**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.**

The end of school was the start of my world – a world of games.

The sound of cards shuffling, and dice rolling on the veneer of the small wooden table – that is the sound of an ongoing game, an experience which is a microcosm of reality. Many of my friends perceive the word “gaming” with a negative connotation, as a frivolous activity to engage in. In the worst instances, it compromises on our performance in the academic race. However, gaming has very much been a part of my life since I was young – I have grown up with it, grown to understand the good and the bad, and grown to love it.

Games have multifarious manifestations, from recreational sports to the classical gathering of friends around a table to the online realm. I have always been fascinated by the creative rules and mechanisms each game presents – from the collaborative play of Pandemic to the competitive atmosphere in Monopoly. These experiences are one of the best ways spend time with friends; they were the platforms through which a hitherto socially-awkward person crawled out of her shell to strike conversations with others.

Besides that, I learnt to manoeuvre to delicate balance of competition. From the person obsessed about winning every game, I grew to appreciate the time spent with a fellow challenger, whilst still giving my best in an intellectual stimulation. As I grew older, my experience with gaming shifted toward the virtual world, where I got to connect with people around the world.

However, my experience with gaming has not been all that positive. When school could not meet my intellectual, social and emotional needs, I sought gaming as a way to let the days pass. Yet, this indulgence insidiously transformed into a habit, into an addiction. Addiction wasn’t just about yearning to stay connected with the game; that was only a small part of what I felt. More significantly, I felt that the virtual identity I took up was a comfortable refuge, and my identity was dissociating from reality.

Then came this moment when conflicting thoughts began to fill my 12-year-old mind as I took a step back to evaluate my life, a life I felt was being wasted away. Ever since then, I was slowly but surely leaving behind my addiction behind. To my surprise, kicking away an addiction is not all that difficult because there are so many alternative activities awaiting us in life. For me, it was reading. My interest in gaming mechanisms extended to dystopian novels, where I could temporarily immerse myself in different social constructs, which provide convenient escapisms from reality.

Instead of trying to erase this experience from my past, I have come to accept it. Reflecting on the experience let me see it in a more positive light, as a journey that has helped shape who I am today. I discovered how much dedication and energy I had to channel towards doing the things I liked, and also saw how I was one who could see the good in everything. This optimism made me hopeful about school and life. Now, I believe that every individual has a potential, likely hidden underneath a veil of expectations and rules cast by society. With patience and determination, along with a spoonful of belief in ourselves, this potential can eventually be brought out. In fact, games are tools to achieve this potential.

The realm of games is a large part of my identity not because I was born with a passion for it. Rather, a bittersweet memory of it is etched in my mind after many years of a turbulent relationship. To this day, I will look back and remember the days of being entertained for hours by a soma cube, feeling grateful to have had the opportunity to immerse in the wonders of unstructured play.

Games are so much fun, and so much more than fun.

**Why try something new? Illustrate with a personal example.**

‘New’ takes place in both large and small changes around us, from entering a new environment to picking up a new habit. What distinguishes trying something new from merely going through change is that the former involves an element of active choice of venturing into the unknown. Though the path fills us with doubt and uncertainty, that very lack of predictability is what makes the journey exciting.

Growing up, I have always basked in the familiarity of plain foods, never opting for a drizzle of that specialty sauce over my food. Fishball Noodles was my first (and perhaps only) go-to choice at the food court, because there was no need to try something new. Yet, there is something so stale about the status quo – we gradually grow accustomed to the pleasurable feelings of our routine, and seek another routine.

It is undeniable growing up changes our palate and makes us want to try more things. Despite that, I think that the stories told by fervent supporters of spicy foods – excited descriptions of a foreign sensation – were a stronger driving force. They rave about heat which opened their pores and made beads of sweat trickle down their face, the cleansing feeling of having their airways opened. How could I leave my curiosity towards a foreign sensation hanging?

Trying out spicy foods wasn’t just about completing the 5 tastes of sourness, sweetness, bitterness, spiciness, saltiness (which are not entirely representative of the human experience of taste). Besides introducing a new dimension to the way I consume food, I built a new connection with my peers who have always relished the tangible tinge of spiciness. It also gave me the satisfaction of having overcome my hitherto-existent psychological barrier against trying spicy foods, of having taken a small step in the conquest of the self.

Yet, novelty is a double-edged sword and it is easy to just fall into the devil’s trap, engaging in new activities like vices. But at the end of the day, who says that falling going down the “wrong way” is bad? There’s always something that we can learn from the new things we try, and that is perhaps the greatest lesson any new experience can give us – something we have not learnt before. At the end of it all, it is important to recognise that our actions are guided by the conflicting demands for adventure and safety, guided by our ability to judge and take risks. Striking a balance on the scales of risk and reward requires a discerning mind and experience, and how will we gain this very experience without trying something new?

There is no way to define what ‘new’ actually is – the path each of us is taking is new to ourselves. Though the act of trying something new has been so widely encouraged that it may seem to be an anathema to novelty, it is only through trying something new will one be able to understand the benefits (and necessity) of trying something new.

500 words

**What in particular about Yale-NUS College has influenced your decision to apply?**

I am an open-minded person, especially when it comes to learning. I believe that Yale-NUS can offer me a vibrant and broad-based environment for me to explore, expand and reach my potential. I hope to be able to meet like-minded individuals who not only pursue learning, but seek to be change-makers. Furthermore, Yale-NUS is located in my home country so I am able to spend my undergraduate years deepening my understanding of and serving the communities in Singapore.

500 characters

**Robotics**

During the National Junior Robotics Competition (NJRC), my team decided to make a difference to the community. We volunteered at the Innovation Lab (Science Centre), and were involved in various activities like sharing our knowledge of robotics with young children, facilitating lessons, maintaining the classroom environment, and even collaborating with other organisations like Yayasan MENDAKI (Singapore's main Malay self-help group).

**St. John**

As part of a Uniformed Group (UG), I worked with my squad to bring out the spirit of UGs. Being an instructor involved developing training programmes to prepare our cadets for future leadership roles, as well as to instill important values like teamwork in them. As a secretary, I prepared the weekly routine orders to keep more than 120 members in my school informed about upcoming activities. This was complemented by other administrative duties which kept the corps running.

**Bowling**

I worked with my captain and team mates to bring together the school's bowling team. Besides organising activities to promote team bonding, I was also involved in the administrative management of the team. Lastly, we also represented our school at the 2016 'A' Division Tenpin Bowling Competition.

**EKA**

As an intern at EKA Training, I helped to facilitate the team-building and personal development workshops run by the company. These workshops were targeted at a wide range of clients, from corporations to government organisations to schools. I was also exposed to administrative work and collating feedback. Towards the end of the stint, I was offered the chance to design aspects of a team-building workshop, namely a heritage trial around Singapore.