

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/IB/TOPS/MACS/HOMEWORK 23

NAME (FIRST AND LAST): _____ GRADE: _____

Part 1: Personal Essay Writing

Read the following personal statement and answer the questions that follow.

Too young to volunteer in a hospital yet too old for summer camp, I was determined not to idle away my first summer as a high school student. Undaunted and striving to help my community, I inquired about our local nursing home. My grandmother refused to enter the brown building with me, unable to interact with residents who were ailing and terminally ill. With persistence, I toured the facility with my father and decided to volunteer. The residents who were so debilitated that they would never leave the care of the nursing home really moved me. It was amazing how the support of the medical staff and family members created an environment that allowed residents to live an enjoyable life. I will never forget one resident in his early thirties who was paralyzed from the waist down, unable to live as most young adults. I would run into him on the elevator almost daily. My encouraging words and energy as a young person often brightened his day, and in return made me feel very joyful to serve. It was quite extraordinary to know that such a small gesture could positively impact someone's life. From reading stories to assisting the professional staff with exercise routines for the residents, the experiences I had there were life-changing. It was then that I realized that my life would be most fulfilled working directly to improve the lives of others as it relates to medicine.

With a strong interest in clinical medicine, I continued my studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) as a biology major and a Meyerhoff scholar. I embarked on several projects within the disciplines of immunology, cell biology, genetics, and vascular biology. These research projects gave me an indescribable experience as a participant in the discovery process and newfound appreciation for biomedical research. I was ready to work in the hospital and wondered how various scientific discoveries were being used in medicine. To answer this question and gain first hand experience of life inside a busy hospital, I began volunteering in the shock trauma resuscitation unit at the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) in Baltimore. On my first day as a volunteer, I was a bit nervous, unsure of what to expect. However, once I suited up and walked into the shock trauma room, I knew medicine was the profession I was meant to pursue. Through my work, I witnessed the medical staff working tirelessly to stabilize and care for patients who had experienced car accidents, stabbings, and other forms of trauma.

I will never forget walking into the shock trauma room to find a crying mother and grandmother as they saw their son and daughter severely injured from a car accident. As I looked into the next unit, there was a middle-aged woman who was recovering from a stab wound. Walking away from her unit, I could hear her call "Miss....Miss, can you help me?" I didn't know what she wanted, but I quickly turned to talk with her. She wanted her food heated and the nurse's assistance. Although I could not physically interact with her, I felt like a part of the medical team---working to ease suffering and serve those in pain. The most striking incident occurred one Saturday morning when I walked into the resuscitation unit and saw a pool of blood surrounding the rolling bed of one patient. The doctors and nurses tried everything possible to save his life. However,

they were unsuccessful and he died. I watched the reactions of the staff as they silently covered his body and rolled it away. It was then that I realized that one day I would be in a position to save someone's life. I immediately thought about the family of the deceased patient. Most importantly, I understood the important role that I must be prepared for in helping families deal with such a life tragedy.

As I was walking back to the locker room, I started to reflect on the joy I got from volunteering in the hospital and mentoring community kids, combined with my passion for science. I knew at that moment that I would love working as a physician who could not only heal and alleviate pain, but who can educate and innovate. The opportunity to change even a fraction of the lives of those in a city or underserved country is quite amazing. With the untimely death of various community members due to the advanced stages of cancer and the higher incidence of human immunodeficiency virus infection in minority women, I am inspired to join the struggle against deadly diseases and sickness. As I continue to strive for more, I can remember a quote by author Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: "When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die." I not only want to treat patients in the clinical setting, but am driven to improve the treatment and diagnosis of life-altering diseases through public health research. Without reservation, this will be my contribution.

Write down four words or phrases that may be useful in your personal essay writing for the IB/TOPS/MaCS applications. Briefly explain why they may be useful.

Words or Phrases	Brief Explanation
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

1. Describe two positive character traits that the first paragraph represents. How are they represented?

2. In relation to the second paragraph, what purpose does the first paragraph/introduction serve? In other words, why do you think the applicant chose to begin her essay in this way?

3. In the second paragraph, the applicant listed a few projects that she embarked on; in addition, she mentioned her volunteer work at a shock trauma resuscitation unit. How does the applicant's writing represent her interests and volunteer work? Does she simply list them, or does she do something more?

4. What purpose does the third paragraph ("I will never forget...life tragedy") serve? Explain carefully by paying attention to how the different incidents are represented.

5. How does the final paragraph provide a strong conclusion to the personal essay?

Part 2: Responding to essay prompts

Tips on Writing a Good Thesis Statement at the Middle School Level

by Jennifer Brozak, Demand Media

<http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/tips-writing-good-thesis-statement-middle-school-level-14596.html>



By the time you reach middle school, your teachers will assign an essay that requires you to write and support a thesis statement. Learning how to develop a clear and concise thesis statement is one of the fundamental skills of successful writing, as a solid thesis statement provides a paper with direction and lays the foundation for what you plan to argue and support.

Use Specific Language

Your thesis statement should be as specific as possible. Because it provides a “road map” for your paper, it should be very direct regarding what you plan to address in your essay. Try to avoid using vague words like “good” or “bad” or “same” or “different” in your thesis statement; instead, use synonyms for those words that shed light on what you mean by “good.” For instance, if you’re writing a compare-contrast essay about the similarities and difference in characters between two novels, don’t simply write, “Character A and Character B were alike and different in many ways.” Instead, be as specific as possible about the shared and contrasting qualities the characters possessed.

Answer a Question

To be effective, your thesis statement must answer a question. Sometimes this is easy, because your teacher will provide you with a question to answer, and you can formulate your thesis from the question. For instance, your teacher may ask a question such as “Should cell phones be banned in school? Why or why not?” Your thesis could then begin with “Cell phones should (or should not) be banned in school because...” and then, depending on your paper’s length requirements, you’ll want to briefly state two or three reasons in your thesis statement as to why they should or should not be banned. If your teacher hasn’t asked a specific question, try writing your own topic question. For instance, if your topic is healthy school lunches, you could ask yourself, “Why are healthy lunches so important in schools?” to begin formulating your thesis statement.

Pass the "So What" Test

A useful way to determine whether your thesis is effective is to ask whether it passes the “So what?” test. In other words, if your reader wonders “So what?” after you state your thesis -- meaning that your reader doesn’t understand the broader issue you’re attempting to address -- you’ll want to revise it to make it more clear and descriptive.

Pass the "How" or "Why" Test

Another way to test the efficacy of your thesis is to ask whether it passes the “how” or “why” test. For instance, if, after reading your thesis, your reader needs to ask “how” or “why” you’re stating your position, chances are that you need to revise to make it more

inclusive. For example, if you use the thesis "Martin Luther King, Jr. was a good leader," your reader might wonder how or why you feel this way. Adding a "because" to this statement will help, as will avoiding the vague word "good." For example, writing "Martin Luther King, Jr. was an effective leader because of reason A, reason B, and reason C" is much clearer and more direct than just saying he was a "good" leader.

PRACTICE

Choose one of the following prompts. Circle one of the numbers to indicate your choice.

1. What do you consider to be the single most important societal problem? Why?
2. Pick a controversial problem on college campuses and suggest a solution.
3. What do you see as the greatest threat to the environment today?
4. Choose a person or persons you admire and explain why.
5. Choose a book or books and that have affected you deeply and explain why.

The Outline

Write out the whole **introduction** (three to four complete sentences). Make sure there is a thesis statement. Do not exceed the lines provided.

Does your thesis statement...	Please circle.	Briefly explain.
...use specific language?	Yes / No	
...answer a question?	Yes / No	
...pass the "So What" test?	Yes / No	
...pass the "How or Why" test?	Yes / No	

If your answer is “No” to any of the questions above, go back to your thesis statement and refine it.

Body Paragraph 1:

Topic sentence (complete sentence; make sure that the topic is related to the thesis statement, and that it contains a controlling idea):

What evidence or examples would you use to support the controlling idea in your topic sentence? You may write in point form but make sure that your ideas are clearly expressed.

Body Paragraph 2:

Topic sentence (complete sentence; make sure that the topic is related to the thesis statement, and that it contains a controlling idea):

What evidence or examples would you use to support the controlling idea in your topic sentence? You may write in point form but make sure that your ideas are clearly expressed.

Body Paragraph 3:

Topic sentence (complete sentence; make sure that the topic is related to the thesis statement, and that it contains a controlling idea):

What evidence or examples would you use to support the controlling idea in your topic sentence? You may write in point form but make sure that your ideas are clearly expressed.

Write out the whole conclusion (three to four complete sentences). Summarize your topic sentences using different words. You may also point towards another point of view or other possible perspectives while reemphasizing your main argument.

THE END