



Jonathan takes a risk in devoting the third paragraph and much of the fourth paragraph of his essay to describing Fred's story. However, because we know that Fred does not interact easily with others, we can surmise that Fred felt comfortable enough with Jonathan to share so much of his life with him. We can also see that Jonathan is an astute observer and compassionate listener. Though Jonathan may have chosen to present fewer details about Fred, he does a good job of bringing it back to himself when he writes, "[Fred's] enthusiasm and indomitable spirit in the face of adversity taught me valuable lessons—lessons I will carry with me for the rest of my life . . . A trip that started with me 'taking care of him' turned into a trip of substantial personal discovery." In essays about personal role models, it can be tempting to write about the role model and lose sight of oneself. For a college admissions essay, however, it is important to remember that admissions officers ultimately want to learn more about you. If you are writing about someone else, it is important to make explicit how this person has influenced *you*, something that Jonathan does well in the last sentences of his fourth paragraph.

The strength of Jonathan's essay lies in its many unexpected elements. Though attending the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair is clearly a huge honor, the essay tells us about a person. And this individual is hardly a famous person, but he is spoken about with the highest reverence and respect. Thus, Jonathan demonstrates the strength of his character; he is likely to be an asset to the student body of any college because of his exemplary acceptance of people from all backgrounds.

"Then and Now: How the Perseverance of a Working, Single Mother Molded the Persona of her Chinese-American Daughter"

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I GREW UP IN A FOUR-ROOM apartment in the middle of Beijing at the turn of the twentieth century. Common household features such as the existence of stairs within a house were thought of as decadent luxuries representative of the incredibly wealthy. My life was simple. At five years old, it was differentiated by two things, the times I was with my mother and the times I was not.

My single mother was a chemist and professor at the University of Beijing. Even at a young age, she distinguished herself from her peers



with her remarkable ambition and intense passion for learning. From growing up in the frigid winds of Northern Mongolia, to becoming one of three students to earn a full scholarship to China's most competitive university, to working as a government-sponsored chemist in Goslar, Germany, my mother accomplished more before I was born than most people achieved in a lifetime.

Unfortunately, I would not learn of the fabulous successes and arduous trials of my mother until much, much later. All I could understand or not understand at five years old was why my mother was rarely home, why I did not see her for three months during the summer when I lived with my grandparents, and why I was forced to go to a daycare owned by a tyrannical monster who would tell ghost stories to make me cry. Even now, much of my knowledge about my mother's early life is something I am still piecing together. As was the case then, my full understanding of her brilliant yet ill-tempered persona is continually hindered by the simple troubles of life. Although now, they are the issues of an eighteen-year old teenager rather than those of a five-year old child.

I remember nights we would spend together when she was busy with her research and classes; I would sit in a desk next to her, drawing pictures and imagine that I was her personal assistant. I also remember times when I had to stay home alone because she had a lecture to give or errands to run; I would lean against the window sill staring down into the bleak, concrete streets waiting and watching for the return of a petite form in a bright red jacket. Yet despite the forlorn days and the lonely nights, I feel neither regret nor resentment towards those early years or my mother. On the contrary, I am incredibly proud and grateful for all the difficulties she endured in order to raise me properly. Had it not been for my childhood experiences, I would not have matured at such an early age or developed such a strong sense of independence.

We moved to America in the spring of 1997. The transition of cultures was daunting yet it failed to dishearten my mother. Like every other experience in her life, she treated the move as an opportunity. However, even my mother was not immune to the overwhelming cultural shock, and despite her perseverance and accomplishments, she continually struggled with the language barrier and the difference in societal values.



While my mother was forced to labor against such changes, my young age enabled me to adapt quickly to the new environment. Unfortunately, my “Americanization” has caused a great deal of mystification and incomprehension in my mother. Not only do our manners of speaking differ, but we no longer view traditional beliefs the same way. Her lack of encouragement for my participation in athletics and her excessive emphasis on my grades have been both frustrating and upsetting. From my gregarious nature and social outings to my obdurate refusals to comply with her every long-established demand, she has been forced to accept the evolution of her daughter from that of Chinese doll to American teenager.

Nevertheless, despite our various differences and my acute assimilation into another culture, I have never lost sight of what mattered most to me, nor forgotten the roots of my heritage and rigorous upbringing. My mother’s persistence and endurance are qualities which I have proudly assumed and carried with me in every activity of my life. From facing the ignorant racisms of elementary classmates to the malicious jealousies of middle school peers, I have never doubted or second guessed the work ethic and moral code that she instilled in me. Her resourcefulness has also been highly influential and taught me of the importance of seeking opportunities. Whether it was working along side *Philadelphia Inquirer* journalists or researching marketing strategies for a startup company, I have learned and developed with each success and letdown encountered throughout my middle and high school years.

The difficulties of my mother and the difficulties that I faced in two countries on two continents continue to define and shape my personality and character. As mother and daughter continue along the journey of life, I hope that she can come to accept and embrace the daughter whom she has so diligently raised while I hope to slowly unravel the full mystery that is my mother and, one day, finally comprehend and appreciate the entirety of her effect on my life.

ANALYSIS

With an impressive vocabulary and keen sense of reflection, Lisa has written an essay that conveys the story of her unique upbringing across two very different cultures. This essay weaves together Lisa’s history and personality with that of her mother. Like Timothy’s essay “Self Mind,” (Chapter 7), Lisa balances information about herself