

## College/Personal Essay Assignment

**As part of their summer assignment, incoming Seniors--Class of 2018--are required to submit a 650 word personal essay responding to one of the following prompts:**

1. 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.
2. The lessons we take from *obstacles we encounter* can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a *challenge, setback, or failure*. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you *questioned* or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your *thinking*? *What was the outcome*?
4. 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.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or *realization* that *sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others*.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

**Essays must be typed and submitted on the first day of school.**

## Thoughts from your SHS Counselors

As you know, there are two major parts of the college application; the quantitative piece (GPA, transcript, standardized test scores) and the qualitative piece (essay, extracurricular activities, teacher and counselor recommendations). Some elements you can control at this point, and others you cannot. You have control over the essay. Make it authentic. We hear very frequently from colleges that your grades, transcripts, and test scores get you an invitation to the conversation about admissions. Now is your chance to wow them at the party.

Developing an effective college essay requires that you show a college admissions committee who you are.

You show them by telling them.

Just because you are captain of the dance team does not mean you are a leader. What do you do that makes you a leader? Why are you an athlete? What is it that you really love about art? How did your passion for history begin? We are not suggesting that you talk about these things necessarily, but you can't just say, "I love art." SHOW them.

Important things to keep in mind:

- Tell them something not covered elsewhere in your application! They don't want you to go over your resume; they can read your activities list.
- Consider your audience. Admissions committees are made up of a diverse group of adults; they may differ greatly in things like age, religion, sexual orientation, interests, values, etc. Be mindful of your content. We aren't going to tell you what to write about- it's your personal essay, but we do ask that you consider the audience.
- Keep things positive. You can discuss a negative event, hardship, tragedy, etc., but again, be mindful of showing the college how you have become a better person because of it.
- Be yourself. Colleges are not looking for you to be anyone you are not. If you are true to yourself, you will find a college that is a good fit for you and that also thinks you would be a good fit for them.
- Be honest.

This is an excellent opportunity to work on an essay that over 90% of you will write. We understand that college is not for everyone. However, what we *do* know is that this whole process is a journey unto itself. You will learn a lot about yourself through the process of planning your next steps and we see this summer assignment as a landmark on the journey. Take the chance to learn something about yourself along the way.

Please see the links on the following page for model essays

### Helpful Links

[Essays that Worked: Essays written by students admitted to Johns Hopkins University](#)

[Essays that Worked: Essays written by students admitted to Tufts University](#)

[Essays that Worked: Connecticut College](#)

[Sample College Essay with Commentary](#)

[How I Conquered the College Admissions Essay](#)

All prompts are Common Application prompts. See [The Common App Essay Prompts](#) for more information.