

OLYMPIAD SCHOOL/IB/TOPS/MACS/CLASS 20 HANDOUT

Read the following personal essay that was written to complete a TOPS application. Discuss its strengths (and areas for improvement).

Ever since being informed of the TOPS program from my mom in 2009 in grade five, I was immediately captivated by the program. Doing some more research, I discovered that the program had exactly what I was interested in. It was a perfect match for me in all ways such as objectives, experiences, and focus. I've been working hard and studying with inspiration to prepare for the program. Aside from learning, I believe that extra-curriculars are important too. For myself, I like balancing sports, music, and studying so that I am not just solely focusing on one aspect. In my opinion, this program can really help me make high school the most valuable and worthwhile experience I will have. I enjoy all the subjects at school however, my favourite subjects are math and science. The two subjects have a strong connection in my mind. Both of them depend on the other. Can you imagine having science with no mathematical equations or numbers? On the other hand, math without science is just pointless and misguided. Studying science is one of favourite hobbies. No matter what topic it is from biology to astronomy, I always have an urge to read more. Understanding the principles of science is one step closer to understanding the world. Science is significant because it helps us to investigate and eventually try to understand the world in how everything works together. It is truthfully stunning to me the way science works and how it is always in the foundations of our lives. Even the simplest activities such as sleeping are explained by science. Why do we sleep each day? How does sleeping work? Science also explains some rules that we follow, such as adding an extra day to February every four years (a leap year). Why does this

happen? It's these types of questions and answers that really make me embrace science! Growing up, I discovered that the concepts in science increase in difficulty to understand. Eventually science split into different areas, each branch having its own focus. This has only made me more interested in science. The branches that I specifically enjoy focusing on are the study of life sciences and chemistry. Life science has interested me because its priority is with living organisms. It dives into the questions of our bodily functions and other life as well. Chemistry appeals to me with the different elements and compositions of objects. Matter is everywhere and chemistry is essentially studying the make-up/composition of this. Aside from science, math is, without a doubt, my most enjoyable and influential subject. The one most prominent component of math that makes it different from other subjects is that it is very accurate and acquired through calculations. Math, to me, involves understanding concepts, knowing the processes of solving problems, and applying these to real life. All of this is truly awe-inspiring. Outside of math and science, I enjoy language too. I am especially interested in writing speeches and essays as well as debating. Practicing speaking to the public is an important skill to master. Almost every week during the weekend, I participate in public speaking, debating, writing, and English classes. Ahead of time we prepare speeches and present them during the class. Debating is a great way to get your mind thinking fast and improve your speaking skills. For extra learning, I take science and math classes during the weekends too. I take these classes in order to continue and learn ahead of what is taught at school. I know that education cannot be all of a person's focus and having other interests is valuable in life. I've chosen two extra-curriculars for myself to focus on: table tennis

and piano. Table tennis is for physical activity while piano is to develop and appreciate my musical side. I've been practicing both activities for roughly five years. I've won countless competitive tournaments in table tennis and have just reached level ten in piano. The TOPS program offers many options for extra-curriculars that I'm sure I would be interested in. My sister has paved out many roads for me beforehand. I learned more about some choices that I would have to make and things I'm interested in. She had attended the enhanced program in high school, liking her experience very much. Learning from her experience, although it is a great program, I do not believe it is the perfect program for me. Currently I attend the enhanced program as well. I've been in in this program for three years now. Despite having thoroughly liking this program, I do not think I should continue with it in high school. The TOPS program shares all my interests about school and offers much more. I want to mainly focus on the subjects that I am sincerely passionate about. High school is a time to find your dreams and prepare you for university or wherever you wish on going. Through TOPS I'm sure that I can achieve more. I want to really use the next four years to the fullest extent and have a brighter future.

Read the following excerpt from the Wikipedia entry on time travel. Which

Forward time travel

There is no widespread agreement as to which written work should be recognized as the earliest example of a time travel story, since a number of early works feature elements ambiguously suggestive of time travel. Ancient folk tales and myths sometimes involved something akin to travelling *forward* in time; for example, in Hindu mythology, the *Mahabharata* mentions the story of the King Raivata Kakudmi, who travels to heaven to meet the creator Brahma and is shocked to learn that many ages have passed when he returns to Earth.

The Buddhist Pāli Canon also mentions time moving at different paces, and in the Payasi Sutta, one of Buddha's chief disciples Kumara Kassapa explains to the skeptic Payasi that "In the Heaven of the Thirty Three Devas, time passes at a different pace, and people live much longer. "In the period of our century; one hundred years, only a single day; twenty four hours would have passed for them."

In Islam, there is some reference to time travel. The Quran tells about several individuals who go to sleep in a cave only to wake up after 309 years. There is also a reference about time variation where it states "one day for God (Allah) is one thousand years of what you (human beings) count". A similar idea is described in the Christian New Testament book of II Peter, where Peter states that "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day." (2 Peter 3:8)

Another of the earliest known stories to involve traveling forward in time to a distant future was the Japanese tale of "Urashima Tarō", first described in the *Nihongi* (720). It was about a young fisherman named Urashima Taro who visits an undersea palace and stays there for three days. After returning home to his village, he finds himself 300 years in the future, when he is long forgotten, his house in ruins, and his family long dead. Another very old example of this type of story can be found in the Talmud with the story of Honi HaM'agel who went to sleep for 70 years and woke up to a world where his grandchildren were grandparents and where all his friends and family were dead.

A more recent story involving travel to the future is Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *L'An 2440, rêve s'il en fût jamais* ("The Year 2440: A Dream If Ever There Were One"), a utopian novel in which the main character is transported to the year 2440. An extremely popular work (it went through 25 editions after its first appearance in 1771), it describes the adventures of an unnamed man who, after engaging in a heated discussion with a philosopher friend about the injustices of Paris, falls asleep and finds himself in a Paris of the future. Robert Darnton writes that "despite its self-proclaimed character of fantasy...*L'An 2440* demanded to be read as a serious guidebook to the future."

More recently, Washington Irving's 1819 story "Rip Van Winkle" tells of a man named Rip Van Winkle who takes a nap on a mountain and wakes up 20 years in the future, when he has been forgotten, his wife dead, and his daughter grown up. Sleep was also used for time travel in Faddey Bulgarin's story "*Pravdopodobnie Nebylitsi*" in which the protagonist wakes up in the 29th century.

Which plot summary sounds the most interesting to you? Explain.

Pay close attention to the 6 panels from a graphic page and answer the questions that follow. The page comes from a graphic novel adaptation of *The Time Machine*.





Group Discussion

1. Choose one interesting detail in the 6 panels above and explain why the detail is significant.

2. Can you infer why there is no visible sign of work in this world? Explain the evidence that you used to make that inference.

3. What is the meaning of the word “wane” based on the context?

Pay close attention to the next 6 panels and fill in the blanks with suitable sentences.





Open-ended Question

What do you think science fiction writers or movie-makers are interested in telling their readers or audiences? In other words, is there an underlying purpose in what they do? Discuss with evidence or examples from *The Time Machine* or any science fiction movie you have seen or science fiction book you have read.

THE END