b'coz i wnat 2 go on da train

As I gripped the microphone and stood on the stage, speaking out about mental health and the anonymous chat-bot Jack and I made — Harmony — I was blown away by the rush of power and empowerment I felt. My voice trembled: the kind when someone *really* wants you to listen. In the end, the room was dead silent. Harmony was a chat robot built entirely overnight as we drank coffee and ate cold pizza to keep ourselves awake. I focused on gathering the sources, writing informative articles, and customizing the colors and images of the site. Jack wrote the site's layout, and wrote on the core algorithm for the chat bot. In the end, we wrote up about 8 pages of a website. Oh, we also won first place at Digitize Hackathon, my first ever hackathon! (you can check it out here: https://harmony.vercel.app and video at https://harmony.vercel.app/demo.mp4)

Harmony inspired us to start our own hackathon, to empower other students to have this same powerful moment of standing on the stage and giving a winning presentation. To inspire real impact and change. We ended up splitting as co-founders, although I did eventually run HarmonyHacks online. While proud of HarmonyHacks too, I feel that I could have done better. I was a bit over-ambitious in this venture — a solo 9th grader that knew nobody, that expected everyone else to be just as passionate and work just as hard on the project — either I wasn't inspirational enough, or just naive. We barely crossed 1000 dollars, and that's probably one of the leanest budgets for a hackathon at this point. It was also really stressful, I remember watching a lot of Mingjie's videos and wondering "what went wrong?" with my hackathon. In hindsight, I could have probably gained some experience from being part of an existing hackathon, then starting my own. Plus, co-founder issues :P (https://harmonyhacks.org)

Yet, before any of this, before I was remotely interested in HTML/CSS/programming in general, I started from USACO, the computing olympiad that I now absolutely love. USACO — has and is the core foundation of all programming I have ever done. I chase for the ephemeral excitement when everything "just clicks" and the stars align to form mind-constellations. I just, really really like it. Ask anybody that knows me more than my display name, "ShiftyBlock", and they'll talk about how I'm somewhat obsessed with USACO and competitive programming — it's so fun! (i could go on and on for another page about what USACO means to me and whatnot, but you can also refer to my message history hehe)

To me, programming is about solving problems, and tackling these social issues that surround us in our daily lives. My only in person hackathon experience was one of the most memorable events ever, and is what inspired me to create HarmonyHacks, and is also what inspired me to pursue web development at all. Now, finally: here's why I would love to go on the Hacker Zephyr.

I'm a super business-y oriented guy. (Startups anyone?) I know Ken is no longer on the slack anymore, but he's the super-embodiment/super-set of my favorite character traits: a confident and logical person with tangible skills and quick learning. I love to talk to people with the 2 of these traits: "logical person with tangible skills", and I love the Hack Club community for exactly

this — incredibly skilled web developers/app developers/rust fanatics who are passionate about what they do — and I strongly believe that being able to meet these passionate people in person, is a life-changing experience that I would love to be a part of.

Plus, I also want to meet Roshan and Claire :) [Ken too if he applied!]