**SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY EXAMPLES**

**UCHICAGO SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY EXAMPLES**

**THE "WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD" ESSAY**

**This essay was written for the U of Chicago "Create your own prompt" essay. The author included the following explanatory note:**

I plan to double major in biochemistry and English and my main essay explains my passion for the former; here is a writing sample that illustrates my enthusiasm for the latter.

In my AP Literature class, my teacher posed a question to which students had to write a creative response. My response is framed around the ideas of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave.”

*Q: Why did the chicken cross the road?*

*A: A manicured green field of grass blades cut to perfectly matched lengths; a blue expanse ornamented with puffy cotton clouds; an immaculately painted red barn centered exactly at the top of a hill--the chicken gazes contentedly at his picturesque world. Within an area surrounded by a shiny silver fence, he looks around at his friends: roosters pecking at a feast of grains and hens lounging on luxurious cushions of hay. As the nice man in a plaid shirt and blue jeans collects the hens’ eggs, the chicken feels an overwhelming sense of indebtedness to him for providing this idyllic lifestyle.*

*On a day as pristine as all the others, the chicken is happily eating his lunchtime meal as the nice man carefully gathers the smooth white eggs when it notices that the man has left one behind. Strangely located at the empty end of the metal enclosure, highlighted by the bright yellow sun, the white egg appears to the chicken different from the rest. The chicken moves towards the light to tacitly inform the man of his mistake. But then the chicken notices a jagged gray line on the otherwise flawless egg. Hypnotized and appalled, the chicken watches as the line turns into a crack and a small beak attached to a fuzzy yellow head pokes out. Suddenly a shadow descends over the chicken and the nice man snatches the egg--the baby chick--and stomps off.*

*The chicken--confused, betrayed, disturbed--slowly lifts its eyes from the now empty ground. For the first time, it looks past the silver fence of the cage and notices an unkempt sweep of colossal brown and green grasses opposite its impeccably crafted surroundings. Cautiously, it inches closer to the barrier, farther from the unbelievable perfection of the farm, and discovers a wide sea of black gravel.  Stained with gray stones and marked with yellow lines, it separates the chicken from the opposite field.*

*The curious chicken quickly shuffles to Mother Hen, who has just settled on to her throne of hay and is closing her eyes. He is sure that the always composed and compassionate chicken will help him make sense of what he’s just seen.*

*“Mother Hen, Mother Hen! I-I just saw one of those eggs, cracking, and there was a small yellow bird inside. It was a baby. Are those eggs that the nice man takes away babies? And that black ground! What is it?” the chicken blurts out.*

*Her eyes flick open. “BOK BOK! Don’t you ever dare speak of what you have seen again,” Mother Hen snaps in a low and violent whisper, “or all of this will be taken away.” Closing her eyes again, she dismisses the chicken.*

*Frozen in disbelief, the chicken tries to make sense of her harsh words. It replays the incident in its head. “All the food, the nice soft hay, the flawless red barn--maybe all of this isn’t worth giving up. Maybe Mother Hen is right. She just wants to protect me from losing it all.” The chicken replays the incident again. “But it was a baby. What if it was hers? She still wouldn’t care. She’s being selfish; all she cares about is this perfect life.” A final replay, and the chicken realizes and accepts that Mother Hen knows, has known, that the man is doing something wrong; yet she has yielded to the cruelty for her own comfort. A fissure in the chicken’s unawareness, a plan begins to hatch. The chicken knows it must escape; it has to get to the other side.*

*“That man in the plaid shirt is stealing the eggs from their mothers again,” the chicken thinks the next day as he unlocks the cage. Then the man reaches into the wooden coop, his back to the entrance. “Now!” At its own cue, the chicken scurries towards the opening and exits unseen. With a backwards glance at his friends, the chicken feels a profound sadness and pity for their ignorance. It wants to urge them to open their eyes, to see what they are sacrificing for materialistic pleasures, but he knows they will not surrender the false reality. Alone, the chicken dashes away.*

*The chicken stands at the line between green grass and black gravel. As it prepares to take its first step into the unknown, a monstrous vehicle with 18 wheels made of metal whizzes by, leaving behind a trail of gray exhaust. Once it regains its breath, it moves a few inches onto the asphalt. Three more speeding trucks stop its chicken heart.*

*“I can’t do this,” it says to itself. “These monsters are a sign. They’re telling me to go back. Besides, a few lost chicks aren’t so bad. The man’s not that evil. He gives us food, and a home.”*

*But the chicken dismisses the cowardly voice in its head, reminding itself of the injustice back in the deceptively charming prison. Over the next several hours, it learns to strategically position itself so that it is in line with the empty space between the tires of passing trucks. It reaches the yellow dashes. A black blanket gradually pushes away the glowing sun and replaces it with diamond stars and a glowing crescent. It reaches the untouched field.*

*With a deep breath, the chicken steps into the swathe, a world of tall beige grass made brown by the darkness. Unsure of what it may discover, it determines to simply walk straight through the brush, out on to the other side. For what seems like forever, it continues forward, as the black sky turns to purple, then blue, then pink. Just as the chicken begins to regret its journey, the grass gives way to a vast landscape of trees, bushes, flowers--heterogeneous and variable, but nonetheless perfect. In a nearby tree, the chicken spots two adult birds tending to a nest of babies--a natural dynamic of individuals unaltered by corrupt influence.*

*And then it dawns on him. It has escaped from a contrived and perverted domain as well as its own unawareness; it has arrived in a place where the pure order of the world reigns.*

*“I know the truth now,” it thinks to himself as the sun rises. “But here, in Nature, it is of no use. Back home, I need to try to foster awareness among my friends, share this understanding with them. Otherwise, I am as cruel as the man in the plaid shirt, taking away the opportunity to overcome ignorance.*

*“I must return now; I have to get to the other side.*