

Sample Essays

As much as any writing tips or guide will help you, sometimes the best way to get an idea of what you need to write and how you need to write it is to view some sample essays. That is exactly what this section will offer you, access to sample essays that have comments by school officials so you can see what each sample essay did well. This will help you integrate things into your work to make it the best it can be!

Sample Scholarship Essays

Sample #1

The Book that Made Me a Journalist

Prompt: *Describe a book that made a lasting impression on you and your life and why.*

It is 6 am on a hot day in July and I've already showered and eaten breakfast. I know that my classmates are all sleeping in and enjoying their summer break, but I don't envy them; I'm excited to start my day interning with a local newspaper doing investigative journalism. I work a typical 8-5 day during my summer vacation and despite the early mornings, nothing has made me happier. Although it wasn't clear to me then, looking back on my high school experiences and everything that led to me to this internship, I believe this path began with a particularly savvy teacher and a little book she gave me to read outside of class.

I was taking a composition class, and we were learning how to write persuasive essays. Up until that point, I had had average grades, but I was always a good writer and my teacher immediately recognized this. The first paper I wrote for the class was about my experience going to an Indian reservation located near my uncle's ranch in southwest Colorado. I wrote of the severe poverty experienced by the people on the reservation, and the lack of access to voting booths during the most recent election. After reading this short story, my teacher approached me and asked about my future plans. No one had ever asked me this, and I wasn't sure how to answer. I said I liked writing and I liked thinking about people who are different from myself. She gave me a book and told me that if I had time to read it, she thought it would be something I would enjoy. I was actually quite surprised that a high school teacher was giving me a book titled *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. It had never occurred to me that teachers would lie to students. The title intrigued me so much that on Friday night I found myself staying up almost all night reading, instead of going out with friends.

In short, the book discusses several instances in which typical American history classes do not tell the whole story. For example, the author addresses the way that American history classes do not usually address about the Vietnam War, even though it happened only a short time ago. This made me realize that we hadn't discussed the Vietnam War in my own history class! The book taught me that, like my story of the Indian reservation, there are always more stories beyond what we see on the surface and what we're taught in school. I was inspired to continue to tell these stories and to make that my career.

For my next article for the class, I wrote about the practice of my own high school suspending students, sometimes indefinitely, for seemingly minor offenses such as tardiness and smoking. I found that the number of suspensions had increased by 200% at my school in just three years, and also discovered that students who are suspended after only one offense often drop out and some later end up in prison. The article caused quite a stir. The administration of my school dismissed it, but it caught the attention of my local newspaper. A local journalist worked with me to publish an updated and more thoroughly researched version of my article in the local newspaper. The article forced the school board to revisit their "zero tolerance" policy as well as reinstate some indefinitely suspended students. I won no favors with the administration and it was a difficult time for me, but it was also thrilling to see how one article can have such a direct effect on people's lives. It reaffirmed my commitment to a career in journalism.

This is why I'm applying for this scholarship. Your organization has been providing young aspiring journalists with funds to further their skills and work to uncover the untold stories in our communities

that need to be reported. I share your organization's vision of working towards a more just and equitable world by uncovering stories of abuse of power. I have already demonstrated this commitment through my writing in high school and I look forward to pursuing a BA in this field at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor. With your help, I will hone my natural instincts and inherent writing skills. I will become a better and more persuasive writer and I will learn the ethics of professional journalism.

I sincerely appreciate the committee's time in evaluating my application and giving me the opportunity to tell my story. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

(This sample is also presented with helpful notes immediately following the second college application sample.)

Sample #2

Planners and Searchers

Prompt: *In 600 words or less, please tell us about yourself and why you are applying for this scholarship. Please be clear about how this scholarship will help you achieve your personal and professional goals.*

Being African, I recognize Africa's need for home-grown talent in the form of "planners" (assistants with possible solutions) and "searchers" (those with desperate need) working towards international development. I represent both. Coming from Zimbabwe my greatest challenge is in helping to improve the livelihoods of developing nations through sustainable development and good governance principles. The need for policy-makers capable of employing cross-jurisdictional, and cross-disciplinary strategies to solve complex challenges cannot be under-emphasized; hence my application to this scholarship program.

After graduating from Africa University with an Honors degree in Sociology and Psychology, I am now seeking scholarship support to study in the United States at the Master's level. My interest in democracy, elections, constitutionalism and development stems from my lasting interest in public policy issues. Accordingly, my current research interests in democracy and ethnic diversity require a deeper understanding of legal processes of constitutionalism and governance. As a Master's student in the US, I intend to write articles on these subjects from the perspective of someone born, raised, and educated in Africa. I will bring a unique and much-needed perspective to my graduate program in the United States, and I will take the technical and theoretical knowledge from my graduate program back with me to Africa to further my career goals as a practitioner of good governance and community development.

To augment my theoretical understanding of governance and democratic practices, I worked with the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) as a Programs Assistant in the Monitoring and Observation department. This not only enhanced my project management skills, but also developed my skills in research and producing communication materials. ZESN is Zimbabwe's biggest election observation organization, and I had the responsibility of monitoring the political environment and producing monthly publications on human rights issues and electoral processes. These publications were disseminated to various civil society organizations, donors and other stakeholders. Now I intend to develop my career in order to enhance Africa's capacity to advocate, write and vote for representative constitutions.

I also participated in a fellowship program at Africa University, where I gained greater insight into social development by teaching courses on entrepreneurship, free market economics, and development in needy communities. I worked with women in rural areas of Zimbabwe to setup income-generating projects such as the jatropha soap-making project. Managing such a project gave me great insight into how many simple initiatives can transform lives.

Your organization has a history of awarding scholarships to promising young students from the developing world in order to bring knowledge, skills and leadership abilities to their home communities. I have already done some of this work but I want to continue, and with your assistance, I can. The multidisciplinary focus of the development programs I am applying to in the US will provide me with the necessary skills to creatively address the economic and social development challenges and develop sound public policies for Third World countries. I thank you for your time and consideration for this prestigious award.

Sample #3

Saving the Manatees

Prompt: *Please give the committee an idea of who you are and why you are the perfect candidate for the scholarship.*

It is a cliché to say that I've always known what I want to do with my life, but in my case it happens to be true. When I first visited Sea World as a young child, I fell in love with marine animals in general. Specifically, I felt drawn to manatees. I was compelled by their placid and friendly nature. I knew then and there that I wanted to dedicate my life to protecting these beautiful creatures.

Since that day in Orlando, I have spent much of my spare time learning everything there is to know about manatees. As a junior high and high school student, I attempted to read scholarly articles on manatees from scientific journals. I annoyed my friends and family with scientific facts about manatees-- such as that they are close relatives of elephants--at the dinner table. I watched documentaries, and even mapped their migration pattern on a wall map my sister gave me for my birthday.

When I was chosen from hundreds of applicants to take part in a summer internship with Sea World, I fell even more in love with these gentle giants. I also learned a very important and valuable lesson: prior to this internship, I had imagined becoming a marine biologist, working directly with the animals in their care both in captivity and in the wild. However, during the internship, I discovered that this is not where my strengths lie. Unfortunately, I am not a strong student in science or math, which are required skills to become a marine biologist. Although this was a disheartening realization, I found that I possess other strengths can still be of great value to manatees and other endangered marine mammals: my skills as a public relations manager and communicator. During the internship, I helped write new lessons and presentations for elementary school groups visiting the park and developed a series of fun activities for children to help them learn more about manatees as well as conservation of endangered species in general. I also worked directly with the park's conservation and communication director, and helped develop a new local outreach program designed to educate Floridians on how to avoid hitting a manatee when boating. My supervisor recommended me to the Save the Manatee Foundation so in addition to my full-time internship at Sea World, I interned with the Save the Manatee Foundation part-time. It was there that I witnessed the manatee rescue and conservation effort first hand, and worked directly with the marine biologists in developing fund-raising and awareness-raising campaigns. I found that the foundation's social media presence was lacking, and, using skills I learned from Sea World, I helped them raise over \$5,000 through a Twitter challenge, which we linked to the various social media outlets of the World Wildlife Federation.

While I know that your organization typically awards scholarships to students planning to major in disciplines directly related to conservation such as environmental studies or zoology, I feel that the public relations side of conservation is just as important as the actual work done on the ground. Whether it is reducing one's carbon footprint, or saving the manatees, these are efforts that, in order to be successful, must involve the larger public. In fact, the relative success of the environmental movement today is largely due to a massive global public relations campaign that turned environmentalism from something scientific and obscure into something that is both fashionable and accessible to just about anyone. However, that success is being challenged more than ever before--especially here in the US, where an equally strong anti-environmental public relations campaign has taken hold. Therefore, conservationists need to start getting more creative.

I want to be a part of this renewed effort and use my natural abilities as a communicator to push back against the rather formidable forces behind the anti-environmentalist movement. I sincerely hope you will consider supporting this non-traditional avenue towards global sustainability and conservation. I have already been accepted to one of the most prestigious communications undergraduate programs in the country and I plan to minor in environmental studies. In addition, I maintain a relationship with my former supervisors at Save the Manatee and Sea World, who will be invaluable resources for finding employment upon graduation. I thank the committee for thinking outside the box in considering my application.

Sample College Application Essays

Sample #1

Prompt: *Please submit a one-page, single-spaced essay that explains why you have chosen State University and your particular major(s), department(s) or program(s).*

State University and I possess a common vision. I, like State University, constantly work to explore the limits of nature by exceeding expectations. Long an amateur scientist, it was this drive that brought me to the University of Texas for its Student Science Training Program in 2013. Up to that point science had been my private past time, one I had yet to explore on anyone else's terms. My time at UT, however, changed that. Participating for the first time in a full-length research experiment at that level, I felt more alive, more engaged, than I ever had before. Learning the complex dynamics between electromagnetic induction and optics in an attempt to solve one of the holy grails of physics, gravitational-waves, I could not have been more pleased. Thus vindicated, my desire to further formalize my love of science brings me to State University. Thanks to this experience, I know now better than ever that State University is my future, because through it I seek another, permanent, opportunity to follow my passion for science and engineering.

In addition to just science, I am drawn to State University for other reasons. I strive to work with the diverse group of people that State University wholeheartedly accommodates – and who also share my mindset. They, like me, are there because State University respects the value of diversity. I know from personal experience that in order to achieve the trust, honesty, and success that State University values, new people are needed to create a respectful environment for these values. I feel that my background as an American Sikh will provide an innovative perspective in the university's search for knowledge while helping it to develop a basis for future success. And that, truly, is the greatest success I can imagine.

This emphasis on diversity can also be found in the variety of specialized departments found at State University. On top of its growing cultural and ethnic diversity, State University is becoming a master at creating a niche for every student. However, this does not isolate students by forcing them to work with only those individuals who follow their specific discipline. Instead, it is the seamless interaction between facilities that allows each department, from engineering to programming, to create a real learning environment that profoundly mimics the real world. Thus, State University is not just the perfect place for me, it is the only place for me. Indeed, having the intellectual keenness to absorb every ounce of knowledge presented through my time in the IB program, I know that I can contribute to State University as it continues to cultivate a scholarly climate that encourages intellectual curiosity.

At the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at State University, I will be able to do just that. In a department where education and research are intermixed, I can continue to follow the path that towards scientific excellence. Long-mesmerized by hobbies like my work with the FIRST Robotics team, I believe State University would be the best choice to continue to nurture my love for electrical and computer engineering. I have only scratched the surface in this ever evolving field but know that the technological potential is limitless. Likewise, I feel that my time at State University would make my potential similarly limitless.

This is a picture-perfect response to a university-specific essay prompt.

What makes it particularly effective is not just its cohesive structure and elegant style but also the level of details the author uses in the response. By directly identifying the specific aspects of the university that are attractive to the writer, the writer is able to clearly and effectively show not only his commitment to his studies but – perhaps more importantly – the level of thought he put into his decision to apply. Review committees know what generic responses look like so specificity sells.

Sample #2

Prompt: *What motivates you?*

For as long as I can remember, I have dreamed of science. Where others see the engineering, experimentation, and presentation of science as a chore, I only see excitement. Even as a child I constantly sought it out, first on television with Bill Nye and The Mythbusters, then later in person in every museum exhibit I could find. Science in all its forms fascinated me, but science projects in particular were a category all to themselves. To me, science projects were a special joy that only grew with time. In fact, it was this continued fascination for hands-on science that brought me years later to the sauna that is the University of Alabama in mid-June. Participating in the Student Science Training Program and working in their lab made me feel like a kid in a candy store. Just the thought of participating in a project at this level of scientific rigor made me forget that this was supposed to be my summer break and I spent the first day eagerly examining every piece of equipment.

Even at first, when the whole research group sat there doing rote calculations and others felt like they were staring down the barrel of defeated purpose, I remained enthusiastic. Time and time again I reminded myself of that famous phrase "great effort leads to great rewards," and sure enough, soon my aspirations began to be met. This shift in attitude also coincided with a shift in location: from the computer desk to the laser lab. It was finally time to get my hands dirty.

Now things began to get really interesting. During the experimentation phase of the project, I spent the majority of my waking hours in the lab – and I enjoyed every minute of it. From debriefing with my coordinator in the morning to checking and rechecking results well into the afternoon, I was on cloud nine all day, every day. I even loved the electric feeling of anxiety as I waited for the results. Most of all, though, I loved the pursuit of science itself. Before I knew it, I was well into the seventh week and had completed my first long-term research experiment.

In the end, although the days were long and hard, my work that summer filled me with pride. That pride has confirmed and reinvigorated my love for science. I felt more alive, more engaged, in that lab than I have anywhere else, and I am committed to returning. I have always dreamed of science but since that summer, since my experiment, I have dreamed only of the future. To me, medical science is the future and through it I seek another, permanent, opportunity to follow my passion. After all, to follow your passion is, literally, a dream come true.

In addition to its use of clear, demonstrative language, there is one thing that makes this an effective essay: focus. Indeed, notice that, although the question is broad, the answer is narrow. This is crucial. It can be easy to wax poetic on a topic and, in the process, take on too much. Instead, by highlighting one specific aspect of his personality, the author is able to give the reader a taste of his who he is without overwhelming him or simply reproducing his résumé. This emphasis gives the reader the opportunity to learn who the writer is on his terms and makes it a truly compelling application essay.

Sample Scholarship Essays

Sample #1

The Book that Made Me a Journalist

Prompt: Describe a book that made a lasting impression on you and your life and why.

It is 6 am on a hot day in July and I've already showered and eaten breakfast. I know that my classmates are all sleeping in and enjoying their summer break, but I don't envy them; I'm excited to start my day interning with a local newspaper doing investigative journalism. I work a typical 8-5 day during my summer vacation and despite the early mornings, nothing has made me happier. Although it wasn't clear to me then, looking back on my high school experiences and everything that led to me to this internship, I believe this path began with a particularly savvy teacher and a little book she gave me to read outside of class.

Comment [JET1]: Shows the author is willing to work hard.

Comment [JET2]: The last sentence of the introduction should be both a thesis and address the prompt.

I was taking a composition class, and we were learning how to write persuasive essays. Up until that point, I had had average grades, but I was always a good writer and my teacher immediately recognized this. The first paper I wrote for the class was about my experience going to an Indian reservation located near my uncle's ranch in southwest Colorado. I wrote of the severe poverty experienced by the people on the reservation, and the lack of access to voting booths during the most recent election. After reading this short story, my teacher approached me and asked about my future plans. No one had ever asked me this, and I wasn't sure how to answer. I said I liked writing and I liked thinking about people who are different from myself. She gave me a book and told me that if I had time to read it, she thought it would be something I would enjoy. I was actually quite surprised that a high school teacher was giving me a book titled Lies My Teacher Told Me. It had never occurred to me that teachers would lie to students. The title intrigued me so much that on Friday night I found myself staying up almost all night reading, instead of going out with friends.

Comment [JET3]: This introduces the subject of the essay: the book that had a profound effect on the author.

In short, the book discusses several instances in which typical American history classes do not tell the whole story. For example, the author addresses the way that American history classes do not usually address about the Vietnam War, even though it happened only a short time ago. This made me realize that we hadn't discussed the Vietnam War in my own history class! The book taught me that, like my story of the Indian reservation, there are always more stories beyond what we see on the surface and what we're taught in school. I was inspired to continue to tell these stories and to make that my career.

Comment [JET4]: Answers the prompt by describing the book and explaining why it had such a profound effect.

For my next article for the class, I wrote about the practice of my own high school suspending students, sometimes indefinitely, for seemingly minor offenses such as tardiness and smoking. I found that the number of suspensions had increased by 200% at my school in just three years, and also discovered that students who are suspended after only one offense often drop out and some later end up in prison. The article caused quite a stir. The administration of my school dismissed it, but it caught the attention of my local newspaper. A local journalist worked with me to publish an updated and more thoroughly researched version of my article in the local newspaper. The article forced the school board to revisit their "zero tolerance" policy as well as

Comment [JET5]: Highlights an accomplishment to demonstrate what you are capable of to the selection committee.

reinstate some indefinitely suspended students. I won no favors with the administration and it was a difficult time for me, but it was also thrilling to see how one article can have such a direct effect on people's lives. It reaffirmed my commitment to a career in journalism.

Comment [JET6]: Shows impact on community.

Comment [JET7]: Demonstrates overcoming obstacles.

This is why I'm applying for this scholarship. Your organization has been providing young aspiring journalists with funds to further their skills and work to uncover the untold stories in our communities that need to be reported. I share your organization's vision of working towards a more just and equitable world by uncovering stories of abuse of power. I have already demonstrated this commitment through my writing in high school and I look forward to pursuing a BA in this field at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor. With your help, I will hone my natural instincts and inherent writing skills. I will become a better and more persuasive writer and I will learn the ethics of professional journalism.

Comment [JET8]: Shows the author has researched and understands the organization's mission and goals and why the author is a good fit for the scholarship.

I sincerely appreciate the committee's time in evaluating my application and giving me the opportunity to tell my story. I look forward to hearing from you soon.