**We know you lead a busy life, full of activities, many of which are required of you. Tell us about something you do simply for the pleasure of it. (100 -> 111)**

There are some elements of performing in a drama production which have a riveting effect that cannot be recreated: the parted velvet curtain separating our world from reality; fellow actors lining the edges of the stage, bracing for their entrances; and the constant attentiveness necessary to maintain the show’s momentum.

However, what I love most about theatre what comes in the months of prior rehearsal: understanding your character for the first time, figuring out how to convey certain emotions outwardly, and, more importantly, getting to know your fellow cast members onstage. It is these elements of drama that help me to take a break from the stress of school and relax.

**Although you may not yet know what you want to major in, which department or program at MIT appeals to you and why? (100 ->97)**

I love the game of chess. The rules are quite basic, yet they give rise to endless possibilities for outcomes after each move. Furthermore, because there is no chance involved, you are the master of your own fate. Computer science has these same properties. It has a framework in which logic is key, and once one learns it they are capable of having a widespread positive impact. Want to build an educational app to enrich the learning of underprivileged children or a website that simplifies the lives of countless individuals? All you need is concentration and thought.

**At MIT, we bring people together to better the lives of others. MIT students work to improve their communities in different ways, from tackling the world’s biggest challenges to being a good friend. Describe one way in which you have contributed to your community, whether in your family, the classroom, your neighborhood, etc. (200-250 -> 339)**

Up until recently, the St. John’s community service department had not yet emerged from the 20th century. Everything was handled on paper: students learned about events if they happened to walk by a flyer, officers recorded the names of students who showed up just by having them sign a sheet, and it took these officers months to compile everyone’s hours. As expected, this system had some huge flaws. Because an officer couldn’t read his handwriting, my friend was not notified that an event was cancelled and showed up at 7 AM on a Saturday in vain. My sister had to meet with an officer right before the deadline for hours because she had just learned that her hours were incorrectly counted.

So, last Spring, two friends and I finally decided to remedy the issue. We decided to make an app that would allow a user to create, sign up for, and be confirmed for community service apps. I wanted to try something new, so I wrote the code for the backend since I had never done server-side work.

At first, things were difficult. The client-server interface was buggy, and I discovered numerous security flaws that required complete redesigns of the way data was stored. On top of all this, coordinating meetings with two other teenagers during the summer was as difficult as one would expect.

Finally, by the end of the summer, we had finished. Around this time, we realized that other schools could utilize our work. We contacted some schools around Texas and offered the app and server to them, and they took us up on the offer!

While the app has only been running for a short time, the improvement has been remarkable. It appears that participation has been boosted by the app, and students particularly enjoy being able to immediately see their hours.

In making the app, I learned a lot about programming servers. However, the most important lesson is probably the fact that small adjustments to a system’s efficiency and accessibility can yield large advancements.

**Describe the world you come from; for example, your family, clubs, school, community, city, or town. How has that world shaped your dreams and aspirations? (250 -> 314)**

Excited at the thought of being an upperclassman, I entered my junior year full of ambition and energy. My goals included (to name a few) expanding my knowledge of formal computer science in the class only available to juniors and seniors, obtaining more involved roles in theatre productions, and securing a spot in the honors choir.

Two days into the school year, Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Houston. While my house was left unscathed, most of the city was not as fortunate. From the comfort of my couch, all I could do was scroll through Facebook posts documenting the destruction dealt to my friends’ families and watch news footage of countless emergency evacuations. An endless stream of questions flooded my thoughts: Why was my family spared? Why did this happen? Why was the impact of the storm so great? What could I do to help?

Finally, it was safe to travel by road again, I immediately trekked to the makeshift shelter in the convention center. I arrived to a scene of chaos. A mountain of donations remained to be sorted, and as a result they could not yet be distributed to evacuees. Some volunteers had begun the process, but they were understandably overwhelmed by the workload and the time pressure; as a result, there was no organization. I suggested to the red cross leader that we impose a standard system of organization, and little by little we chipped away at the colossal workload throughout the week until we could finally begin distribution.

In the wake of my experience during Harvey, my initial aims seemed trivial. While they were important to myself personally, they had little impact on the world when compared with the volunteering at the convention center. This realization motivated me to look towards academia and nonprofit work as viable life paths, as those types of work seemed more important in the long-run.

**Tell us about the most significant challenge you’ve faced or something important that didn’t go according to plan. How did you manage the situation? (250 -> 277)**

“70.” That’s the number that was on my first math test of freshman year. I felt betrayed, backstabbed. Going in, I knew the class was going to be a challenge; it was an honors class, and this was high school, not middle school. However, I don’t think I ever really accepted that this reality would apply to me.

In middle school, I began to develop a passion for math. It always made sense, and it appeared that I was better at it than my classmates. Because of these two aspects, I engrossed myself in anything math-related. I read ahead in my class textbooks. I stayed after school for math club. I went to MathCounts competitions on the weekends. Math became a significant part of my life. So naturally, as a naive freshman with a somewhat-inflated sense of his math abilities, I dismissed what I had heard of the difficulty of the class.

This arrogance was what made the wound really sting. Math was supposed to be easy. It was my subject. The grade hung over my thoughts. I felt like a failure. However, I gradually started to make adjustments in the way I thought about the class.

I actually studied the night before the next test. I took more notes in class. However, more importantly, I began to realize that I had subconsciously tied my happiness to one number. Defining my self-worth with my performance in school was no way to live. I decided to try new things, like acting and microfinance, to provide myself with outlets for my anxiety, and as a result I have enjoyed the rest of high school much more than the beginning.

<http://mitadmissions.org/blogs/entry/on-writing>