



**Jiang, Junyang**

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## University of Chicago Writing Supplement

### Writing Questions

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A hot dog might be a sandwich, and cereal might be a soup, but **is a pizza a large piece of toast?**

*—Inspired by Arya Muralidharan, Class of 2021 (and dozens of others who, this year and in past years, have submitted the question “Is a hot dog a sandwich,” to which we reply, “maybe”)*

Is a hot dog a sandwich? Is cereal a soup? To me, they are, it's just that we don't usually call them that way. Is pizza a large piece of toast? Why not? “A heated piece of carbohydrates with nice toppings” is a description that can be used to define both toast and pizza.

The word pizza was first documented in Italy in A.D. 997, but for the real history of pizza, there is a common tale—when Marco Polo came to China, he encountered a baked scallion pancake, which features unleavened, flat bread folded with oil and minced scallions. The scallion pancake, unlike regular pancakes, uses dough instead of batter. Marco Polo returned to Italy and missed scallion pancakes so tried to find a chef who would be willing to make them for him. He allegedly met a chef from Naples at a dinner party and persuaded him to recreate the dish. The chef attempted to make the dish for several hours without much success. Polo then suggested putting the fillings on top of the dough instead of inside. The change made the dish work, and so came the prototype of pizza.

Imagine soldiers in a long and endless war, huddling around the campfire in a freezing night, heating up a shield or a round armament, and placing a kneaded dough on the top. Everyone contributes some of their cheese, dried meat, raisins, and some wild scallion they found on top of the dough. Sitting around and retelling stories of the day, waiting for the dough to bloom and the aroma of melting cheese to be released, the soldiers are having the happiest time of the night.

The shadow of the war has gradually receded, while time, non-stop, has proceeded towards the next thousands of years. People are exposed to a much wider choice of pizzas, as the hundreds of thousands of pizza shops around the world introduce different types of pizza with different styles of toppings. Meanwhile, delivery service enables people to eat in a more convenient manner. Even for places as wild and rural as Pearson College, an extra 5 dollars of delivery fee would bring us—isolated human beings unsatiated by the cafe food—freshly made hot pizza from the closest Metchosin pizzeria.

From time to time, the place where people enjoy the pizza is the small gazebo, where we can light up and sit around the fire. While eating, we tend to compare the pieces of pizza in our hands to similar food at home: a Mexican friend claims that the taco is thinner; my Norwegian classmate prefers pizza with salmon, a more flavorful choice; my Swiss friend thinks the pizza maker here is overly stingy with the cheese; two other classmates from Central Asia miss the flatbread a bit more, although pizza is already pretty close. My favorite pizza is either Hawaiian styled, or the type grilled with green peppers, tomato, mushrooms and chicken, possessing great color and rich texture. At this time, the pizza in my hand just feels like a Chinese dish, reminding me of the cuisine I'm used to eating for 17 years. I know, I will be able to go home during

winter and summer holidays and recharge myself with the wonderful Shanghainese cuisine for every single meal from breakfast to supper, a privilege I didn't realize at the very beginning.

Some of my friends don't have the opportunity to go home, because of the funding or even due to the fact that the refugee policy restricts their return to the country where they are from. Every time a holiday break comes close, I take special care not to mention going home: my classmates from Western Asia and Africa are facing the pain of being unable to go home for the break, maybe for the next few years, or even the remainder of their life. "No one is unwilling to go home, but I just do not have a home left. The only thing that's left is a slaughterhouse on the land where I grew up." When I first heard this from a friend from Rwanda, I was totally in shock and had no idea about how to respond--"I'm glad that I got selected into the refugee program, although it cost me five years of staying away from my family and country. My first priority is to help them immigrate as soon as I get my Canadian passport." After this and some other similar discussions, I finally come to the realization that we are not living in a completely peaceful era, it's just that I was lucky enough to have grown up in a peaceful environment, freeing me from worrying about things like food, shelter, and education. For them, all that I can do is use my pocket money to buy a large pizza and ask everyone to sit around and share.

Today, we might also do something similar to what the soldiers did thousands of years ago: DIY pizza. After a day's camp, chop some wood, light a fire, place the pre-made dough on a metal plate lying directly on top of the wood pieces that are burning red. We hungry creatures put in whatever we want to have: canned salmon, chicken breasts, tons of cheese, cans of pineapples, taco sauce, artichoke hearts, pepper, etc. Covering the top with another metal piece as the lid with another pile of hot charcoal ash on top, waiting for 15 minutes, taking out the pizza that's almost-100% made from scratch. A literal mashup of ingredients from different cultures! It doesn't taste bad. We walk to the beach right next to our campsite, sit on the logs, bury our feet into the sand, enjoy the sunset and salty sea breathe, and spend the accumulated appetite on the pieces of pizza, hot chocolate, and smores, feeling relaxed while bonded with each other.

Since ancient times, from the pizza prototype created thousand years ago, through the handmade pizza made from scratch during a camp, to the kinds made and delivered by pizzerias, people who made pizza and the ingredients used have changed. However, the part that's unchanged is how people become more connected by the warmth delivered by the pizza and the memorable time spent together eating it.

So, a pizza can be just a pizza. Or it can be more. It might also be a large piece of toast, a decidedly uncommon term for pizza. In the same way, a pizza to me is connections, memories, reminders of where we are from, and all the thoughts and emotions provoked.

How does the University of Chicago, as you know it now, satisfy your desire for a particular kind of learning, community, and future? Please address with some specificity your own wishes and how they relate to UChicago.\*

My passion for science once cost me my eyebrows.

In grade nine, my curiosity for chemistry lead to the establishment of my balcony laboratory. When the mid-summer sun heated the lab to 30+ °C, I could light a 1000 °C alcohol blast burner, sit in front of my desk monitoring closely for the whole day, and wait for copper oxide and charcoal powder to react. Attracted by the fact that alkaline metals can cause huge explosions, I decided to put little sodium pieces into water and gradually increase their size. However, when their size increased to 125 mm<sup>2</sup>, an explosion much fiercer than I had expected was triggered, leaving me without eyebrows for two weeks.

Since then, I've fully embraced the importance of lab safety, while contributing to lab research and making my mark at national Olympiads. When I learned about the opportunity to engage in a pharmaceutical research project at Fudan University, I immediately applied and was ultimately selected. Through this challenging experience, I had a taste of how it felt to synthesize a compound that has not yet been created to discover a new cancer treatment. Having a more and more thorough understanding about cancer and other incurable diseases and meeting recovered patients in real life, I'm having an increasingly deeper understanding of people's fear and despair brought by the disease and feel the weight and hope new cures to diseases can bring. Fascinating by how real biochemistry scientists work and impressed by the amount of social responsibility they have, becoming someone like them and develop new approach to a not-yet solved disease has become my life goal.

At the University of Chicago, the resources for biological chemistry are much more than I can possibly imagine. With so many well-honored professors in the biochemical department and the faculty-student ratio as high as 5:1, I will be able to get personalized attention when exploring the field I love. With over 80% of the undergraduate students involved in research, I will be more than likely to have the chance of doing research related to molecular biology or other fields I might be interested in. For instance, I found myself really interested in professor Wenbin Lin's nanomedicine branch of his research interest, namely the mechanism of intelligent drug delivery utilizing the EPR effect, as the topic of my pharmaceutical research project is related to this idea.

Besides my love for biochemistry, the 90+ available majors, majors, specializations, and academic opportunities would allow me to further explore my academic interests in marine biology and economic-related mathematics. There's also the Marine Biological Laboratory with which the school has a deep affiliation, where I would continue my investigations in plankton classification and coastal biodiversity. Meanwhile, in the well-designed general education program, I have access to other fields of knowledge

including music history and psychological science, allowing me to become knowledgeable in fields other than biochemistry.

Last but not least, I can have a fantastic non-academic experience at the University of Chicago as well. At a place with such rich athletic traditions, I would like to improve my tennis skills in tennis varsity or even create the badminton varsity to add to the existing 18. When I get tired, I can recharge myself through the wide-ranged dining options throughout the campus or even order some Chinese food from Chinatown using my salary from paid student jobs. I'm also looking forward to free visits to the Art Institute of Chicago, performances of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and joining the University Symphony Orchestra as a "biochemical pianist", spending much time with the pianos of Goodspeed Hall and the Logan Center.

At the University of Chicago, I can seamlessly continue all that I love.