



Overall, this essay gives us a strong sense of Mathew's commitment to global medicine. The essay could be strengthened by using more specific examples rather than generalized statements, such as the statement that "doctors in other countries are scarce and locals are still being trained in ancient ways and often hurting their patients more than helping." When writing about other cultures, it is important to be sensitive and avoid passing negative value judgments. Universities tend to be diverse places with people from many different backgrounds, making culturally sensitivity important for communicating with peers.

"Scientific Sparks"

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GROWING UP WITH SEPARATED PARENTS HAS not been the easiest life, but it has been my life. When I was younger, I'd hate going out to eat with my dad and seeing a family of four happily enjoying a meal. If my mother and father ever went out together to a restaurant, it was with me, once a year for my birthday, and was usually interspersed with various disagreements.

It was when I was in first grade that I began to realize that, although my parents had their differences and no longer loved each other, I was the one thing that united them. I had no basis to be envious of what I thought of as "complete" families.

Both my mother and father, wanting the best for me, recognized early on my love and fascination with all things scientific. They worked to create opportunities for me to pursue my interest. My mother would read at bedtime, at my request, nature field guides instead of nursery rhymes. The two of us often made long journeys at 3:00 A.M. to witness meteor showers in the clear skies of the mountains. She encouraged me to set up experiments around the house, which I happily did—measuring the growth of palm tree saplings and dissecting owl pellets to extract the mouse bones inside. An environmental scientist, my father could not wait to transfer all of his scientific knowledge into my young head. Needless to say, many of his spontaneous lectures were far above my grasp—I still vaguely remember a quantum physics talk he gave me when I was eight—but they inspired me to learn more on my own.

My thirst for scientific knowledge grew over the years, without limits in any one specific area. Then, in January four years ago, my



Aunt Diane died after a five-year battle with breast cancer. It was during my aunt's illness that I realized I could use my natural love of science to benefit others facing similar challenges.

I have continually pushed myself closer to this goal by excelling in my AP science classes, studying biotechnology at UC Davis through the COSMOS program, and competing as a member of my school's Science Bowl Team. This past summer, I had the opportunity to intern at the Reijo Pera Lab at Stanford University through the Stanford Institutes of Medicine Summer Research Program. During this two-month internship, I worked with human embryonic stem cells to explore the function of PRDM1, a potentially-useful gene in the creation of regenerative medicines.

The scientific spark my parents recognized years ago has shaped my life, and with it, I wish to shape the lives of others. I aspire to become a biomedical researcher, a career that harnesses my long-time fascination of science and my commitment to improve the quality of life for those facing medical challenges. It would be a privilege to work alongside scientists, exploring new treatments and technologies to create exciting new options for patients and their families.

ANALYSIS

Ariela fits a great deal of information about herself and her family into her response to the essay prompt, which asks for a description of “the world you come from” and an explanation of how “that world shaped your dreams and aspirations.” These challenging questions require writing about outside influences as well as one's personal goals. Ariela does a wonderful job of focusing the essay by presenting us her family life—mostly in the first three paragraphs—and explaining how this nurtured a “thirst for scientific knowledge”—described in the last three paragraphs. While she also mentions her school (AP science classes), clubs (Science Bowl Team), and summer opportunities (an internship at Stanford), these all fit within the context of Ariela's family life, particularly her parents who encouraged the “scientific spark” they saw in their daughter. This central thesis holds the short essay together.

The introduction to “Scientific Sparks” presents an intimate view of Ariela's life growing up with separated parents. Her realization that “I was the one thing that united” her parents provides a nice segue into the third paragraph, in which she describes her parents' many efforts to support her scientific interests. The specific details Ariela provides