At the end of the essay, the bacon metaphor may seem overdone to some readers, as Mariam has "gobbled up new knowledge rapidly, hankering after it like any elusive bacon strip" and has expressed a desire for "fresh, new crisp" learning to satisfy her "hunger for knowledge." She might have reduced the number of mentions of bacon and hunger. However, Mariam's essay ultimately stands out for its originality and unpredictable connections, like linking *The Great Gatsby* to—what else?—bacon.

"Beyond Plug-and-Chug Math"

Anonymous
MIT

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A MATH-SCIENCE girl. I sighed and sulked through classes on US History and French in eager anticipation of the formulas and applications I would be learning later in the day. I believe there are many factors which attribute to my success, two being my fascination and persistence.

When I was seven I once asked what math was good for and why I should learn it. The answer I received simply does not do math justice, "One day when you're in line at the grocery store the cashier will give you too little change and you'll be glad you learned this." Now in calculus I see the application of all these once foreign symbols, formulas, and letters. I am often amazed by the calculations I am able to do using the cumulative information acquired from nearly 12 years of education, such as how to maximize the volume of a box given a certain surface area. Math is not just plug and chug as many view it but it requires creativity and thinking out of the box to solve the problems encountered in the real world. Beauty lies in its simplicity and in the fact that proofs and observations are what brought the golden rectangle from ancient Greece, Pascal's triangle, and the Pythagorean Theorem as well as a host of other theorems, equations, and postulates. Math has made the impossible possible and the once long and tedious, simple and quick. The genius of it is amazing as well as the fact that any person is capable of applying and discovering it. I draw graphs and try to make shapes from functions for fun, count to 10 to calm down, and save money at the store, too. For all of these reasons and many more, I am fascinated by math.

I wasn't always good at math, contrary to what students in my classes might say. When I first showed interest in math in the 5th grade my parents laughed; middle school was even worse. Incoming 6th graders were given a test on the second day of school and depending on their scores were placed into a high or low speed math class. I was put in the slow speed math and missed a lot of class my first year, as a result my grade drifted from a B to a C to a C-, then I got help. I knew I liked math and I didn't want to do bad in it so I bought books and hired my older brother to help me. I eventually made it to a B+. Later, in the summer after my junior year, I took a course that covered nearly a year of Calculus. I was told that if I decided to take Calculus AB, I would be bored, so I went for a challenge. My strongest subject began to take up most of my time. I had to read review books, go online for help, and stay in during nutrition and lunch for extra instruction. It was hard, but my dedication paid off and I earned an A. This persistence and drive also help me excel in math.

ANALYSIS

In this essay, the author begins by stating that she has "always been a math-science girl." The honest confession that follows, "I sighed and sulked through classes on US History and French," underscores this point. She goes on to provide specific examples of her "fascination and persistence" regarding math, even causing a chuckle when she asks why math is useful to learn and receives an answer that doesn't "do math justice"—being able to count change at the grocery store. This is comical, providing an excellent contrast to algebra with its "foreign symbols, formulas and letters." The rendering of math as a "foreign" language shows us the fascination the author has with math and its applications. Her praise of math and vision for the potential of what to others might merely be a boring academic subject is memorable in its admiring tone: she notes the "creativity and thinking out of the box" math requires, and believes its "beauty lies in its simplicity." The references to specific math theorems, equations, and postulates further strengthen the author's assertion that she is intrigued by all the applications that math has for the real world, whether they are ordinary or academic. The strength of this author's examples lies in their accessibility to a general audience. She summarizes this nicely when she writes, "I draw graphs and try to make shapes from functions for fun, count to 10 to calm down, and save money at the store, too." The reference to saving money at the store nicely ties back to the original anecdote about math being undervalued in society.