

Essay 1

Ten years ago, I was a spy.

Secret identities, awesome spy gadgets and undercover operations consumed my imagination. This was serious business and I took training seriously.

My brother was Public Enemy No.1. He'd come home and I'd use Mission Impossible stealth moves to follow him everywhere. I'd pick his bedroom door with a nail file and steal his allowance. I'd climb the tree outside his window and take reconnaissance photos.

The proudest moment of my young espionage career was Operation Secret Crate. One Saturday afternoon, Mom drove up with my brother and his friends, who were coming over to play Grand Theft Auto, make stupid jokes and eat junk food. My mission: eavesdrop.

My high-tech tool was a plastic moving crate, two and a half feet square, forgotten behind the living room couch. It had eye-holes big enough for an intrepid spy.

I was small and flexible, but fitting inside that crate was a stretch. Still, the mission was on. Quick jumping jacks and toe touches to loosen the limbs. Squat, knees to chest, crate over head...

Slam! The boys banged through the front door and swarmed onto the couch. Peering out I saw tennis shoes and hairy ankles. My heart thumped so loud I worried it would overpower their excited voices and the hum of the X-Box. The smell of Pizza Hut cheese sticks was in the air.

The moment of truth. Would they notice the girl crouched in the crate inches away?

One minute. Five minutes. Ten minutes. They didn't notice! Fifteen minutes. Twenty minutes. Still safe. Thirty minutes. I realized the flaw in my plan. I might learn their secrets, but my body was so contorted and aching that soon I might never walk again.

Something had to be done. Something bold, drastic, unthinkable.

ARGGHHAHGHGHGHGHGHGHHAHDHGHGHGHGHGHG!!!!!!!

I shouted at the top of my lungs, flung the crate off me and jumped onto the couch. They all screamed. The cheese sticks went flying. The coke spilled. My brother, for once, had nothing to say.

Elana, girl of mystery, strikes, I said. Be warned.

I strutted out of the living room.

Since those first spy trainings, I've never stopped preparing for a future clandestine career. I've cracked codes in computer science and cracked jokes with a CIA operative. I've slogged through 10k of mud at the Camp Pendleton mud run and four years of Chinese in high school. I've flown planes with the Civil Air Patrol in Santa Monica and beat drums with Sudanese refugees in Tel-Aviv. I have launched a rocket, administered CPR, operated ham radios, set a broken arm and helped a rescue team look for a downed plane.

I could end up as a spy, a diplomat, a soldier, an astronaut, or a fighter for a lost cause. I could end up famous or completely unknown. I know two things for sure: I won't be at a desk job, and I'll be good to have around when there's trouble.

Essay 2

512 words

From the time I was able to realize what a university was, all I heard from my mother's side of the family was about the University of Michigan and the great heritage it has. Many a Saturday afternoon my grandfather would devote to me, by sitting me down in front of the television and reminiscing about the University of Michigan while halftime occurred during a Michigan Wolverines football game. Later, as I grew older and universities took on greater meaning, my mother and uncle, both alumni of the University of Michigan, took me to see their old stamping grounds. From first sight, the university looked frightening because of its size, but with such a large school comes diversity of people and of academic and non-academic events.

In Springfield High School, non-academic clubs such as the Future Physicians and the Pylon, both of which I have belonged to for two years, give me an opportunity to see both the business world and the medical world. These two clubs have given me a greater sense of what these careers may be like. In Future Physicians, I participated in field trips to children's hospitals and also participated in two bloodbanks.

Currently I hold a job at Maas Brothers. This lets me interact with people outside my own immediate environment. I meet different kinds of people, in different moods, with different attitudes, and with different values. This job teaches me to be patient with people, to have responsibility, and to appreciate people for what they are.

In the community I am active in my church Youth Group. As a high school sophomore, I was our church's representative to the Diocesan Youth Fellowship. I helped organize youth group events, the largest being "The Bishop's Ball," a state-wide event for 300 young people. I also played high school junior varsity soccer for two years. As a senior I will be playing varsity soccer, but in the off-season. As a junior I coached a girls' soccer team for the town. This gave me a great deal of responsibility because the care of twenty-four girls was put into my custody. It felt very satisfying to pass on the knowledge of soccer to another generation. The girls played teams from other parts of Florida. Though their record was 3-8, the girls enjoyed their season. This is what I taught them was the greatest joy of soccer.

The past three years of my life have given me greater visions of my future. I see the University of Michigan as holding a large book with many unread chapters and myself as an eager child who has just learned to read. I intend to read and probe into all the chapters. The University of Michigan offers me more than the great reputation of this fine school, but a large student body with diverse likes and dislikes, and many activities, both academic and non-academic, to participate in. With the help of the University of Michigan, I will be successful after college and be able to make a name and place for myself in our society.

Essay 3

Common Application:

Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

Until just recently, I would have affirmed that my favorite word was independence.

However, after completing a North Carolina Outward Bound course I discovered that my preferred word is collaboration.

I embarked on our senior class trip in eager anticipation of hiking and navigating my way through the mountains. Thoughts of copious amounts of bugs, cold weather, and a certain degree of lack of personal hygiene did not faze me or diminish my enthusiasm. I was confident in my physical ability and thought that I would be able to conquer any task allotted to me. We received our group assignments, traveled to our starting points to complete the infamous "duffle shuffle," hoisted our cumbersome packs, and commenced our Outward Bound experience.

I quickly discovered that not all of my group members were as keen on the close proximity to nature and the intense physical exertion of hiking. However, instead of alienating myself from those who were struggling and condescendingly leading the group at a fast pace, I convinced my other speedy team members that we were only as fast as our slowest person. I then relocated the two team members that were struggling to the front of the line, and with some cajoling and encouragement, they proudly led our group as we reached the top of Table Rock. During our appreciations at Dinner Circle on the last night of the trip, every one of my group members thanked me for my positive attitude and perseverance throughout the course.

During my course I also discovered that I am orientated more towards the "process" rather than the "product", as the Outward Bound School refers to it. On the second day of our journey, our knowledgeable instructors relinquished their leadership and we were forced to utilize our newly found cartography skills to navigate through the wilderness. During this challenge, I was not

merely focused on reaching our destination, but on diligently mapping each step of our course, determined to lead us along the best path. After many scouting expeditions, compromises, and a few wrong turns, we successfully forged our way to our campsite.

The same instance occurs in my education as I consistently find myself striving to gain knowledge that does not pertain to a certain class and most likely will not be on our next chapter test. To me education is more than absorbing, memorizing, and repeating facts from my teachers; it is constantly striving to discover simply for the sake of knowledge, with no extrinsic motivations involved. Once again, the process is sometimes more important than the product.

Realistically, although I would have succeeded alone in the narrow sense on my Outward Bound course, I could never have accomplished the greater objective of the trip; learning about myself and others through unified purpose and action, without the help of my peers. That is the message that I can now take through life.

Drama Kid

I walk through the cafeteria doors, the bleach white room congested with girls in green uniforms, their giggles and chatter penetrating my ears as I look for the booth labeled "Drama Club Sign Up." I do not realize in my eighth grade year how my decision will affect me, but it is a choice I hasten to make as I scribble my name on the list of potential actresses who seem more able and more confident than me. Reading for a part a few weeks later, I steal out of my cave that I have fashioned from years of timidity, using the black typed words on the scrap of paper in front of me as my medium. They say: "I have something rich inside me. I can stand out in this cluster. I have my own skin. Let me show you."

Throughout my high school years, acting has helped to draw out that substance within me, allowing me to express myself in ways that I could not before. Until I discovered acting, I had trouble acknowledging my emotions, closing myself off because of my father's suicide. In many ways, I still experience the residue of his decision today. I have realized, however, through theater, that I can express myself through the voice of others. I can use their words to construct my own ideals. By pursuing the motives and ambitions of my characters, I discover things about myself that I had not previously acknowledged.

Studying a range of characters, monologues, and points of view has not only helped me understand myself, it has contributed to my understanding the complexities, strengths and weaknesses of others. Contemplating differing perspectives has taught me that the words of others may clash with mine, but are still worth listening to. I have learned that though each person is unique, there are so many things that we have in common and define us as humans. I recognize that because I am so young I have only seen a glimpse of humanity. However, I am motivated to learn more, and not only through scripts and books. I want to learn about something that is not me, something that I could never have experienced without searching the soul of another person, another country, another culture. I cannot imagine my life without the will to discover.

Theater gives life to a once dormant aspect of my self, allowing me to delve into the unexplored and turn my wonder into action.