

### Coalition Application Essay Prompts:

- **Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it.**

#### *An Intervention*

Every time the bell rings, I close my books, grab my laptop, and charge out of the building. As I race past my peers, with an open laptop clutched under my arm, the landscape around me fuses into a blur. Faster, faster, faster!

One day, I rushed to my physics classroom, panting - my lungs and legs revolting against the ungodly speed.

"Not fast enough!" I mumbled to myself - there are tons of emails unchecked, projects unfinished, and subjects un-reviewed. If I could be just a little faster, I would accomplish more, and feel more alive. That's why I sprint between classes every day, watch YouTube at 2.5x speed, and eat lunch while doing homework: slowing down only makes things worse.

Nine o'clock in my host family bedroom, I was writing like a well-oiled machine, feeling as if my body was but a tool for me to use and throw away afterward. Parts of an unfinished robot spilled across the floor; a laptop on the bed was flickering training progress of my AI model; and a phone flashed Dad's greetings from my hometown that I didn't finish reading.

A sudden knock on the door interrupted my flow: "Come sit with us Hanke. Children are 'trick or treating'," my host mom invited. "Only ten minutes," I thought, running downstairs, hoping to hand out all the candy as quickly as possible.

Crisp air stung my nose that'd been confined in the dusty bedroom. The moon above was motionless. Everything seemed to be in such a slow-motion that my body had difficulty adjusting. The toasty glow from the fire gracing my cheek instantly transported me to my family on the other side of the globe: How we sit around the porch eating dinner, catching up on each other's lives. These are memories I must have buried deep lest they leak out to disrupt my carefully calibrated routines. Almost in a trance, it occurred to me that I might've lost something important in the mad rush on my forward-charging journey.

Suddenly, out of the shrubbery jumped two zombies. "Trick or treat!" they shrieked, snapping me back to reality. Two young girls in ogreish makeup stood in front of me.

"Me?" I replied, frozen like a rusty robot. "Sorry, I ran out of candy, but I can..." Before I could finish, a girl grabbed a piece of chocolate from her pumpkin bucket, placed it in my lap, and walked away with her friend, who turned around and shouted, "It's a gift for the kid with no candy on Halloween!" The sugary content of Hershey's chocolate dissolved in my mouth and reached my heart, giving me some much-needed sweetness in late October. I teared up, the previously sealed-up memories finally gushing out.

Looking up at the starry autumn night sky, listening to the firewood crackling in the pit, I'd never imagined that an unhurried world could be such a beautiful place. Sure, an intelligent robot can execute millions of lines of code per second, but it still can't untangle memory,

experience love, or comprehend the beauty of this natural world. I was running too fast to notice what really mattered to me.

With that thought, I dashed back up to my room, but this time to finish reading those messages and phone Dad.