -> host concerts -> playing the guitar on my own
  + Although online -> i joined MUNs, hackathons, random things i found interesting which i ultimately found my passion for learning
  + Learned how to marinate bulgogi or korean bbq at home ; learned how to make traditional japanese matcha ; learned how to crochet a bag; learned how to play the kalimba; learned how to ride the hoverboard for the first time after many years of convincing since i was always “too scared”
  + Worked hard
  + I created a web app for feeding hands
  + Hosted a concert for music from youth
  + Joined an architecture and art class (for some reason -> realized it wasn’t for me)
  + I even went to travel with friends to a remote island, discovering a completely new culture of people and traditions, became more involved in the community
  + They’ve become my mentors in life (in the future, i want to be the same)
* Best parts -> i found myself !!!!
  + I found that i loved exploring, learning -> i joined hackathon, making a design for an app and an entire concept beind an app under 24 hours -> got me to the global rounds
  + I learned how to draw blood in the free clinic ; learned how to take covid-19 swab test; learned how to use the hermatology analyzer; to use a manual blood pressure thing; learned how to do cpr ; learned how to use a glucometer
  + I even did research at school -> using coffee, something different
* Conclusion
  + Through my podcast, listening to what people had to say to me, i realized i did not like watching stranger things just as my sister told me to watch, did not like listening to rap songs, instead enjoyed ballads
  + I could make decisions on my own, found myself through curiosity, was not scared of failure, instead i embraced it
  + Decisions were no longer being thrown at me, instead they were coming from me

I looked down on the piece of paper: “what gets wetter the more it dries, a towel!”. I was given a task in 4th grade: make a pun at home and share it in class!

That night, I tried hard to think of puns, funny things I could say to make my friends laugh, something new they never heard but nothing came up. Instead, I typed up on my parents home computer on the internet “funny puns”, looking for the best one I could find. I was afraid of not getting the “right pun” and scared that what I thought of was not good enough. Ms Novelyn, my english teacher asked the next day: “wow this is pretty good, are you sure you wrote this, i feel like i’ve heard it before”. As a primary school student, I was always given decisions and told what to do: I was not creative.

Ever since I was told to take piano lessons or try out tennis, I could not make my own decisions. From choosing what shoes to wear to a family dinner or whether or not to read a book, I needed some approval because I was always told what to do as a kid. This led me to be afraid of failure and become quietly curious instead of trying new things. When I had my first solo piano recital, I asked my piano teacher what song I should play, and she reminded me that I could choose my own piece but as the recital came closer, I could not come up with anything. Instead, she gave me a simpler version of Ballade pour Adeline, a famous piano piece. I felt the relief that I did not have to pick what I wanted to play. Picking a piece always brought me to think whether I was picking the “right” one or if people would enjoy the piece, not thinking whether i would enjoy playing it. On the day of the recital, I made a mistake, music was supposed to be something I really enjoyed, without stressing whether I satisfied the audience. The idea of doing things the “right” and perfect way distracted me from my true passion for music: I was lost.

As I grew older, I fell more into my youtube addiction. Constantly filling my brain with videos I’ve never came across. For example, politics such as Hong Kong and China, a video made by Vox, the Malaysian flight that was never recovered: MH370, and more. When the pandemic hit, I spent more time on screen, relying on youtube for entertainment. I became more disconnected to the “real world” around me. This made me start Now We Know, a podcast which I began with my friends. We interview people from high schoolers to adults on their point of view in life, careers and aspirations. Through my podcast, I was able to reach so many people giving advise and what they thought of life. For example, Clifton Tan, a feng shui architect from Singapore shared his point of view on traditions, beliefs and stereotypes. Christine Yaromich, who worked for Elon Musk, talked about her stand on a “successful” career and struggles in university. Melina Jonas, a veterinary microbiologist who graduated from UC Davis, talked about her balance on life and her journey to her job or Carys Mihardja, an inspiring fellow Indonesian, who showed us that there was always a way to care for others. Coming from different lives, perspectives, all of them had one thing to say: “always try new things, you’ll never know until you try because when you fail, there will always be another way”. That summer, almost every week, that mindset was implanted in my brain. Episode after episode, every speaker always said to try something new. During this time, I decided to try new things. I created my first literature review together with Dr Malkin from Duke University on the use of Nanomedicine for Tuberculosis Eradication in Indonesia. Coming with barely any background in research or picking a research topic, Dr Malkin guided me how to choose a topic. When picking my research topic, it was the first time I thought that there was no “right” topic. I began thinking what I truly wanted to study on, discover on: I started exploring.

That summer, I made my first tiramisu with many failed trials, marinated bulgogi, a korean dish, learned how to crochet, joined a few Model UNs, took a summer class on Architecture and art at Columbia University and ultimately tried anything I could. Through this, I found that I did not like spending hours on zoom, discovered a new hobby of studying art, discovered the most significant public health problems in Indonesia. Most importantly, I found my love for learning, music and discovery. I started Music From Youth, a non profit organization in which I began sharing my knowledge on music to those who do not have access to music. I taught music during the summer every week and hosted a virtual concert to raise funds to purchase music instruments. Then, Music From Youth donated these instruments in order to teach a variety of instruments. Personally, I found that I loved teaching through this and seeing students happy through music. Furthermore, I began my age of discovery through research at school where I used caffeine to kill E. Coli with the guide of my seniors and biology teacher. Published on Sigma Xi, I was able to discover that I loved learning through research. At school, I began a Mental health campaign through student council, a hard decision where I had teachers questioning my ethics, or purpose of this campaign. Instead of holding back, I raised students’ voices on mental health, their opinions and feelings. Through making message boards at the end of the hallways, creating webinars, art therapy, I made a topic people were afraid of speaking on a norm to talk about. I realized that my idea of exploration, trying new things and making my own decision allowed me to flourish, become more confident and brave to find new things to learn.

Thanks to my podcast, I found myself through research, music and youtube. Without youtube or quarantine, I would not be shaped to the person who is unafraid of making choices. I no longer have to google a funny pun for an assignment nor do I have to ask my mom what piece i should play on the harp. I did not have to ask my parents if I should plant a mango tree at the backyard because of boredom. I made decisions that I thought was best for me and ultimately began thinking the wonders around my community. As the motto of my podcast on spotify was: connecting others through curiosity. I loved learning even if it was a mere 10 minute video from John Green or his brother. I had ease exploring like watercolor painting, starting my own research and even cooking a korean dish I never knew was difficult. Decisions were no longer thrown at me instead they were coming from me.

Dear Ariana,

Both essays are very good starts. You make good use of descriptions, and your anecdotes are a good way of placing the reader in your shoes. Below are a few notes on how you can improve your content further.

In your first essay, I suggest only focusing on only one or two main stories or experiences which showcase your personal growth. Avoid simply “telling” the reader that you learned to accept failure, “show” us *how*. What happened? What were your thoughts at the time? How did you overcome the conflict you faced?

For your second essay, I recommend you narrow it down to just one or a few themes. Decide which core value (or values) you want to showcase the most. Is it your passion for music? Your curiosity and love for learning? Your fearlessness in trying new things? What have you done or accomplished that showcases these values?

Lastly, and this applies for *both* essays, conclude your essay by reflecting on how your personal growth – or your core values – will serve you going forward.

You can try structuring your paragraphs by using the PEEL structure: Point, Evidence, Explanation, Link (to next paragraph).

You’re headed in a good direction, so keep it up.

All the best,

Arianne & Chiara

ALL-in Essay Editors