

The Anti-College Essay
Personal Essay

I like watching reruns of *The Wonder Years*. I like taking pictures with foreboding subway-dwellers. I like smelling the pages of a new book. I like walking aimlessly along Riverside Drive with my friends in search of some inevitably disappointing house party. I like a good flick. I like chicken parmesan. I like cruising about the Internet for interesting, gimmicky, YouTube-esque videos. But most of all, I like listening to outdated, cheesy music that would be grounds for execution by way of guillotine among my contemporaries.

For a while, I was satisfied with all these idiosyncratic tidbits of self-definition; that is until college application time reared its ugly head. I knew the day would come eventually, but it always seemed so distant to me. "This can't be real," I thought. "College is for 'big kids.'" Despite my hesitations, though, the admissions process was here and there was no stopping her.

After I recovered from the initial shock, I went straight to the drawing boards. What do colleges want to know about me? How can I make myself stand out? Then, as if imbued with the all-knowing powers of a divine spirit, the answer struck me like a blow to the face: I could write about that life altering trip I took to that impoverished, third-world country last summer. "Brilliant!" I concluded. "They'll think I'm some sort of magnanimous crusader!" There was just one teensy-weensy drawback: I have never been to an impoverished, third world country. Oh well, on to the next idea. How about I write an evocative piece on my toil with adversity? I'll seem sensitive without seeming vulnerable, poignant without seeming sentimental. This is great; I think I'm finally making substantial headway. Pulitzer, here I come! Alas, there's trouble in paradise after all. I have never faced true adversity. Sure, I've had my fair share of ebbs and flows, but don't we all? My problems are not severe enough to merit a page's worth of writing.

All hope was rapidly waning. Writer's block had seized me by the throat. Bereft of even a halfway decent idea, I decided to call it a night. But, ironically enough, it was at that precise moment when inspiration finally struck. I had something of an epiphany: I am not defined by the trips I take; I am not defined by hardships I've overcome. Neither my character nor my value can be reduced or adequately illustrated by a single event. Instead, I am a fusion of all my little penchants. I am that guy who watches reruns of *The Wonder Years*; I am that guy with bad taste in music (and so on and so forth). Of course, as I get older, I plan on making my mark, but for now, I am completely content with my humble, adolescent life. Bear in mind that I am only 17 years old. It would be shameful to take myself too seriously. Nothing I've done or seen is important enough to warrant further elaboration. In sum, then, I am a mere shopping list.