

## University Application Essay

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I arrived in the United States with a few suitcases and a vocabulary consisting of three words: hi, bye, and cat. A year later I was getting in trouble for talking too much in class. In English. And a year after that, I was allowed to skip the third grade (and later the sixth grade as well) on account of my academic abilities.

Having lived in Ukraine until the age of eight, coming to the United States made me completely and utterly disoriented. School was especially frightening because everyone around me was talking about something I didn't understand. All I could think about everyday was how many hours were left before I could go back home, back to the refuge of my native language. After a few more days of school, my teacher realized that I wasn't getting anywhere. That's when I started going to tutoring classes at school to learn English. Yes, I learned a lot in those few tutoring classes but I personally believe that I learned the most outside of that little classroom with my tutor. I was learning from my surroundings - the ingredients listed on a peanut butter jar, the news on TV, and what my classmates were laughing about in class.

Back then, I didn't give this any thought, I was just happy to be able to communicate and have fun with my friends, but now that I think about and relate this experience to the rest of my life, I realize that I learn best from my surroundings. Reading books and studying are definitely good ways to learn something, but I personally believe that the best way to learn is through accidental but sometimes intentional engrossment. When I'm forced to learn something that I don't enjoy, I usually do not excel. Not to say that I don't put in effort or hard work, I usually do, but my results are never as good as when I truly delight in learning something.

This theory has been relevant throughout my life. I understood the American culture not through reading about it in an encyclopedia but through experiencing it firsthand. Furthermore, I was able to understand it in a very limited time, two and half years to be exact, because an unexpected turn of events (or for the sake of clarity, my stepfather's job) landed me in Hong Kong, China where I've been living for the past 6 years. Yet again, through total immersion with my surroundings I have become accustomed to Chinese and Asian culture.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that I am a quick learner, a person with a love of knowledge and someone who isn't obstinate to change. I believe that my awareness of the world around me through personal interaction gives me an advantage. Having lived in three very different countries and cultures, I can attest to being a truly global citizen. This very fortunate part of my life makes me an individual and a kind of person that you don't meet everyday. I therefore trust that my presence will be a valuable contribution to your university.