1. **Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.**

Every Saturday morning, my father would guide me past the *Petai* treesin our garden.

He would hurl me up to reach for the beans and smile when I caught them in my hands; the same when I’d spoon rice and give vitamins to my brothers like a good big sister. Saturdays are different now. Watching the empty chair at our dinner table left an aftertaste different from the usual- bitter. This peculiar taste was unfamiliar, but I've grown stronger since. For every bitter memory and hardships unspoken, I began to see myself and the world in a new light.

Semarang, Indonesia. The city where everybody knows everybody and rumors will surely spread. Upon the news of my mother taking the lead in the company, I soon found myself facing societal judgment and bitter looks. At school, one parent approached me to ask, “Is your mom doing well? Is business going smoothly, dear? I hope you and your brothers are eating well.” I smirked. Although well-intentioned, such comments forged my inner quick-witted Hermione Granger to reply, “we’re doing well auntie.” However, I never shied away and answered with honesty in my words- because we were truly doing well. One thing came clear to me at an early age: we are undeniably products conditioned to think that women are incapable of being breadwinners in the family. I choose to think otherwise.

When I look at my mother, I envision a woman I aspire to become. She is a woman who drives to the office to undergo challenges in the industry in hopes of seeking greater opportunities for her four children. Ten-year-old me saw a warrior princess, unseen in movies, but are necessary heroines in life. For every hurdle she encounters, she embodies a woman capable of accomplishing many facets unbounded to the walls of our home.

Being accustomed to my mother’s regular absence, my brothers and I learned to look after one another. *Jie Jie* means big sister in Mandarin. Whether it was washing dishes, lifting heavy tables, or peer editing my brother’s English homework, every call of “Jie Jie!” posed my signature hair flip to take action. We would have wild conversations about electric vehicles in Indonesia, accompanied by my occasional rant about women’s rights- a topic rather controversial at school- but they would nod and listen anyways. Every moment spent blossomed into understanding between my brothers and me, allowing us to exchange both difficult yet honest conversations; seeing the world not as what it is, but what it could be. This newfound enthusiasm stems from my initiative to support my mother as I foster growth in myself and those around me.

By the age of fifteen, I beamed with excitement when my mother invited me to participate in my first-ever meeting. After many years of being told “I’ll-tell-you-when-you’re-older,” I am finally able to get involved. Sitting down next to my mother, I examined the fusion of words displayed on the screen. What is CSR? How do we improve? Most importantly, do we have Instagram? The whole room shook their heads. Delving deeper beyond the surface, I wanted to explore every detail from the “why” to the “how” and the result of every impact as we move forward. Since then, frequent trips to the office became an insightful experience that I look forward to as I grow.

Throughout my childhood, the reality of my father’s passing became the “new normal” that shaped my identity. Yet, it brought me to realize: I am not defined by my circumstances, nor do I wish to fall victim to the stereotypes in my community. In the face of adversity, I’ve explored strengths in myself previously unknown. Today, I am seeking parts of myself yet to discover, and in my pursuit of becoming, I want to taste everything that life has to offer- bitter beans and all.

Hi Nicole. I’d like to express my greatest applause for your courage to share something so deeply personal and important to you. The story is definitely something unique to yourself, and it must have shaped your childhood in ways we cannot imagine. I’m glad you’re taking steps to make sure the vocabulary used was extensive, and I can tell you wanted to give descriptive statements to make it interesting for readers to read.

That being said, I admittedly don’t see a clear flow of your paragraphs or the point you’re trying to make. The stories you wrote seem to be excerpts from your memory, which is great because anecdotes shows your thoughts, but I don’t understand their connection with each other. Furthermore, I don’t understand what each story has to do with the conclusion you mentioned. I feel like the stereotypes or judgements you mentioned is most likely about single parent families? But since you didn’t describe an event or wrote the specific judgement or stereotypical slurs you received, I couldn’t exactly tell what affected you.

The part about the office meeting definitely would have been interesting. And if you focused more on how the meeting changed your mindset or work ethics or vision for the future, that would have flowed more with the previous statement about your mom being your hero. I didn’t really understand what the purpose of the bonding between the siblings is meant to be? Don’t be mistaken, it’s definitely a part of who you are as a sister, but I don’t get what that has to do with “I do not wish to fall vistim to the stereotypes in my community” and “I want to taste everything life has to offer.”

Great job keeping the word count though. Try to make your thoughts more coherent. Good luck.