



The visual description of those playing the tabla in concert is very powerful and helps us understand the instrument better even if we aren't quite sure what it looks like or how it sounds. We can almost see the performers' fingers "gliding" and the "spellbound" audience members. Details like these bring the essay to life and help the admissions officers relate to the story being told.

Using the purchase of instruments to transition from the musical part of the essay to the volunteer work at the Braille Institute provides a nice connection between the stories. This is a great way to work in how he and his friend raised funds to buy the instruments and then took the initiative to volunteer at the institute. Again, the details that he provides about Chaandni help us to see what he sees. We can visualize her tapping, listening and smiling. We can feel his thrill from watching her.

Through his observations of Chaandni and her contemplative playing of the tabla, Shreyans demonstrates that he has undergone a transformation. We can see that he is now ready both physically and intellectually to perform. The conclusion has a meaningful tie to the introductory story.

When you write an essay about an activity, it's more powerful to describe the thinking that goes into the event rather than just the activity itself. This will allow the admissions officers to understand why you have committed yourself to the activity and what you gain from it. The essay that Shreyans wrote wouldn't have been nearly as effective had he just described his playing. What makes it compelling is that he tells a story through his learning to play the instrument and that he describes the mental aspect of playing. He also demonstrates how he evolved in his attitude toward playing the tabla.

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"Hurricane Transformations"

Jason Y. Shah
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I USED TO SPEND ENDLESS NIGHTS wide-eyed, anxiously dreading a high school life teeming with harsh peers and hollow hallways, immersed in a cold atmosphere eternally void of familiarity's warm embrace. I'll admit that this is not a hopeful vision; nevertheless, I cer-



tainly risked accepting this ugly reality when I supported my family's decision to uproot itself and move from New Jersey to Florida after my freshman year.

Somewhat flexible, my parents gave me a significant voice in the decision as I would be most profoundly affected. Yet, I had spent my entire life in the same cozy center-hall colonial in the same New Jersey suburb. I had known my friends since youth, when we had snowball fights during the icy winter and ran through lawn sprinklers during the summer. Teachers knew my family and cordially greeted me in the halls. I could never move. In my mind, I was set!

Or was I? Instinct tugged at my heart, something was missing in my life because life is not about being "set." Lured by the concept of a fresh start, I yearned for the chance to write my own story. As the son of Indian immigrants, I had adventure in my blood; the time had come to venture beyond my comfort zone and stake a unique claim in Florida.

The first few months were trying; only birds joined me during lunch and I spend weekends alone writing introspective poetry. My fifteenth birthday centered on a family discussion about our affection for our new home while Hurricane Charley pounded the life out of Florida. I regretted moving. By fortuitous research, however, I learned more about innovative entrepreneurs who were shaping our world. I have not looked back since.

My self-inflicted adversity finally evoked personal growth. I constantly introduced myself to strangers and pursued my passions in different activities. By launching and supporting community organizations, I transformed into a proactive leader as I overcame difficulties in varied contexts. Continuously seeking challenges in the community and IB Program, I teamed up with other motivated citizens and students to thrive and contribute to my new home.

Today I am highly involved in my community with many friends and mentors. Nobody knows me for my family or childhood, just for who I am today. The results of my own decisions and actions mean much more than what has been bestowed upon me. I would risk it all again because I know that I can only enjoy what I have earned. Breaking away from the risk-averse crowd that holds an exaggerated fear for what can be lost has been refreshing. I have gained trust in myself to defy odds because I never would have dreamt of the happiness and accomplishments that I have been honored to achieve in Florida.



College will certainly thrust a fiercer Hurricane Charley at me, but I will stare it straight in the eye and exceed expectations, eventually leaving an enduring legacy for the world through my entrepreneurial and philanthropic endeavors.

ANALYSIS

Jason's essay provides a powerful story of self-transformation from an introverted person to a community leader. The metaphor of the hurricane—a catastrophic event that requires rebuilding afterwards—makes this essay memorable, as we see how hurricanes related both literally and metaphorically to Jason's life. The hurricane provides a vivid image that reminds us of the force of the challenges Jason faced, both in witnessing Hurricane Charley and also in shouldering the “self-inflicted adversity” of moving to Florida.

Self-transformation is an ambitious topic to write a single essay on—after all, this is often the topic of entire biographies. Jason does a good job of reigning in the vastness of this topic by providing specific details and identifying concrete events. For example, he paints the image of a “cozy center-hall colonial” and shows us the “snowball fights” and “lawn sprinklers” of his youth. Descriptions like these create an evocative sense of the comfort and familiarity of Jason's suburban New Jersey home. This is much more memorable than simply stating that he has an emotional attachment to New Jersey. The contrast between the cheerful scene in New Jersey and the “hollow hallways” Jason imagines in his new school help us appreciate how challenging the prospect of moving was to Jason.

In the third paragraph, Jason reveals an adventurous and risk-taking part of his personality that he connects to his heritage as the son of Indian immigrants. As the narrative unfolds, Jason shows us how his decision to move is hardly easy at first, but that his willingness to confront a challenge in order to generate personal growth demonstrates courage and a commitment to learning. “I yearned for the chance to write my own story,” writes Jason, who goes on to demonstrate how he steps into that bold dream. “By fortuitous research,” he continues, “. . . I learned more about innovative entrepreneurs who were shaping our world. I have not looked back since.” Jason may have chosen to elaborate more on what the nature of the “fortuitous research” was and who some of these “innovative entrepreneurs” were, especially since he refers back to entrepreneurship and philanthropy at the end of his essay. While descriptions are helpful to set the context and scene, it is important to spend time elaborating in pivotal moments, since these are so critical to a narrative essay.