

## Personal Statement

It's 8:15 in the morning. The bell rings. I strap my bag over one shoulder and slowly walk down the hallway. My steps are weary and I'm in no mood to talk. I begin to question myself, "Why did you choose this course?"

As I approach the classroom door, each step seems to bring back memories. This all began one summer ago — I decided to take IB Literature to challenge myself and to improve my writing.

However, I wasn't expecting regular class discussions. Before I could start sharing my idea, if I had any, my mouth would open and close repeatedly looking for a suitable opportunity to jump in; yet really I was just waiting until I had enough courage. I was concerned that my teacher would judge me for my ideas and conclude I'm incapable. Carrying this anxiety as I spoke, I would feel the air suffocating my lungs, sweat dripping down my face, and adrenaline speeding up my heart rate. I began to lose strength and hear my voice tremble, fragmenting sentences, or worse, uttering single words. Miserable, I would constantly peek at my teacher, the source of my insecurity, for signs of agreement. Until I found such gestures, I would remain anxious.

During my struggles, I came to realize that being shy and doing nothing would not alleviate the situation. I still vividly remember the time when I started learning English and chose not to seek help. It wasn't wise.

This time I wouldn't make the same mistake. I needed to devise a plan against this tsunami, my teacher's overbearing presence. His usual frowning face and solemn tone

intimidated me. If I failed to approach him, I would have to face the inevitable: crushed confidence and escalating stress.

However, nightmares have to be overcome. I packed my bag slowly, hoping to be the last one in the classroom. I walked cautiously towards the teacher's desk while trembling in fear. During this seemingly endless moment, numerous scenarios ran through my head: what if he says no, stares me down, or thinks I'm insufferable? I reached the table and noticed the dark coffee on his desk. More thoughts occurred to me: what if he's tired, cranky, or doesn't want to talk? However, I was determined. The unbearable feelings of struggling at speaking appeared clearly in my head, strengthening my resolve.

When I finally asked in a quiet voice, "Mr. Gertzfield, can you give me some suggestions on my commentary?" He answered without hesitation, "Sure. When are you free?" I was filled with joy and surprise. That day he patiently explained to me where and how I could improve. He added in the end, "Has this helped? We can meet tomorrow if you have more questions." I was touched. His smile and attitude cast a bright light on the shadows of my past reassuring me that teachers are always there to help. As I got more familiar with him through more meetings and conversations, he became a friend to me instead of a fierce and ruthless tsunami. I can talk to him about anything anytime, sharing my ideas without restraint.

Now I regularly join in discussions, asking questions, critiquing and discussing ideas, deepening my understanding of the subject. This improvement in self-confidence also helped elsewhere. I often talk to my teachers: asking about their day and for help on homework, running little errands, and chatting about holidays.

In the beginning I regretted taking IB Literature. Now, it's my favorite class. It has offered me more than knowledge; it offered me growth. I learned to take initiatives and face problems instead of avoiding them. I also became more hardworking: I now ask for extra work in order to improve.

It's 8:15 in the morning. The bell rings. I rush and almost hop to class with happiness written on my face, open the door wide and shout, "I LOVE IB LIT!"