Please help suggest which part to cut cos it’s still 100 words over the limit

Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

The piercing sound of my alarm clock brought me back to reality. The same reality that I’ve been living in the past 12 years. Waking up, pinning down my serviam, driving to school, stressing out for tests, sleep. Repeat. Yes, I was on autopilot. No drama, no conflicts, no problems.

The fourteen-year-old me seemed to be doing well at school. I was surrounded by genuine friends, getting decent grades, supported by trusting parents. I seemed comfortable. Except I wasn’t. I wanted to change the flow of my life and break my routines. I sought for surprises.

*Maybe I should move to another school… Or another city… or both…* *But, what if it is not the right timing, what if I’m unable to adapt… What if I can’t find new friends and lose the old ones in the process…*

There were so many “what-ifs” in my head, and I didn’t know how to tell my parents about my thought of moving. I think they might freak out if they find out that their only daughter is moving away.

I collected various YouTube videos, online excerpts, and screenshots of a school’s website. And then one Sunday lunch time after church, I asked my dad while chewing my siumai dimsum, “What do you think of me moving to Taruna Nusantara (Youth of the Nation)?”

And there was a pregnant pause… continued with a “Is that a retreat place?”. I explained to them that it is a military school located in Central Java. My parents were bewildered. They thought I was following one of my friends. They instantly opposed my idea and told me to just stay in Santa Ursula, as it was already one of the best in Jakarta.

I want a change. I *need* a change. So, I pushed through. I asked my parents to visit the school first. Watching me hold my stance for the first time, my parents agreed to let me go.

Off to Magelang, I went. I landed in Jogja, took a 40-minutes bus ride to Magelang, and reached Taruna Nusantara. The most accurate words to describe it was eerily astonishing. I admire the students there who lined up very neatly during the ceremony. I admire how they have a very strict schedule but were still able to put a smile on their face. To top the list, I admire the way they've gone through the tough curriculum and strenuous physical training and create a strong bond. I wanted to be part of it because I believe that it would give me the real taste of life, cutting the line of dependency from my parents and learn to stand on my own feet. I was even more determined to enter this school.

So, I took the entrance test. I had to take note that I was a minority. The fact that I was the very few Chinese who applied made some of my family relatives opposed my decision, including my grandmother. They think I would not survive there and won’t be able to handle the new environment. But that didn't break my spirit, a popular saying from Germany Kent lingers in my mind “At the very moment when people underestimate you is when you can make a breakthrough.” I did my best through all of the processes.

My hard work didn't betray me but instead, my fate took me to another path. I did not make it into the school. It would be a lie if I said I wasn't sad when I heard the news. I was devastated but I know that it was just the beginning of my new journey. Looking back, I am grateful to make such attempt in my life. I learned how to take risks and break out of my comfort zone. My experience was just the surface of a deep iceberg called life.

Explain the relation of the experience you had with what you did after.

* E.g. How did the event prompt you into developing your graphic design skills? Did the event make you realize that you have to prepare more for the future?
* Did anything you learn from the event made you want to join a medical NGO? Was it because after you got to see another part of the world of different people you realized that community service is important?

Life continues in Santa Ursula, but I was no longer on autopilot. I continued seeking new challenges and opportunities within and outside of school. I developed graphic design skills and put my design out there to be judged by other people. I joined a medical NGO and flew 2000km away to Maluku to help people. I became the head of my school design team and started my own freelance job. I broke out of my bubble of comfort. Long gone is the timid girl who chooses easy paths. Now, the only constant is *change* and it all started from saying *yes* to new opportunities.

Hi Graciella!

I can see that the event that sparked a period of personal growth was your attempt to get into Taruna Nusantara. Through this event, you “learned how to take risks and break out of your comfort zone,” and after this event, something inside of you grew.

This is great! I think this is an event that you could definitely discuss.

I think the story behind this event is as significant as the personal growth you experienced after. I would suggest trying having an equal proportion of the two.

**Structure**

* Background of why you wanted to move as well as your attempt to take the test (225-250 words)
* Reflection on what you’ve learned/discovered from the experience/event (50-75 words)
* The growth you experienced, how you were no longer on autopilot (300 words)

**Introduction**

I would suggest this part to be the introduction.

“*Maybe I should move to another school… Or another city… or both…* *But, what if it is not the right timing, what if I’m unable to adapt… What if I can’t find new friends and lose the old ones in the process…”*

**The event/experience – background why you wanted to move**

I think you explained the event very well. You use a lot of descriptive words, included your thoughts that make it clear for the admission board to picture your condition at that time. I do think that it could be compressed so that you can elaborate more on the growth you experience.

I have made some comments and highlights.

* Highlighted Red: I think could be omitted.
* Highlighted Gray: It would be good to compress it, just mention it briefly.

**Reflection on what you have learned**

It is great that you mentioned what you’ve learned. I think it would be better if you could relate it more to the changes it triggered you after. I have inserted a suggestion of questions that could help link the two.

**The growth you experienced (Highlighted green)**

It is awesome at how active you grew after! I would suggest choosing 1 to elaborate more on. For example, you talked about how you joined a medical NGO and flew all the way to Maluku to help people. Did you grow in compassion and awareness of the community/world because of the event? I think this would be great to mention because it shows how the event really sparked your growth.

Looking forward to reading the next draft! ☺

Fedora Elrica Gracia

All-In Essay Editor

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NO NEED TO REVIEW

It was during 9th grade that I had almost stepped out from the borderline to a world that I didn't quite recognize yet. My days were filled with, "Where are you going next? What major will you pick?". I was very determined with my choice until my father challenged me to step out of my comfort zone. He showed me a military boarding school located in a rural part of Central Java. The school was called, “ Taruna Nusantara” which means “Youth of The Nation.” The name has such a deep and heavy meaning that it immediately intrigued me. It was only the first step of the unlimited road of journey. Inbetween, there are many unexpected bumps and without enough determination, I will stop halfway through.

The decision took many sleepless nights and "what if" thoughts. I knew that moving there means being away from my family and friends. I’m afraid that I would be an outcast and being dreadful throughout my next 3 years that’s supposed to be the best time of my life. Adapting to a new culture and different way of living is not an easy thing to do especially for someone who is used to live in her comfort zone. Then I realized that I don't have to think too much before giving it a try. In trying new things, we must not be fortune-tellers who seem to pretend to know the future.

Off to Magelang, I went. The 1 hour flight felt like forever. When I looked out through the airplane window, I realized that I was so far away from home. Staring all the clouds, fading away from my vision, I started to doubt myself, " Can I bear being away from Jakarta for another three years?".

My assumptions changed when I saw the school with my own eyes. The most accurate words to describe it was eerily astonishing. I admire the students there who lined up very neatly during the ceremony. I admire how they have a very strict schedule but were still able to put a smile on their face. To top the list, I admire the way they've gone through all of the hardships together and create a strong bond. I wanted to be part of it because I believe that it would give me the real taste of life. Cutting the line of dependency from my parents and learn to stand on my own feet. There was a little spark of willpower within me to enter the school.

I wonder what values I could get if I embark on a new journey. Countless opportunities are awaiting. Now, I'm going through this process all over again to apply to my dream university. This time, a higher level of challenges and hardships will be expected. I am challenging myself once again, but this time I’ve gained my confidence from my past failure. I hope this time, I can prove myself and people around me that I succeed in doing it.

ESSAY 2 ( ALTERNATIVE )

The beginning of high school was filled with curiosity. Having watched too many high school musical movies during childhood days made us have high expectations. We're expecting parties, being hit on by our crush, a teenage love life, and many other things. They all lead to one thing: our life purpose.

As a freshman, I was still very naive. I called myself a goodie-two-shoes who is afraid of trying new things and all I cared about was a perfect score on my test paper. The world around me moves fast that I felt left behind. Everyone was starting to explore new hobbies and pursue it. One of them became an amateur journalist, one even became a small band manager. Meanwhile, I was just there, doing ordinary school stuff without any dream I want to achieve or hobby I want to pursue.

I started to reflect on myself, what is it that I enjoy doing for hours non-stop? I know one thing for sure that illustrations amaze me. Whenever I watch Ghibli production movies, I always keep an eye on how mesmerizing their animations were. I love how they chose their color palette, the ambiance they created and the details on each scene in the movie. I wanted to create visual arts and a piece that could deliver a message to its viewers.

Since then, I started to learn graphic design by myself. The journey begins with a 30 days free trial photoshop that bugs now and then. Video tutorials from Youtube were my teachers. Color arranging, compositions, shapes, and different types of fonts excite me. My interest in design keeps getting deeper. I'm starting to get more familiar with photoshop. Using it feels like playing a game to me. Brushes are my "guns" and the blank document is my battlefield. Every new skill that I learned is a level up.

Slowly, this dear hobby of mine turned into a passion. I was chosen to be the head of the creative design team in my school. It was a tough position but I believe in my team. What used to be a hobby turned into a task. I was chosen to be the head of the publication team for our school's main annual event. Posters, banners, social media platforms were my daily meals. Deadlines were piling up along with school exams and assignments. I would overwork myself until midnight to meet all the deadlines and fell sick. I didn't enjoy designing that much again and I was disappointed and thought I was losing my passion. The pressure was almost too much.

Thankfully, I had my support system that pushes me to keep going. With "Plastic Love" by Maria Tekauchi playing in the background, help from my team, and supportive words from my friends, I was able to finish all of my tasks. Contentment filled me when my works were being published and brought advantages to many people. The trust that people put on me to design for them meant a lot to me and motivated me to be better.

In retrospect, I always remember how I got started and find the motivation to start again. A hobby that I found by coincidence became a very important thing in my life. I may not have the high school life that many people dreamed of, but I got to do what I love and met lots of amazing people along the way.

ESSAY 3

The complexity of human feelings is such a gift. Isn't it weird when we feel all sorts of emotions at the same time?

I claimed myself as a logical person. Someone who likes to talk with facts. For me, happiness comes in a physical form. Happiness needs to be seen, to be proven. But that was me. Now, I like to think more with my heart.

It was not too long ago that I packed my luggage to go to Maluku, the eastern part of Indonesia. Maluku was somewhere that I never thought I would visit, let alone doing community service there.

The two weeks stay thought me life lessons that last 50 years ahead.