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**Sample essays 2017**

**Villanova University**

# Ignoring Apples Brittany Adam

## Describe a time you dealt with a moral problem that you treated differently the second time you faced it.

St. Augustine tells us, "It is not true to say that a thing rightly done once should not be changed." I know this is true because of my experience with my grandfather's failing health. My grandfather, Sinclair Adam, is a gentleman farmer in Chester County, Pennsylvania. In the fall, he harvests apples, which he offers to friends and neighbors, even my family in California. Every tree in the orchard bears a different variety of apple - winesaps, Johnathans, macouns, grimes, northern spys, romes, granny smiths - and our box contains a sampling with the lid labeled like a box of chocolates. In the spring he devotes himself to the trees; he prunes, chops, plants, cuts, thins, and sprays meticulously, knowing he will reap the rewards of a gorgeous and plentiful fall harvest. Last year, however, we received our annual box of the apples that he had picked and so meticulously wrapped filled with fruit that was disappointing, smaller, dryer, and more blemished than usual. We overlooked the flaws because we remembered that my grandfather's heart surgery in the spring must have prevented him from properly caring for the trees he prized so much. Under the circumstances, I chose to ignore the signs of failing health and thanked him as enthusiastically as ever for his gift. To do otherwise would have hurt his pride.

I recently visited my grandfather on a trip I made to visit East coast colleges. While the less than perfect apples could be overlooked, another occasion arose that could not be ignored. My grandfather's declining vision makes him a dangerous driver, although he has not faced that fact yet. This time I chose to take action because, although I would rather let him keep his pride and avoid an awkward confrontation, I value his life too much to risk it.

# Watch Me Callie Adam

## Common Application: General topic of your choice.

I'm sure I have the visiting team's attention by the time I finish my first lap around the soccer field. Standing in a circle, contemplating my presence, they venture guesses quietly, "Cross country? Lost? Girl's soccer?" Finishing my second lap, I can always feel them looking at me, trying to put the pieces together. I am running the laps by myself because today, like many other days, I have missed my team's warm-up when classes at school ran into practice. Although it is amusing to hear the other team's bewilderment, by the end of my warm-up I welcome the security of a group. The boys, discussing whatever had happened in school, include me with friendly greetings. I join 'my' team with a feeling of satisfaction; glancing at the visitors, I think, 'Let them ponder that for a while.'

Now the other team stands, and stares across the field trying not to look too obvious. Their coach barks, "Concentrate! Move! What are you looking at?" But chances are he knew long before he even got to the game. "It's just a girl," he says.

I knew it was risky accepting the opportunity to play with a boys' team. It is something that could have had resonating effects on me, as I am in high school, and passing judgment on people seems to be something my age group has a knack for. The team isn't my high school's either so school pride and loyalty are potentially sensitive issues as well. However, when I consider my passion to play and improve, this seems like a perfect opportunity.

I have proved myself to my own adoptive team and coach, but because others do not know me, scrimmages are always the most eventful, not to mention trying experiences. When we begin to play, the opposing team's initial confusion is to our advantage since I have no challenges. The defender who is my mark, assigned to keep me from the ball, doubtfully attempts to tackle while his exasperated coach yells. The other team's slow start doesn't always last, and in an effort to save their dignity in the face of accusations, opponents frequently resort to more than soccer, and the games become quite entertaining.

I have learned that I cannot expect my reputation to precede me; I must start over every scrimmage with the faith that after playing the ninety minutes I will have earned the respect of a fellow player. I like to see that the effort I put into each game has made me an equal. Regardless of the score, I count a game as a victory when I can look evenly at my former mark and he can sincerely, albeit quietly, say "Good game."

Every new experience requires me to earn my reputation. In the future, I expect that some first impressions of a young girl aspiring to become an engineer will have to be proven wrong, just as I strive not only to win a soccer game, but also to win my opponent's respect. I have to answer many questions about my decision and interest in playing with the boys; most people, confused, wink and grin, and ask if I really even play. These are the people who do not know me yet, and normally, smiling, I invite them to a game- "watch me."

# The American Dream Derek Moses

## One of the core values of Villanova, as an Augustinian university founded on the teachings of St. Augustine, is that students and faculty learn from each other. As you imagine yourself as a member of the Villanova community, what is one lesson that you have learned in your life that you will want to share with others?

3, 2, 1, and the final whistle blew! The basketball game was over and we had won in overtime! My team from Central Bucks had beaten all of my friends from Council Rock, an unbelievable upset. A good friend and coach, Irv Magill, gave me the opportunity to go to Delaware to play in the Tri-State Maccabi Games for Central Bucks in 2003, and it was an experience I will never forget.

Practice, practice, practice, and more practice. I traveled about an hour two times a week for a few months to participate in a two hour long practice for this team. It was essential for me to make a full commitment to this team because each practice we had together was crucial to our success. I learned the importance of team and how every member needs to give their best effort in order for the team to work as a whole. I learned the importance of working together to achieve a common goal. I put every ounce of effort that I possibly could into this team. They say “practice makes perfect” and although our team was far from perfect, the dedication that we put forth into making ourselves better paid dividends.

“Quality is better than quantity.” Our team was dependent on this statement. Although the skill level of our team was fairly low, we had one advantage over every other team in the tournament; we had the best coach and we knew it. Irv’s knowledge and ability to teach is extraordinary and was why we were able to have any sort of success at the Maccabi Games. Through Irv, I not only learned a lot about the game of basketball, but I learned a lot about life and the importance to always try your best at whatever you do. I also learned that there is always someone better than you that can teach you as long as you’re willing to learn. You may not be the best at something, but if you work hard and put your hard work to use, anything is possible.

The “American Dream.” The idea that presented with the opportunity this great country of ours gives us, we can overcome all obstacles, break through all barriers, and achieve anything we put our minds to. Yes, my journey to the Maccabi Games may be an extremely scaled version of this idea, but it fits the mold. We were extreme underdogs (probably the worst team in our age group), but we practiced so hard and were taught so well that we pulled though and were victorious. I may have been just twelve years old but I learned an extremely important lesson. It’s this lesson that’s given me my drive to do well in middle school and high school, and it’s this drive that will make me continue to succeed in college and in the workplace. This is what I want to teach others. The “American Dream” (or some form of it) is out there; you just need to have that dream and go after it.

# Falling Toward the Future Samantha N. Gonzalez

## This was a essay of choice on the Common Application.

“Samantha Nicole!” my mother began. The deliberate usage of my middle name indicated she was preparing to reprimand me. I instantly knew I had been caught peering underneath my neon pink Barbie bandage. As do most young children, I chose to satisfy my curiosity over my mother. The scrape I had received from the playground pavement was just too intriguing to ignore. My eyes widened in wonder at the little red circle on my knee. Just a day ago, it had been brand new, and now, with the help of a modest amount of hydrogen peroxide, it was half the size. Although as a six year old observer I had no comprehension of the complex mechanisms at work, my fascination with the body’s ability to heal was already apparent.

Scrapes were the most serious injuries I needed to worry about until last October. The Friday before the season’s third football game, I fell six feet during a cheerleading stunt. I attempted to land on my feet, but rolled my right ankle. After the doctor exclaimed that my bruised and swollen ankle was the worst he had seen in his career, I knew that the injury would not heal in the amount of time initially projected by my school’s athletic trainer. Usually, a hairline fracture on a talus bone and a sprained ankle would just be two more of life’s little inconveniences. Yet six weeks with a cast has had a sustaining impact on how I think. By forcing me to change my perspective, my first broken bone has forever altered my outlook on life.

Although I have always wanted to be a doctor, the many trips I made to the physician's office during those six weeks allowed me to better understand what the profession entails. Medical doctors are respected for their intelligence and inexhaustible concern for their patients. While many seek the title of physician for its large paycheck, the best doctors are those that have passion for the profession. For as long as I can remember, I have dreamed of becoming a physician. Being aware of the hard work that is required of a medical doctor only strengthened my drive.

In addition to looking toward the future, I began to appreciate the present. While on crutches, I learned to value the gifts life gives everyday. I was upset that I could no longer participate in cheerleading, but my daily struggles forced me to realize that there are people that will never have the chance to do physical activities. I began to realize I never saw how difficult little things like opening a door or getting up the stairs could be. Now, completing these tasks was something of which to be truly proud. Choreographing my actions so that I could move around my house was a tedious task. Without planning, I could easily climb the same flight of stairs three times, each trip returning with another forgotten item. Not only was it tiring and time consuming, the loud thuds that resulted from the hop to the next stair were never well received by my family past ten o’clock at night.

The moment I was able to walk without crutches, I noticed how much easier life actually was. I had forgotten what it was like to open doors by myself. I could climb the stairs quickly and quietly. I was able to go into small rooms without worrying about falling over on an out of place item of furniture. My regular life seemed so much more exciting and fulfilling with this independence. My newfound passion for life could only have been achieved through the removal of what I had taken for granted.

I have discovered so many things from breaking my ankle that I no longer look back upon the situation as negative. In fact, I now look upon negative situations in my life as the best and most impactful type of learning experiences. I failed to realize that the awareness that had served me so well in the discovery of my first passion, biology, was slowly fading away. By slowing down and focusing, I was able to uncover daily treasures that were passing me by. I pride myself on the maturity that I have gained as a result of this disguised blessing, and know that what I have learned was well worth six weeks of inconvenience.

# What do you see? Kelly C. Lewis

## One of the core values of Villanova, as an Augustinian university founded on the teachings of St. Augustine, is that students and faculty learn from each other. As you imagine yourself as a member of the Villanova community, what is one lesson that you have learned in your life that you will want to share with others?

Henry David Thoreau said, “It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.” Two people can look at the same situation but see something entirely different. In the grand span of my 17 years of existence, I have learned that attitude is a choice. Our backgrounds and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are still in control of who we will become. Ultimately, there is no purpose behind pessimism. Regardless of what we undergo in our lives, the world will not stop to take pity on us, and no matter how we feel, we are still responsible for our actions. Unfortunate experiences can be either setbacks or motivators depending on how we view them.

One of the best examples I know of the power of attitude is a boy named Jack who I have been working with for the past six years. We work together in the classroom and exercise together at the Jewish Community Center. Jack is a year younger than I am, and he suffers from severe autism. Having spent such an extensive amount of time with Jack, I have seen the way people look at him. I know firsthand what other people say when he screams, hits himself, and shakes uncontrollably. When I see Jack, however, I don’t see his impaired speech or the fact that he will not stop hitting himself in the head. I see a boy just like me with problems just like mine. To the general public, Jack and I appear totally different from one another, but we are really very much the same. Jack is incapable of communicating the way I can, but I cannot communicate the way he does, either. I organize my words and actions to convey my thoughts and feelings. In contrast, Jack has an extraordinary ability to communicate through love. Even though his peers ridicule him, he loves them. When he is mistreated, he passes no judgments. He does not feel sorry for himself. He does not retaliate. He loves. No matter what anyone does to him, he still treats everyone like his best friend. He possesses an ability to forgive that I envy. So when other people see an autistic boy with whom they do not know how to act, I only see Jack, the boy I want to emulate.

Attitude is an individual matter. I know from personal experience what it is like to have a bad attitude. I walked into high school with a closed mind and an unwilling heart. I did not want to make friends or try anything new. But my sister, who was then a junior in high school, changed my mind. Her persistence in maintaining her optimism and strong sense of self gradually rubbed off on me. By my sophomore year, I had a new lease on life. I began taking on leadership roles, looking forward to school, and blossoming socially. I saw firsthand the difference that a change in attitude could make. I saw the way my sister’s attitude affected not only her own growth as a person, but mine as well. Because of her, I decided to change my attitude for the better. My sister and I are still very different people, but our shared motivation, open-mindedness, and genuine concern for others now bind us not only as sisters, but also as friends.

One of the most important lessons my sister taught me was how to lose. It is important to recognize that failure is an unavoidable part of life, and learning how to get back up again is an absolute necessity. If we were not in our current situation, we would be in another that posed equal challenges. No one will ever be consistently happy all the time, but a transformed viewpoint can turn mishaps into lessons. A change in attitude yields a change in lifestyle, productivity, and overall happiness. We are in charge of our own lives, and I know that my attitude -- combined with my determination to succeed and my eagerness to learn and evolve -- will lead me down the right road for me. If I could tell the rest of the Villanova Class of 2015 just one thing, it would be to do some soul-searching to find the roots of their unhappiness and then change their attitudes toward the sources of their discontent. We do not need a new set of circumstances. God gave us the circumstances we have for a reason. With the right attitude, we can each determine our future.

# Finding Your Animal Totem Brad Boyle

## Common application "What make you, you?"

"On Thursday," announced my religion teacher, "we will be going to the zoo to find our animal totems." For those that don’t know, an animal totem represents the Native American belief that each person has a connection to a specific animal. I was excited to begin my search, and as soon as we got to the zoo, I began to march around looking for my true animal companion, my guide through the journey of life. Every animal I examined, though, had its faults: the lion was too proud and vain, the wolf too devious and misleading. Distressed, I sat down on a bench to reflect, looking for any help that I could get. At that moment, an animal slowly emerged from beneath a pile of wood in the exhibit across from me and began to stare at me as if it had recognized me from a previous life. That animal was the beaver. When I considered my own strengths and weaknesses in relation to those of the beaver, I knew that I had found my animal totem.

The beaver is an animal that is reliable, stable, and hardworking -- all qualities that I am very proud to possess. Year after year, the beaver works to perfect his lodge by tediously creating dams in rivers and lakes. Other animals rely on the beaver’s industriousness to help protect the ecosystem in which they all live. I believe that reliability is achieved only through consistency and hard work, and I enjoy being a person on whom others can rely. People often come to me to ask for help and advice, and that is a personal characteristic that I cherish. During my time playing ice hockey, I have never been a boisterous leader, but I have nonetheless served as captain for my last three teams. On and off the ice, I lead by example, offering encouragement rather than intimidation. I take pride in the respect I have earned from my teachers, as demonstrated by their positive comments on my report card. To me, being attentive and respectful is something that should be expected from everyone. Being reliable, though, is the reward you get for doing the right thing, in the right way, for the right reasons.

Though the beaver must build its lodges and dams in order to survive, it still has to work hard to accomplish that goal. I consider myself hardworking as well. I always put in the effort to achieve my goals. For example, I remember that when I first started playing guitar, I thought, “Wow, this is way too hard; I will never be able to do this.” After several years of diligent practice, I recognize how much those monotonous drills have paid off for me. Without the effort I put forth in the beginning, however, I would not be able to play like I can today. That point seems self-evident, but it is amazing how many people are not willing to persist in order to succeed. It is amazing how many people complain when they do not get the results they expected. That is not to say that I am perfect -- believe me, I am not. I do my fair share of procrastinating and make my fair share of mistakes. Just like the beaver, though, I have benefited greatly from hard work.

My class field trip was very important to me because I was able to find my animal spirit and evaluate my strengths. After researching the beaver’s totem, I found that the Native American people revere the beaver for its ingenuity and dedication. Although I don’t really believe that I am spiritually connected to a beaver, I do take inspiration and encouragement from its hard work and commitment, traits that I work hard to embody in everything I do.

# The First Shift Juliana McCabe

## Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

I walked into the hospital that morning wearing my red polo and khakis, which I feared made me look far more like a glorified Target employee than a capable intern. As I stepped out of the elevator, I realized that four hours of basic training could never come close to preparing me to enter the busy world of 7 East, the orthopedic floor. Worries echoed through my head: What if I get lost, or the nurses get mad at me, or the patients don't like me? Putting these anxieties out of my mind, I ventured into the staff lounge, where the more senior intern scheduled to guide me along was supposed to be waiting. However, that day he had called in sick. I couldn't believe it. My first shift, and I wouldn't even have someone to teach me the ropes.

I tentatively knocked on the door of my first patient's room and entered. Forcing my face into a bright smile, I introduced myself and inquired if there was anything I needed to help with. The only request was a fresh pitcher of ice water. Okay, here was a task I definitively knew how to do. But I should have known that the whole shift wouldn't be so simple.

I was nearing the end, convinced that I had learned all I could possibly know about working in a hospital, when I entered my last room. I was greeted by a sprightly 97 year-old woman -- just recovering from a hip replacement. She asked if it would be too much trouble to help her to the toilet, so I obliged, carefully walking her over to the bathroom in the corner. I was about to lower her onto the toilet, but as misfortune would have it, we were just seconds too late: a woman old enough to be my great grandmother had soiled herself. Luckily, none hit me: in any case, my first reaction was to take care of her. I cleaned her and helped her change into a fresh, albeit too large, hospital gown. I carefully settled her back into her bed and went to mop up the bathroom. Before I left, she gave me a heartwarming "Thank you, dear," the best reward I could have asked for.

After finishing my shift a short while later, I related the events of the day to a friend. It wasn't until she reacted with disgust to that end-of-the-day mishap that I realized what I had really accomplished: I did not mind doing what others might find revolting. That elderly woman was in need of help, and I didn't consider showing her anything but compassion. For me, it was just an instinct. She had nobody else to rely on and it meant so much for me to be that person for her. Now, I always look forward to my shifts with anticipation for what the day will hold. Being at the hospital gives me a purpose in my life: I am making a difference in other people's lives, no matter how small it might be, and that gives me more happiness and satisfaction than anything else ever could. I can't imagine making a career out of anything other than caring for others. My internship has helped me realize that.

# Where do I belong? Jeffrey Alexander Nagel

## Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

At age 13, I had it all planned out. Having taken my passport from my mother's desk, I prepared to purchase my ticket to freedom from the place I'd been held hostage all those years: Florence, Italy. My mother discovered the theft quickly, however, and my plan was foiled. This wasn't the first time I'd plotted an escape. While Florence is many people's ideal vacation city, it was far from the ideal home for me. Neither was Bonn, Germany four years prior. With each change of country, my longing for my old home, America, only intensified.

While parting with my friends, my home, and American culture was difficult, the loss of these previously unappreciated aspects of my life paled in comparison to the challenges I faced in Germany. My father was often away on business trips, and I found that whenever he was gone, I was pushed to mature faster than I would have liked to. I can still vividly recall one occasion when I was seven and he was traveling. My mother, bedridden with the flu, asked me to read my three siblings a bedtime story and tuck them into bed. I was proud that I could help but I felt like it wouldn't have happened if we were still in America.

While I missed my father a lot when he was away, I missed America even more. I felt my lost childhood was somehow preserved there, out of reach and waiting for me. Every time he returned from a business trip there, he brought back candy, snacks, and American memorabilia, which appealed to my childish image of the perfect utopia I had left behind. Although I had little contact with America when I lived abroad, I always considered it superior to Germany and Italy.

When my father broke the news that we would be moving back, I jumped to my feet ecstatically, screaming "YES-YES-YES!" until I nearly lost my voice. In the months preceding my transition back to America, my anticipation grew; I was ready to return to the utopian society that would restore my happiness. I couldn't have been more wrong.

When I moved to Long Island, I came prepared to be the new student again. At Cold Spring Harbor High School, where most of the students had been living in the area their entire lives, I anticipated being the talk of the whole school. I thought I would be "the cool kid from Italy," but in reality, I was the furthest thing from it. From day one, I started realizing I wasn't really "American" anymore. I didn't know a thing about American sports, customs, pop culture references, and most of all, it seemed that I knew nothing about American high school culture. While I came into the school expecting immediate popularity, as I had attained in the warm and welcoming foreign communities, I was set apart from my peers in ways from which I didn't know how to recover. For the remainder of 8th grade, I kept to myself, isolated and wondering what went wrong. The problem wasn't the country. The problem was me.

I changed schools freshman year to Friends Academy. I felt that the kids were nice, but I didn't reach out and remained fairly anonymous for the first semester. However, I auditioned for the play and soon found my niche in the theater department, which immediately gave me a new group of friends. Although I withdrew from my academics for the first two years, I continued to gain social confidence and self-worth, which propelled me to be a leader in clubs and in the theater by junior year.

Looking back, my problem was never finding to which culture I "belonged," or where I considered home - it was about holding my own and being grounded in who I am and who I want to be, independent of where I live. That is a foundation that I can build off of in college and beyond.

# Artistic Abilities William Nelson Marcussen

## The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

I was jealous. Sally could draw a perfect circle and I couldn’t. She always created beautifully proportionate people while I sketched a blobby figure with one arm. I tried over and over, listened to instructions, but as hard as I tried I could never draw as well as Sally could. I thought that I just wasn't creative, so I told myself I was better at other things and carried on eating my peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

That was fifth grade. Then, when I entered my sophomore year, I picked up a digital camera and my obsession began. On the Internet, I had seen magnificent pictures of nature, cars, and even mundane things such as pens and paper. The world changed for me as everything suddenly became beautiful in its own way. I was so fixated on creating a stunning picture that I would never stop until I got just the right shot. I wanted to capture the images that were inside my head, with every detail in place; the rust on the side of the railing, the small cracks in the cement, the sun reflecting off the yellow line down the middle of the road, and the golden light that every photographer chases. It was always a challenge, something that would never stop at a single shot. It would take tens, hundreds, and sometimes more to get the picture that was worth the much-prized thousand words.

It was a Sunday morning and I had 30 pictures due the next day. I thought, “I’ll just get the pictures out of the way; it won’t take long.” Little did I know: instead I found myself completely lost in my work. I grabbed a bowl of water, a water dropper, and my camera and attempted to recreate a water drop floating in the air, as if all gravity had vanished. Between the focus of the camera, the perfect amount of water, pressing the shutter at the precise moment with the exact lighting, there were so many variables; all it took to compromise a shot was for one to go wrong. Literally 100 pictures went by in a blur and all but a few of them were out of focus. I shot 100 more, then another hundred. It was no longer about the assignment, but about proving to myself that I actually was creative. I tried changing the type of water dropper I was using and tried switching the modes in the camera countless times. Soon, I had almost three thousand pictures, a completely full memory card. I had a vision of what I wanted the entire time: a large splash of water creating a crater in the glassy and otherwise untouched water surface, launching out three perfectly-aligned drops. I ended up getting just that. Then I checked my watch. I had become so lost in my quest for the near-perfect picture that four hours of nonstop work felt like minutes.

Looking back at grade school, I realize that I wasn't the best at drawing -- yet I had a whole other type of creativity that had never been explored. I now understand that natural gifts are just the root of a talent, and that true talent only blooms with persistence and determination. I am now aware that my fifth grade classmate wasn’t just born with talent, but actually practiced drawing that circle on every worksheet she was given, until it was near-perfect. I no longer see things as black and white, but in a million tones, in all colors. This new perspective transformed a trash can in the middle of a cityscape into an interesting story: an object I had always walked past and ignored is now part of one of my best photographs. After my early artistic disappointment, I discovered an unknown world through the viewfinder of my camera and a creative side that in truth I had always possessed. I just needed to pursue it.

# Poker Hieu T. Le

## Common Application Essay Personal Statement

Poker is Life. Life is Poker. So the saying goes. Now, my life does not revolve around poker, but I do learn a few things from it: luck, logic, forbearance, and risk. Life is full of uncertainty, and so is poker. Some people bet on luck, just like the guy sitting to my right yesterday. He went all-in before the flop, scaring half the table into folding. I hate to make big blind bet, but I would rather accept my hand and try my best, so I called.

Sometimes risk can be quantified, and I love taking a calculated risk. In that same game yesterday, the flop was five of spades, eight of spades, and five of diamonds. As I was sitting on a pocket of a six and seven of spades, I had a 2/47 chance of getting a straight flush and winning for certain. Considering that the call was just 2-thousand against a pot of 50-thousand Vietnam Dongs, any logical mind would have called. You see, with a leap of faith and a bit of logic, uncertainty can turn into opportunity. "Raised!" Shouted the guy to my left. The rest of the table folded, except me and a bespectacled guy. Was the guy who had raised just bluffing? Was he not? It is not easy to see through a person’s poker face, even when you have played with him for a long time.

In a repeated game, the experienced player can intentionally get caught bluffing earlier, so that no one will later suspect that he has an upper hand when he goes all in. I have read that some people are so good at manipulating their appearances that they don’t need to show their hole, and such manipulation applies to many life situations other than poker. It is the very byzantine nature of humans that intrigues me, that leads me to explore interdisciplinary fields as an undergrad, then obtain a graduate degree in psychology and eventually become a clinical psychologist. But when I first told my mother about my intention, she was fervently opposed. "Do you think you can deal with the mentally unstable or the sociopathic?" sneered my mother. She has a point. No matter how well-trained I am after years of undergraduate and graduate study, how can I be completely trusted to detect a person’s lies or to determine whether a suspect was in his right mind?

It is while playing poker that I realized that uncertainty will always exist in life; one needs to embrace it and act, using all the knowledge – and luck – that he has in order to test different possibilities and minimize the risk. That’s what I did in my poker game: raising the stake on the turn, a king of diamonds, to test my opponents. The glasses-wearing guy immediately called, but the guy who had raised was hesitant before matching my bet. Sensing his uncertainty, I figured he only had a medium-strength hand, but given that he only had less than 5% of the pot in his stack, he would certainly go all in on the river. Luck was on my side, as a nine of spades appeared in the end, completing my straight flush. All that’s left is to manipulate the last betting round. I checked. Thinking I was bluffing in the previous round, both of my opponents went all in. This tactical check essentially tripled the pot I won.

I know that the opponents I defeated yesterday can come back and surprise me tomorrow, and that they are as complex as the personalities I will face if I pursue a career in psychology. But I am ready to walk that road. As we sometimes say in poker, “the only way to live meaningfully is to go all-in.” I want to use every bit of brain and brawn I have to create my own fortune.

# Middle Path Ha Pham

## Common App Essay

"Taking care of plants is a meticulous task. It’s not at all easy like people think, young lady. Do you see how these leaves were burnt by the sun? It gives this plant such a dislikable appearance. See how by pruning the burnt leaves, you’ll make it look alive again?"

Wandering around the terrace of my family’s new house, I met her. She had small figure, tanned skin, and faded hair. The clippers in her calloused fingers flitted from one leaf to another, chopping tiny bits of sun-burnt leaves. The gardener moved continuously, with her sparkling eyes fixed on the potted bougainvillea. The more she talked, the more animated she became, her words radiating positive energy. She was so focused, determined, enthusiastic about the subject that I couldn’t help being intrigued. I sat down next to her, sticking my hand in the bush and ripping off the burnt parts with my fingertips. Her attention moved to the sick Frangipane tree. “Oh dear these roots will be ruined! I’ll spray it tomorrow, but first aid is needed, still. First we cut off the rotten pieces of root, but be extremely careful. Otherwise, you’ll end up plucking up the whole roots…”

I wondered if I had ever felt that same way about anything; this woman had a fire inside her. I hear a lot about passion, but I don’t see many people around me actually love their jobs. She had something different; the gardener was the only inspiring one I’ve encountered. She had purpose. Her charisma within brought up a question I’ve been struggling with these days. Who am I? I can’t answer it, yet, but I know who I was.

There was this fearless child who smiled at everyone, who radiated an air of confidence that made people call her “unshakeable.” She dared to hop into the growling waves of the sea when others kids held back. She chose to jump into risks instead of comfort. My “awesome” element slipped away without me realizing. I blended in. I stopped pouring my heart into my work. I let my piano accumulate dust, thinking I was good enough. My eagerness to be the pioneer disappeared: no more lead-singer, no more lead-runner, no more top-scorer. I forgot what it felt like to be filled with determination. The old me was always on fire.

But here was a clue, right in front of me, and I knew what to do. Grabbing my old canvas tote, I left my parents a note saying I was leaving for the old house. As the gate rolled up, I rushed to my room, flipping the piano lid open. I ran my fingers along the firm piano keys that still emitted the perfect tones. With each key, memories of my initial adoration for this instrument ran through my mind. The piano, like her plants, also needed attention, love, passion. Soon after, sitting in front of the piano again became a part of my routine. It was painstaking at first. A stiff sitting position and wandering mind don’t go easily together. Nonetheless, it was pleasurable again to be draining all of my energy for a target: I was aiming for the school rock club’s upcoming audition.

I met the gardener a few weeks later as she sprayed the tangerine roses. “Sorry I didn’t dazzle you like you dazzled me last time we met. But I do have something I want to show you now, if you have a minute. I want to give you a private performance when we get moved in. And eventually I’ll know as much about my piano as you do about your flowers.” I showed her the rock band’s acceptance letter. That was when things started to feel right again. I’m again defined by determination.

# My Peaceful Place Anonymous

## When do you feel at home?

Distant and peaceful, unscathed by technology, surrounded by countless pine trees and multiple lakes lies a small family run resort that is known as Pine Lake Manor to some but known as peace on earth to myself. The sheer beauty of the countryside of the Catskills to the mountains that disappear into clouds leaves me speechless every year on the car ride up with my parents and two brothers. I anxiously await until we arrive as I think about the fireworks that we will soon be seeing on the fourth of July.

At Pine Lake Manor my family, my grandparents, my aunts, uncles and cousins all sit at one big table for every meal; breakfast lunch and dinner. I have sat next to my Nana every year for the entire time I have been going to Pine Lake, all seventeen years. It’s my families tradition to go up for one week every year and its always the week of the 4th of July. Yes the fireworks are breathtaking and one of the most beautiful forms of art in my opinion but what truly leaves me happier than everything else at Pine Lake is spending time with Nana. After every meal every day for the week we go on a walk together around Pine Lake, simply admiring the beauty of nature together as she tells me a different story about her life. Two of my favorites include how she met my grandpa when he was in the Navy and how the only medal she ever won was in a race with only three people and she took home the third place medal.

Every week each year I spend at Pine Lake is a new adventure. I am constantly making new discoveries and uncovering all of the hidden treasures that the ever-calm Catskills offer. Every year at Pine Lake starts right where the last year ended. I am reunited with family whom I only get to see for this one-week every year. Being surrounded by family really makes me realize just how important family is in life. People come in go in life but family will always be there for you.

While realizing how important family, I find that this time also makes me realize how delicate family is. While overlooking a flock of birds flying by I think about how at any one moment someone so close to you can be gone forever. Overlooking the endless hills of Pine Lake and admiring the nature surrounded me makes me look at the big picture in life. The new iPhone or technology being released isn’t all there is to life. Being surrounded by those who you love is what brings me true happiness. Going on long walks through nature with my Nana is what brings me serenity and peace. Enjoying every moment of life because you never know when it’s your time or those close to you time to go. Watching a tiny ladybug land on and crawl on me makes me feel big but then looking out in every direction and seeing the endless trees makes me realize that I too am small in this world. When I go to Pine Lake I am truly humbled by nature and being around those closest to me makes me cherish every second I spend with them as well a

# Familiarity Anonymous

## 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.

“Entonces, Max, ¿dime porque has venido a España?”

I stared blankly at my host Dad while trying to catch a glimpse of how large his moustache really was, as he glanced over his shoulder towards me, his car narrowly avoided the oncoming traffic. His words were ringing in my head.

"So tell me, Max, why have you come to Spain?"

These were amongst the first words I heard upon my arrival. I nodded and smiled, yet understood nothing but my name. I stumbled upon School Year Abroad (SYA) Spain while exploring alternatives to my daily routine. To some, and understandably so, London is remarkable. To me, London had become the norm. For over 2,000 days I had walked through the same school entrance, passed the same painted letters declaring The American School in London as I bounded up the stairwell, and listened to the all too familiar sound of the morning announcements at the start of each day. My life had become repetitive, and I needed a change from what seemed to be an unending cycle.

As soon as I stepped foot in Zaragoza, I was immersed in a completely different culture: residing with a family that didn’t speak a lick of English and taking a standard American curriculum in Spanish. In retrospect, I wasn’t entirely prepared for such drastic change.

As my host Dad and I attempted to forge some sort of communication during that car ride, a feeling of pure dread overwhelmed me as we neared my new street. I felt like a stranger to everything around me. I was alone, knew no one, and had a house but not a home. As I followed the man with the moustache into the Almingol household, the then unfamiliar smell of paella wafted through the air.

Food became a medium that my family and I could enjoy together. Meals began in speechless unison, and eventually became the foundation of our most memorable moments: my younger brother Markos and I managed to quarrel early on about whether Chelsea or Barcelona was the better club as we heartily dug into our meal. Months later, my father brought a newspaper to dinner, and to our delight opened it to a photo of him taking part in a political protest, his moustache enormous as ever. The passage of food went both ways: I would cook up my signature scrambled eggs on Sunday mornings, before my family prepared a feast of meats and vegetables. We scarfed it down, leaving our fingernails laden with grease.

During these meals, the TV was always on. The Spanish news presenters provided a soundtrack to each moment in our abode whether in the living room, kitchen, or laundry room, and I literally felt I couldn’t escape the flickering screens and unintelligible chatter. But the seemingly meaningless tradition of relaxing as a family in front of the television became a powerful connection. After dinner, we’d sit in companionable silence, as our dog Nemo attempted to clamber onto the couch, and let the voices wash over us, hearing the words yet giving them little thought. Surrounded by the unfamiliar, everyone connects through their similarities, and TV was our channel of communication.

Nine months later, my final banquet, a concoction of cooked yellow rice and stewed rabbit, staked its claim as a paella of the highest grade. We demolished it. I was no longer tentative or reserved; I was one of the Almingol family. With the TV on, my words flowed over our food, yet it was not my fluency that brought us together as a family. It was the cadence of the newscaster and the warm scent of paella.

“So, Max, why have you come to Spain?”

I went to Spain seeking change. I was consumed by another culture, and yes, I have a more global perspective, yet what I truly gained from the experience had less to do with the language I spoke, and the country I was in, but with the family who had embraced me.

# When I Daydream Anonymous

## “Become what you are not yet”- Saint Augustine. When you daydream, who do you hope to become in the future.

I flick the light switch, grab a key off the rack and walk over to open the falcon door of my electric masterpiece. The garage door opens and I roll out an eight hundred horsepower beast, capable of going from zero to sixty in two seconds flat. This is my creation – a car that I have designed, prototyped, tested, added onto and retested until I’ve ended up with a work of art and machinery that I am proud of. This is what I daydream about.

As a dancer recalls the moves before she performs, I am constantly reviewing my ambitions in my mind. Cars are a regular theme as I find them fascinating in every way. Whether on a long run or while eating my breakfast, I daydream about being part of a team that crafts the future of getting from point A to point B in new and exciting ways.

Is it bad to dream ambitiously? Elon Musk had daydreamed that he would colonize mars and despite the skepticism of many, he has become the man behind the future of space travel and the founder of the most revolutionary electric car company of our time. Some have told me that being the best is not a realistic goal or that designing cars is a shallow pursuit. Yet, I want to be an engineer who designs safe automobiles that maximize the utter thrill of driving, while causing minimal impact to our environment. Though I currently drive a twelve-year-old banged-up, completely uncool minivan with speakers that no longer impress, the act of driving will always be an enjoyable experience for me. While I recognize that there is a place for autopilot in the future of driving, especially in such areas as those that are plagued by heavy traffic, I would never want to be required to be a passenger in the driver's seat.

Driving is about the journey, not simply the destination, as driving can be the embodiment of freedom itself. I would rather see travel revert back to horse and buggy before I allow the fun factor to be driven out of driving. I dream of making cars that thrill people - to remind them, constantly, what getting behind the wheel is all about. I am lucky enough to have been raised in the Green Mountains of Vermont, where the peaks change from a lively green, to a mix of red and orange to finally, a frosty white. As soon as one leaves the state, the views become impaired by billboards and concrete towers. This contrast is constantly reminding me just how beautiful the untainted is, and motivates me to refrain from contributing to the harm of our Earth. I dream of being part of the generation who reverses our tenacious destruction, and lives with a mutual respect for the world we live in. \

Converting the world's transportation industry from gasoline to electricity is just the first step in preserving our world. Renewable energy will not solve all of the problems in the world, but it is the best place to start. I dream of incorporating a sustainable system of refining how cars use energy, down to the very buttons on the dashboard. I dream of being the man who gives back to the world he belongs to, as is my responsibility. In the end, I want to become someone who will use my inventive energy to bridge the gap between safety and thrill - between the preservation of human life and the celebration of being alive. Many aspire to drive the car of their dreams; I aspire to give them something to dream about.

# Being a Triplet Anonymous

## 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.

“So, like, if I pinch you, will the other two feel it?”

“Are you all identical, even the boy?”

”How many minutes are you oldest by?”

Being a triplet comes with daily quirky questions. I do not remember the exact moment when I realized my background was special; growing up, having both a brother and sister my own age certainly did not feel unusual. But as we mature, it is increasingly apparent that my situation is a blessing.

Lauren has taught me the importance of embracing uniqueness. She and I are nearly opposite: On the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, I am an ENTJ (extraversion, intuition, thinking, judging) and she is an INFJ (introversion, intuition, feeling, judging). For a long time, these contrasts were challenging rather than complementary to our relationship. We made everything a contest—who could be smartest, prettiest, Mom’s favorite and all else under the sun. Of course sibling rivalry is natural, but being the same age heightened the blatancy of our differences. We constantly judged each other for our differences and tried so hard to be what we could not be. I could not fully love my sister until we matured and used our contrasting qualities to our advantage. Our relationship has taught me that some things are just not worth the competition; we have different gifts, and it was miserable constantly comparing ourselves. My sister has pushed me to reflect on my strengths and weaknesses. More importantly, this self-awareness has taught me how to utilize my talents to support others and to myself accept help.

Alex has taught me that slow and steady can still win the race that I usually sprint. By the time I was going out with friends every weekend and even traveling on my own, he was a still an awkward Abuela’s boy that played video games all the time. What I did not see was that he was developing into an adult, just at a slower pace than I was. He was a late bloomer, and only as an upperclassman did his patience manifest in fantastic friends, a sincere passion for history and a body like Adonis. His willingness to wait yielded detailed, quality results which has taught me to stop rushing to the next milestone and enjoy life as it comes. Often, I get so wrapped up in trying to be as productive as possible that I don’t give myself room to breathe; my brother has proved to me that patience is a respectable virtue. I used to be obsessed with rampant progress, but he has inspired me to let good things take their time and not judge others in their life journey.

My siblings have taught me how to be a leader amongst equals. I have realized that leadership is not about telling people how or what to do, but rather it is guiding others in doing their best work. Additionally, being a leader is not the job of one person; on a team, everyone is a leader in his and her own right. Just as I have led my brother and sister how to be better, they have inspired me to reach my potential, and we have learned different lessons together as a cohesive unit of three moving parts.

I’ll never get sick of the strange questions because it means I have the gift of a very special life. My siblings have taught me compassion, responsibility, forgiveness, patience, self-awareness, and other gifts that I’m likely not even aware of. When our mom would chide us with “be nice to each other, you’re all each other have,” we would groan and roll our eyes—but now I see that I would not be one-third of the girl I am if I weren’t a triplet. In this next chapter of my life, the pillars of fraternity and solidarity that Alex and Lauren have built in me will serve as a life guide.

# Grit to withstand Adeline Vail Christianson

## Grit has been identified as a significant predictor of success. Describe a situation in your life that truly demonstrated a unique degree of grit. Why were you so motivated? What did you learn from the experience?

I’ve come to understand that when I choose a path in life, I’m bound to face some roadblocks along the way. I now see these hurdles not as impenetrable obstacles but instead as opportunities. I can appreciate the new direction they take me and the lessons I learn from them. My faith in God has helped with this clarity.

March 2013 is when I thought all my doors closed. Or maybe they opened. I was an up and coming skater, amazed by the possibilities I could pursue. My career was on track to compete at the international level; I had goals to accomplish, and I looked forward to the day when I’d finally make the world acclaimed Team Braemar Junior Synchronized Figure Skating Team.

Then, my long time coach who had brought the top team to five national championships quit to join the coaching staff of a rival team. Chaos ensued as she persuaded many of my closest friends to join her team. I was shocked by their sudden departure and felt betrayed by them. I found myself uncharacteristically nervous about my future. Remaining at Braemar would require tenacity as we now lacked talent and focus. What had seemed like a promising future in skating was now a lingering dark abyss.

After much upheaval, the light started to emerge at the end of the tunnel. We eventually found a new coach, new skaters, and I, little Addie, was promoted to the top team two years ahead of “schedule.” Being younger and weaker, I had a challenge set before me. I would find an inner strength I didn’t know existed and test it constantly. I pushed myself on everything I tried. When the choreography called for moves that weren’t in my repertoire, I added coaches and ice time to my already packed schedule. I had no time to be fearful of my limits. When competition season came, my teammates and I were ready to take on the nation. The hours and days of hard work yielded an amazing opportunity, a chance to represent our country at an international competition in Milan, Italy. The experience was amazing. We skated the highest score of that international season and won a silver medal.

Looking back, I can now appreciate how frightening my decision to stay had been. I knew that I had to finish my journey at Braemar but was uncertain where that would take me. I still had lofty goals I wanted to accomplish. When I reflect, I realize that I made the right personal choice. The J.K Rowling quote, “Sometimes we have to choose between what is right and what is easy”, resonates well with me. I value my loyalty to the club and will always choose the more difficult path to honor my standards. I rose to a challenge, stuck to my principles and reaped greater rewards as a result. I matured into a stronger skater and stronger person.

I learned that God has a plan for me and that sometimes things have to get worse before they get better. I believe that everything happens for a reason. God wanted to test me and as result I am the person I am today. I’m tougher; I work harder, and I’m less afraid of failure. I know that I will continue to stay on a good path if I have the faith and the courage to trust God.

# The (Lion) King and I Isabel Gese

## Describe a book, movie, song, or other work of art that has been significant to you since you were young and how its meaning has changed for you as you have grown.

When I was younger, lions were my favorite animal (that coveted title, for anyone interested, is now occupied by the raccoon). I dressed up as a lion for four Halloweens in a row, I had perfected a roar which I believed to be intimidating, and my naturally curly hair often reached the level of unkemptness where it resembled a mane. In retrospect, I believed I was a lion. So for me, The Lion King was less of a movie with a message than it was a documentary. And a devotion. It was my favorite movie when I was little and I had to rewind the VHS tape to the very beginning in order to watch it, and it is my favorite movie even now, when I can watch it (from the beginning) at the press of a button.

As I’ve grown, I’ve come to understand the message that is conveyed by the animated animals I love. In the movie, Simba is urged to “remember who he is” and to go back to the Pride Lands to reclaim the throne. He has to stay true to who he really is, and he is faced with the realization that no amount of pretending or running can change that. This message has influenced me for close to my entire life, even though I was unaware of it for so long. I have always tried, from as early as I can remember, to be my authentic self. I have, of course, for the sake of politeness, pretended to enjoy some home-cooking which was truly horrible, so my record is not perfect...but I digress.

I have always wanted to be exactly who I am, even as a little girl. Here was a girl dressed up as a lion among a party of princess trick-or-treaters. I’ve never felt any desire to change who I am just to please others, or in order to blend. Much like Simba (yes, I am comparing myself to an animated lion), I stand out. I am a notable person (and no, that is not always a good thing).

As I’ve grown, I have been influenced by people in my life, but I’ve never felt as though I’m becoming untrue to myself; rather, I feel like I’ve had help becoming a better version of the same person I’ve been all along. And I believe I owe this idea of both growing and staying true to myself, of “remembering who I am”, to The Lion King.

Today, whenever I watch The Lion King or even listen to the soundtrack (which, admittedly, is downloaded on my phone) I am reminded of two things that are equally as important in my mind. I am reminded of the message, to stay true to myself even as I grow, and I am reminded of the young girl who genuinely believed she was a lion.

# A Thank You to the Toughest Teacher I've Ever HadAnonymous

## At Villanova, we believe that it is our similarities that make us strong, but our differences that make us stronger. Please tell us about a relationship that you have with someone who is different from you and how that has changed who you are today.

At my school, AP U.S. History has a reputation all its own - difficult, lengthy, overbearing. Still, in comparison to the teacher’s notoriety, the class seems like a piece of cake. You would have thought The Imitation Game was based on the way students feared him.

From the first day of class, I sensed that we could never get along. A Napoleon-like man, Coach Marks, as we were to call him, spoke of his staunch conservative values and political ideologies through a southern accent so thick, I could hardly understand when he teased me and called me a Yankee for spending my childhood in Massachusetts. Autographed pictures of President Reagan and Senator Marco Rubio lined the walls adjacent to his desk, a sharp contrast to my idolization of CJ Cregg, the fictional Press Secretary of The West Wing and Senators Chris Murphy, Elizabeth Warren, and Cory Booker.

The lens through which we learned the history of our country was shaped by his socially and fiscally conservative ideas. Democrats were corrupt and taxation was theft. Jefferson’s preference of states rights was favored over Hamilton’s national bank and President Nixon’s scandals were not nearly as shameful and un-presidential as President Clinton’s, we were told and tested on.

Having grown up in a service oriented, Catholic family, the daughter of civil servants who worked in non-profit organizations, I learned that respect should be given to all, those who agree with you and those who do not, no excuses. Resisting the urge to roll my eyes was tortuous each day, not because of his views, but because of the sarcasm he showed towards the ideas of others.

This being an election year in an early primary voting state, political tension filled the air inside and out of the classroom. I lasted a full semester without Coach Marks discovering my political affiliation, but the day he found out that I was a Fellow on the Hillary Clinton campaign, I thought that I, and my A in the class, were history. He put on a big show for my classmates, exclaiming that I was a Communist and on the path to the career of Hillary Clinton’s deputy “email deleter”. As class ended, I believed I was saved by the bell, until he asked me to hang back for a moment.

I feared more yelling and more insults, without the safety net of my classmates as witnesses. Yet, rather than yelling, we spoke about the issues, ignoring the personalities of the candidates, instead discussing feminism, the economy, immigration, and foreign policy for close to an hour. The conversation was one of genuine respect and interest on his part. It proved to him that I could form my own, intelligent opinions, and he showed me that when people are able to interact with respect for each other’s differences, we can go so much further.

Twenty years from now, I will remember Coach Marks as the teacher who set me on a path to success. He taught me to advocate for and defend myself, to debate, and to show respect to others whose’s ideas differ from my own.

# 97% Allegra Mendonsa

## Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

97%. That is the survival rate for thyroid cancer. It’s the first thing I looked up after my diagnosis. I felt like something inside me shattered. I told myself I could live with that because, statistically speaking, I would be okay.

However, my parents had a different reaction to the news. This was one of the few times they had been in the same room since I was 13 and one of the only times they agreed on anything. I saw the fear in their eyes, expecting to see their fear mirrored in mine. Within minutes, my father found the best doctor in Chicago specializing in thyroidectomies, while my mother stared at me and held back tears, longing for me to expose my feelings - any feelings. That’s not what I did. Numbness overtook my body, and I looked at my diagnosis through rational eyes. I knew if I could focus on the objective numbers and statistics, I could avoid the whirlwind of emotions that I was feeling.

After three nights alone in a hospital miles away from home and two fresh incisions to my neck, I finally woke up in my bed. I put on my favorite dress and my newest accessory, a white bandage, and went to school. Quickly, I learned my parents weren’t alone in their desire for emotions. Whispers and curious gazes followed me through the hall. When I answered my classmates’ questions, they pulled me into a hug I didn’t consent to and told me, with pity in their eyes, how sorry they were for me. These were people I had barely spoken to, but who acted as if having cancer was some sort of secret, and now that I had told them, we were best friends. I knew they meant well, but I could never give them what they wanted from me: emotion. Before my wounds healed, my doctor told me my cancer had returned. I felt as if my scars reopened. I recalled the pain and loneliness of my first surgery, accompanied by stares, and realized I would have to do it all over again. Before my parents could see me break down, I excused myself to the restroom; I let myself feel the emotions I had locked up inside: fear, sadness, frustration, loneliness. Instead of helping myself, I told myself lies about my vulnerability making me weak. I absorbed everyone else’s feelings about me while simultaneously ignoring my own.

It took a second cancer diagnosis for me to realize I am not a machine. I don’t want to view myself as a “victim” but I realized I had to accept that this was something that happened to me: I had cancer. By acknowledging and confronting my own emotions, I had finally begun mending the brokenness inside that had been hurting me since the day I was diagnosed. This experience taught me that an absence of emotion isn’t what makes a person strong, but weak. By being honest with myself about how I’m feeling and why, I’ve gained a better understanding of myself. Now, ev

# Becoming what I am not yet - Villanova Sukhprit Kaur

## "Become what you are not yet" - Saint Augustine. When you daydream, who do you hope to become in the future?

When I daydream, I see myself as a successful dentist who has opened her own dental office alongside her closest friends. I see myself breaking barriers and stereotypes that say first generation americans and college students can not achieve great success. When I daydream, I see myself with the loving family that I always wished for and as a mother who is both strong and confident. However, I realize in all this that I face to very different alternatives: I can keep daydreaming or I can take action.

This past summer I took action when I had the opportunity to volunteer at a dental office where I was able to interact with the patients and watch the doctor perform procedures, spending eight hours of my day living my daydream. I enjoyed everything, from sorting patient files to watching the most complex of procedures. I soon started to look forward to interacting with the patients everyday. One of the main reasons why I loved talking to the patients was that I spoke to them in Hindi since the office is located in a mostly Indian residential area. This way I was able to help those that did not speak English to fill out their forms as well as any questions or concerns the had for the doctor, even though Hindi is not my first or second language. Being able to interact with with other Indians is always a highlight of my day because that connects me to my roots and I hope to continue to do so with my patients in the future.

To further connect to my roots, I taught kids in my local sikh community how to read and write in Punjabi. For two consecutive weeks I volunteered and taught the U12 class our native language. By interacting with the young children I was able to live out my daydream in which I imagined myself as a strong and confident mother. I did this by not only teaching Punjabi, but also teaching the kids how to stand up for themselves because Sikhs are frequently bullied in schools. Indeed, I wanted them to start believing from a young age that they are unstoppable and no one, not even a bully, can tell them any different; I formed such a strong bond with them that they were my family, helping me live out yet another piece of my daydream.

Through volunteering in my community, I am able to live out my daydreams. I am able to become a well rounded, young, and independent woman. As Saint Augustine suggests, I am becoming what I am not yet.