

MOON PREP'S
FAVORITE ESSAYS

JOHNS
HOPKINS

SIX ESSAYS THAT LANDED
STUDENTS A SPOT AT
JOHNS HOPKINS

MOONPREP.COM

ONE.

Ever since the first grade, Dmitri Mendeleev has been my hero. When I first saw the periodic table, I was in awe; the colors, the patterns, the symmetric shape—everything mesmerized me. Ever since that moment, the periodic table has defined the way I live. Just as Mendeleev put together a seemingly random assortment of elements to form the now infamous periodic table, I loved putting together the seemingly random jumble of words and numbers in word problems to formulate a solution.

Math has always been a channel for my creativity and passion. In fact, it was through math that I first unearthed my love of discovery. I still vividly remember the rush of joy that I felt when I finished struggling through my first word problem and triumphantly waved it around in the air. As I progressed further and further up the insurmountable mountain of math and began to encounter more foreign concepts, it only got more interesting. No longer was I in a world saturated with numbers; instead, letters and symbols began to enter the mix too. My curiosity was insatiable. And then, I picked up my first calculus textbook. While many remember this moment as one of severe anxiety or trepidation, I remember looking at the strange, archaic symbols, bewildered, thinking where did the numbers go? Because this was in third grade, I didn't fully understand the intricacies behind the mathematical notation. Nonetheless, it was at that point that I decided to pursue mathematics.

But, the more I researched, the more questions I had. As I dug deeper into the inviting, yet mysterious abyss of number theory, I saw math morph into shapes and patterns and I came to the realization that math is more than numbers; mathematics represents a field of patterns, representations, models that lay the foundation for the way our universe works. That's when it dawned on me: I loved math for the same reason I loved the periodic table. The rush of discovery, the love of patterns, the joy of exploration—everything was the same. As I explored my love for math further, I began to realize that the joy that I experienced when discovering something new was not only because of that "Eureka!" moment; rather, it was utilizing the tools that mathematics provided to apply the intangible concepts so prevalent in textbooks to the world that surrounds us.

The duality of the periodic table—the cold, hard numbers mixed with the reassuring, steadfast patterns—has manifested itself in every aspect of my life. While the patterns of the periodic table drew me towards mathematics, it was the systematic, ordered way of bringing math into science that pulled me into coding, first making websites with HTML, then writing programs with Java. My passion for programming grew. The world of coding presented itself to me as a way to bring the patterns I loved into the world in a way I could see them.

But something was still missing. After years of refining my analytical interests, I still yearned for that element of science that I had grown to love as a first grader. I was still missing that feeling of success after persevering through a difficult word problem or struggling through memorizing the first 100 digits of pi. It was then that I discovered biology. As I explored various research studies that not only furthered scientific understanding but also helped millions around the world, I knew that this was what I wanted to do. Medical research, specifically in cellular biology and genetics, condenses my passion for mathematics, biology, and discovery into one distinct goal. Whether it be analyzing patterns in the genome, generating computer models of clathrin-mediated endocytosis, or studying the chemical composition of organic molecules, cellular biology embodies my passions just as well as the periodic table.

FEEDBACK ON ESSAY 1

Akash does a great job of displaying his academic curiosity by introducing us to his experiences with topics like the periodic table, mathematical symbols, and coding, and how these all came together to lead him toward a passion for medical research. Rather than simply telling us what he's interested in, Akash shows us his journey through a variety of academic fields in order to paint a picture of who he is today.

TWO.

Standing in front of the kitchen counter, my small hands are placed on the cool granite top and my eyes rest on the empty bowl set out in front of me. On one side lies a pack of masa harina and on the other, a pitcher filled with water. Tortillas are considered to be somewhat of a staple food in Guatemala and in Central American cuisines. Whenever my mom asks me to make tortillas, I groan internally; not because I dislike tortillas, but because I simply cannot make them. What should come naturally as a Guatemalan native is foreign to my small hands. My hands are unable to form the perfectly sized circles because they are trying to decide what dominates more—my Guatemalan roots or the American culture I grew up in.

Minutes pass and I have done absolutely nothing. Finally, I extend my hesitant arm to pick up the pack of masa harina and proceed to pour it into the bowl. As I pour the masa harina, I cannot help but think about how much it resembles my journey to America. When I moved, I brought my Guatemalan heritage with me into the massive bowl that is the United States. Continuing with the recipe, I gradually add water to the masa harina and knead it until it becomes the desired texture. Assimilating into American culture and the American way of life was no easy feat for me and I struggled at first, but I found ways to manage. Although my parents were not fluent in English, I was able to learn English with the help of Dora the Explorer, Barney, and my surroundings. Little by little, American culture poured into my life, intermingling with my Guatemalan roots.

My next step is to grab a small amount of masa in my hands and begin to roll it into as much of a perfectly shaped sphere as I can. Flattening the ball of masa between my hands, I begin to shape it into a tortilla. Similar to how I have a preconceived notion of how I want the tortilla to turn out, I tend to idealize how I want my life to turn out. Regardless of my efforts, I can't help it if my tortilla tears as I attempt to shape it. Just like the cracks and tears in my tortilla, I face obstacles in life. However, I have learned to not let them bring me down or keep me from continuing to try. For instance, I come from a low socioeconomic background, but I have never let that stop me from pursuing my aspirations. It is not just about the tortilla that I am making right in front of me. It is about me, my life, and what kind of tortilla I will end up being. Will I be a tortilla that looks like every other one? Or will I be a tortilla, uniquely made in the most perfect imperfect shape?

Despite my many failed attempts at making tortillas throughout my life, I have discovered the key ingredient to the tortilla recipe, and ultimately the recipe of life: persistence. If trying to make tortillas has taught me anything, it is that: it's not about the shape of the tortilla, it's about how the tortilla faces the hot griddle of life.

FEEDBACK ON ESSAY 2

Rocio's essay uses the tortilla-making story to introduce us to her sense of multiculturalism, an identity that is clearly important to her. By utilizing the example of struggling to cook well in the kitchen, the writer is able to effectively relate to readers of all ages and backgrounds. We believe that Rocio's sense of perseverance will translate to her college experience as well.

THREE.

“These people are just confused,” Emily whispered to me as she stared out the car window at the gay couples walking down the rainbow streets of the Castro. I was utterly offended by her statement, but I replied calmly, “Let people be who they are.” Emily and I grew up in Texas together as inseparable friends. For twelve years that was our beautiful home, and we enjoyed every moment together. Last summer, Emily visited my new home of five years, San Francisco, for the first time. It felt like no time had passed. We still laughed until our faces turned tomato red. We still screamed our favorite Taylor Swift songs as if there was no tomorrow. Nothing could get in between the love we had for each other, even our vehemently opposing opinions.

Emily’s visit sparked a period of growth in which I improved respecting values of those with an opposite viewpoint. That challenge especially reflects the stagnant state of the current political climate in the United States. Extreme polarization is preventing collaboration that could resolve any issues. Even in my daily experiences, I notice the extreme dichotomy. My friends in California stereotype my friends in Texas. My friends in Texas stereotype my friends in California. During debates in history class or jokes during lunch, I observe that these toxic assumptions produce an atmosphere of mistrust. I find that abhorrence exhausting, especially considering that I experienced the beauty on both sides beneath the stereotypes. Disagreement between opposing perspectives is healthy in creating a functioning balance. However, when the fine line between argument and hatred blurs, resolution seems impossible.

So, I try to listen with an open mind, even when that feels extremely difficult. Sometimes, pure adrenaline rushes through my body, making me want to bang my hands on the table out of complete anger towards an opinion. I have learned, though, that suppressing my emotional side during a time of disagreement and instead responding with calmness gets my point across more effectively. When that irritation begins to overtake my ability to concentrate on another person’s outlook, I always try to draw from my experiences of living both in the South and in the West. People come from different backgrounds. They are surrounded by different cultures and experiences. I don’t necessarily have to find validity in everyone’s viewpoints to at least listen to their reasoning.

The more I remain nonjudgmental, the more my own beliefs develop and become nuanced. I have nothing to lose when I listen to my peers. I extract small pieces of their perspectives in order to enhance my own. If I completely disagree with their opinions, I use their counterargument to articulate a more potent version of my position. The value in telling my story is just as important as hearing another. I love group projects in school, where ideas and creativity flow between people. I adore the end of a cross country race when all the girls from different schools hug and laugh with one another. I cherish being on a soccer team, where the bond between my teammates and me is essential for achieving success. Appreciating uniqueness and connecting to different characters augments my own maturity and depth. I want to meet new people. I want to be challenged by new ideas. I want to experience new places. Despite our differences, Emily and I have a healthy relationship in which we are able to learn from one another; the acknowledgement of our individual value allows us to avoid bitterness. I strive to continue improving my ability to be comfortable with disagreement in order to learn more from my peers. I may not always end up agreeing with Emily, or other people I care about, but I should at least try to understand a different perspective. Only then can I create a bridge that connects two different ideas, allowing for a more harmonious world.

FEEDBACK ON ESSAY 3

Through her writing, Callie allows the admissions committee to better understand her approach to learning new perspectives. This essay highlights her personality and values and helps us imagine how she will collaborate with others throughout different spaces on campus in a diverse student body. By broadening her initial anecdote and having the majority of the essay focus on her reflections and takeaways, we were able to spend even more time learning about Callie.

FOUR.

There I was, hanging from the precipice, muscles trembling, fingers aching, sweat dripping onto my spotter twenty feet below. He could see I was struggling, and shouted words of encouragement, but my head was pounding too loudly to make out the words. During the initial ascent, I felt strong and confident, though the intense scope of the route had begun to loosen my physical grip, as well as my grip on reality. I made it to the final hold, exhausting every drop of energy, unable to fathom lifting my arm again. The wall then became a towering mental blockade. I knew exactly where to put my hand next, yet I still didn't feel as if I had the physical means of doing so. I screamed and shot my hand up in a final attempt to finish the climb. I was only hanging on by my fingertips and sheer determination, nevertheless I had made it to the top. My belayer celebrated and lowered me down. Weak and exhausted, I could barely unclip myself from the harness; however, mentally I had never felt stronger.

It is during these experiences that the world falls away; all that is left is the rock face itself. I become one with the wall, solely captivated by the placements of its holds and the complexity of its challenge. Time ceases to exist.

Rock climbing is a second language to me. I grew up scaling the tallest trees I could find, desiring the highest vantage point. Growing up in the uniformly flat state of Florida, I was limited in my upward journey. Luckily, I rekindled my love for climbing in high school, and now cannot imagine life without it. My passion for climbing is fueled by the adrenaline that pumps through my veins.

At first, I was an impatient climber who would try and solve the wall before me, making split-second decisions. However, this strategy rapidly tired me out after beginning to climb. Clearly, this method wasn't going to get the job done; I had to change my mindset. Now, when I approach a wall, I first draw the problem out in my mind, using my hands to examine the holds. Like a game of chess, I lay out an intricate plan of attack. If I am completely perplexed by a wall, I converse with other pro climbers to guide me towards the best route. Every time I interact with climbers better than myself, I learn a new technique and create new bonds. Being part of the rock climbing community has helped me develop my social skills.

The best things about climbing is that there is no clear-cut way to climb a wall, and that there is always a new challenge. My climbing partners say that I take the most unorthodox routes when climbing, but ironically they're the most natural and comfortable paths for me. I get lost in the walls and climb for hours, as time becomes irrelevant. I think of nothing else but reaching the last hold and forget all of my worries. Even when my friends beg to go home from fatigue, I insist on attempting another route. I don't feel I've had a sufficient climbing session until my forearms are pulsing and the skin on my fingertips are raw.

Patience, collaboration, and determination are all needed when climbing a wall, like in any field of research. I no longer say I can't do something, instead approaching challenges with the utmost confidence. If one plan falls short, I reassess and approach the wall from another angle. I am comfortable making decisions, even when I don't know what the outcome may be. Through this life-changing sport I have strengthened not only my body but also my mind, learning the beauty of problem solving.

FEEDBACK ON ESSAY 4

Devon opens his essay with a story that is relatable to many: Struggling through a difficult activity (rock climbing in this instance) yet feeling determined to finish. The author effectively expands from this one experience to how his learning style has changed in the past few years. Through his essay, we get a sense of Devon's growth mindset and can envision him continuing to develop as a student and individual once on our campus.

FIVE.

“If you had to choose one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?”

Having had this question asked of me many a time, I realize that such an inquiry must be considered practically. The correct answer would keep me happily sustained for the rest of my years, whereas the wrong choice could leave me tormented until I wither away from monotony. If I chose macaroni and cheese, per se, I'd be trapped consuming glutinous pasta, tacky milk-fat, yellow dye No.5, and copious amounts of sodium, forever. But if instead, I call upon my contentment understandings and assess my options accordingly, I may arrive at an indefectible conclusion. And after much deliberation, I believe that I have come to such a response: potatoes.

These tubers are the perfect sustenance due not only to their nutritional qualities but, most notably, to their remarkable versatility. Potatoes may be prepared in a myriad of dishes.

Creamy mashed-potatoes come first to mind, with their fluffy hills of whipped-bliss gracing one's tongue so delicately. The thought of golden tater-tots follows; deep-fried potatoes cooked perfectly so as to create a slow crunch when chewed. Then are characteristic french-fries—shoestring or steak, skin on or off. Baked-potatoes, latkes, hash-browns, gnocchi—all respectable meals. And one mustn't forget potato-chips when searching for alight snack.

Oh potatoes, how I love you. And when asked what to eat exclusively for the rest of my life, I will enthusiastically respond “potatoes!”, for by picking one, I choose an abundance.

To a casual onlooker, this question may appear inconsequential in its hypothetical nature, but as they say; you are what you eat. My inclination towards the varied is not contained to my food habits—it is a recurring theme throughout my life. I regularly switch from my mom's house to my dad's. I've moved twelve times. I have a fifteen-year-old sister and a two-year-old brother. I'm a dog and a cat person.

This variation tends not to leave me with an aversion to commitment, but a disposition towards diversity. I am interested in many things. So one must understand how I have struggled, faced throughout my education with the question, “If you had to choose one subject to study, one occupation to pursue, one thing to do, for the rest of your life, what would it be?”

I love to play viola; I get a rush communicating without-words to my quartet members in order to convey a musical message. I am at my happiest reading a good book; their complex stories captivate me and I aspire to write a novel of my own. I want to make laws that improve my country; all people should have a shot at the American dream. I am passionate about protecting the environment; reducing our effect on global-warming is of the utmost importance to me. I want to help those in need; people still don't have access to clean water and I want to use my privilege to help change that. I strive to become fluent in Spanish; traveling the world is a dream of mine. Recently, I have discovered that I really like to code; I'm sure in the coming years I will explore things I didn't know I was interested in.

I don't have an answer to what exactly it is I want to do for the rest of my life. I love English and political science, but I have yet to find such an all-encompassing response as potatoes. What I've realized though, is that I don't have to sacrifice all for one. From each of my interests I learn things that contribute to who I am and shape how I see the world. Eventually, I will focus my path. And when I do have an answer, I will go forth with the knowledge I've gathered from each of my varied interests; and I will never stop learning.

FEEDBACK ON ESSAY 5

Madison's fun writing style left the admissions committee entertained, but more importantly gave us insight into her outlook and personality. The essay illustrates her joy in trying new things and having diverse interests. This helps us understand how Madison would thrive in a liberal arts academic setting with lots of flexibility where she can find the unique cross-sections of her interests.

SIX.

I looked up and flinched slightly. There were at least sixty of them, far more than expected. I had thirty weeks to teach them the basics of public speaking. Gritting my teeth, I split my small group of tutors among the crowd and sat down for an impromptu workshop with the eighth graders. They were inexperienced, monotone, and quiet. In other words, they reminded me of myself...

I was born with a speech impediment that weakened my mouth muscles. My speech was garbled and incomprehensible. Understandably, I grew up quiet. I tried my best to blend in and give the impression I was silent by choice. I joined no clubs in primary school, instead preferring isolation. It took six years of tongue twisters and complicated mouth contortions in special education classes for me to produce the forty-four sounds of the English language.

Then, high school came. I was sick of how confining my quiet nature had become. For better or for worse, I decided to finally make my voice heard.

Scanning the school club packet, I searched for my place. Most activities just didn't feel right. But then, I sat in on a debate team practice and was instantly hooked. I was captivated by how confidently the debaters spoke and how easily they commanded attention. I knew that this was the path forward.

Of course, this was all easier said than done. Whenever it was my turn to debate, I found that I was more of a deer in the headlights than a person enjoying the spotlight. My start was difficult, and I stuttered more than I spoke in those first few weeks. Nonetheless, I began using the same tools as I did when I learned to speak all those years ago: practice and time. I watched the upperclassmen carefully, trying to speak as powerfully as they did. I learned from my opponents and adapted my style through the hundreds of rounds I lost. With discipline, I drilled, repeating a single speech dozens of times until I got it right.

Day by day, I began to stand a little taller and talk a little louder both inside and outside of debate. In a few months, my blood no longer froze when I was called on in class. I found I could finally look other people in the eyes when I talked to them without feeling embarrassed. My posture straightened and I stopped fidgeting around strangers. I began to voice my opinions as opposed to keeping my ideas to myself. As my debate rank increased from the triple to single-digits, so too did my standing at school. I began interacting with my teachers more and leading my peers in clubs. In discussions, I put forward my ideas with every bit as much conviction as my classmates. When seniors began to ask me for advice and teachers recruited me to teach underclassmen, I discovered not only that I had been heard, but that others wanted to listen. At heart, I am still reserved (some things never change), but in finding my voice, I found a strength I could only dream of when I stood in silence so many years ago.

Standing in front of the crowd of students, it was my hope that by founding this program, I could give them an experience that was as empowering as mine had been for me. As the weeks passed, the students inched past their insecurities and towards finding their voices, just as I had always wanted to do. On the last day of class for that year, I looked up and saw each of the students standing confidently, equipped and ready to speak their minds in whatever they wanted to do. They had come a long way from being the shy and stuttering novices that they were just thirty weeks before—I can't wait to see how far they can go from here.

FEEDBACK ON ESSAY 6

Jerry's essay helped the admissions committee understand his background and how he persevered and grew through debate. Although we had already learned about Jerry's enthusiasm for debate in other parts of his application, this essay gave so much more depth into why this activity is meaningful for him. Given what he shared in his essay, we can imagine Jerry being an active participant both in and out of the classroom.