
A Transformative Experience: College Admission Essay Sample

As the sunlight began to dim, my panic rose. The street signs were incomprehensible, and any request for assistance only resulted in a barrage of unfamiliar German. I found myself hoping for a rapid rescue, yet I knew that I needed to find my own way out of the urban confusion of downtown Stuttgart. I was terrified. I found myself racing around a train station, frantically asking all the cab drivers in broken German if they knew where my temporary residence was; finally, I was directed to a bus stop. Unfortunately, I would have to wait quite some time before the next bus arrived. As I sat on the cold stone bench, dejected, I began to notice what was around me. The city was filled with images that were so incongruous with the strict mold of my past experiences that I was stunned.

Born in India and raised in the most traditional manner possible, I had lived a very sheltered life. It was drilled into me that "your success depends on your dedication to your grades," which left little time for "superfluous" activities. I became a diligent worker, yet I lacked the conviction to pursue more than just my education. The structure of my life led me to believe in the universality of my work-driven code, yet this belief was now being shaken.

On every corner of the city was new evidence that my principles were not shared. Teenagers with beers were strolling through the streets, leaving me dumbfounded, only able to wonder: "What would their parents say?" It surprised me further to know that their parents followed close behind, beers in hand. In other areas, I saw other children walking through the city late in the evening, even though school would begin early the next morning. The entire metropolis was full of individuals my age, not just having fun, but developing -- working, volunteering, training, networking, and engaging. The freedom and relationships astounded me and opened my eyes to new possibilities.

Upon leaving the train station, I begin to recognize the imperfections in my perspective. If individuals across the world had found such apparent comfort, confidence, and success by following different beliefs, then maybe my beliefs were not as universal as I had thought. Over time, I departed from my single-minded focus on academics, and began to take a greater role in the activities which had once seemed "frivolous" or "secondary." I discovered ways to reach well beyond textbook education: computer technology, music, and tennis became paramount. Every day, I learned and practiced, developing my skills in Python or HTML, refining my tone and expanding my range, or honing my stamina and shot selection through rigorous practice sessions. Though I only gradually arrived at my future course of study, I envisioned the

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possibilities for the first time: developing software to propel the next generation of spacecraft, researching neural pathways that influence physical capabilities, or even performing music professionally.

The experience at that German Bus Station, Schloßplatz, remains one of the greatest influences on my life. Its destabilizing nature gave me the opportunity to observe the world unbiased, and to derive a perspective more global in nature. Such a drastic variation has taught me that education is far more than a textbook: it is a method to expand on your passions and strive towards something greater, the essence of the fulfilling yet unexpected lifestyles that I observed, from a bus stop bench, that day in Germany.

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