

Curtis High School
Cohort Group Meeting # 2/Activity # 3
WRITING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Directions:

Most, if not all colleges require a PERSONAL STATEMENT paper as part of the admissions process. In addition, potential employers often require or expect such a document to be provided when you apply for a job.

Today you will write a ROUGH DRAFT of such a statement, one that will form the basis of future “personal statements” you will write as you move into the college/career world after high school. This rough draft will also help you explore your own unique talents and abilities.

Please complete the steps below, and read the sample “personal statements” on the back of this sheet, before writing your personal statement on your own paper. Write as much as you can in the time allotted, and turn in what you have written with your portfolio at the end of the cohort meeting today. Since it is a rough draft, do not worry about spelling, grammar, correctness, or cross-outs. Just focus on getting your major ideas down on paper; you will have time to revise and refine your personal statement during future cohort meetings.

There is no one correct way to write a personal statement, but in general those who will read your statement are looking for two important things:

- 1) HOW and WHY the things that you describe have shaped your attitude, character, and academic goals, and
- 2) evidence of your potential that might not be reflected through your grades and extracurricular activities.

STEP I –BRAINSTORM

Before you begin to write, jot down ideas in response to the following prompts at the top of your paper:

- * Characteristics that best describe you as a person, a student, a worker?
- * Things/people/experiences you value most in the world, and why you value them?
- * A challenge faced?
- * A character-defining moment?
- * A personal hardship or barrier overcome?
- * A significant experience/achievement/risk you’ve taken or ethical dilemma?
- * Issues of personal, local, national, or international concern and its important to you?
- * A person who has had a significant influence on you?
- * Life experiences that have made you who you are?
- * Examples and stories from your life that demonstrate your character and/or helped to shape it?

STEP II – CHOOSING A FOCUS and WRITING A ROUGH DRAFT

Once you make a list of possibilities, choose a few of the ones you feel are most important to who you are as a person. Also, take time to read through the sample “personal statements on the back of this sheet, for more ideas.

Then, begin writing a rough draft. Write for the rest of the cohort meeting, and try to get your major ideas down in paragraph form. If you finish one idea, go on to the next. Don’t worry about the draft being polished and completed – rough drafts are just that: ROUGH. Do, however, try to get as many ideas as possible down in rough form before the end of the cohort meeting today. **Put your rough draft in your portfolio and turn in at the end of today’s meeting.**

SAMPLE PERSONAL STATEMENT # 1

Of all the characters that I’ve “met” through books and movies, two stand out as people that I most want to emulate. They are Atticus Finch from *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Dr. Archibald “Moonlight” Graham from *Field of Dreams*. They appeal to me because they embody what I strive to be. They are influential people in small towns

who have a direct positive effect on those around them. I, too, plan to live in a small town after graduating from college, and that positive effect is something I must give in order to be satisfied with my life.

Both Mr. Finch and Dr. Graham are strong supporting characters in wonderful stories. They symbolize good, honesty, and wisdom. When the story of my town is written I want to symbolize those things. The base has been formed for me to live a productive, helpful life. As an Eagle Scout, I represent those things that Mr. Finch and Dr. Graham represent. In the child/adolescent world I am Mr. Finch and Dr. Graham, but soon I'll be entering the adult world, a world in which I'm not yet prepared to lead.

I'm quite sure that as teenagers Atticus Finch and Moonlight Graham often wondered what they could do to help others. They probably emulated someone who they had seen live a successful life. They saw someone like my grandfather, 40-year president of our hometown bank, enjoy a lifetime of leading, sharing, and giving. I have seen him spend his Christmas Eves taking gifts of food and joy to indigent families. Often when his bank could not justify a loan to someone in need, my grandfather made the loan from his own pocket. He is a real-life Moonlight Graham, a man who has shown me that characters like Dr. Graham and Mr. Finch do much more than elicit tears and smiles from readers and movie watchers. Through him and others in my family I feel I have acquired the values and the burning desire to benefit others that will form the foundation for a great life. I also feel that that foundation is not enough. I do not yet have the sophistication, knowledge, and wisdom necessary to succeed as I want to in the adult world. I feel that Harvard, above all others, can guide me toward the life of greatness that will make me the Attacus Finch of my town.

This essay can be found at:

"Writing the Successful College Application Essay." *Quintessential Careers Homepage*. 24 October 2005
<http://www.quintcareers.com/collegegate10.html>

Sample Personal Essay # 2

"A leader is not determined by how good or bad they are but by how much they help those who are not as good as them," anonymous. This quote has helped me through many trials and I believe that it will continue to help me in the future. Hello, my name is Bryanne Calkins and I am a dedicated young lady filled with varied interests. One of my main qualities is that I am a hard worker, and I hate to turn in anything if I feel that it is not done to the best of my ability. This has pushed me to exceed in school, taking college math courses by my sophomore year. Being exceedingly dedicated is a large part of who I am, and if I start something I finish it no matter what. The two main activities that I am involved in are volleyball and pep band. Volleyball has been extremely valuable to me as it has given me confidence in who I am. Pep band, in contrast, has brought the leader out in me. This is because the pep band is student run, and as the president, I believe that it is my responsibility to make sure that the pep band is taken seriously. Being busy may be a large part of me, but one of the most important things to me is my friends. If I make a good friend, I hate to lose them. To me a good friend is like a treasure that is more valuable than anything else in the world, and I do my best to stay connected with my friends. My favorite thing about me would have to be that I am creative. One of my favorite things to do is take pictures and then put them into my scrapbook. Putting together projects, such as posters, Powerpoints or videos, were I get the chance to show my creativeness are my favorite projects. Nonetheless, my favorite thing is to be outside. I love going hunting with my dad, whether it is for deer, bear, or any other animal. Going on picnics, boat rides, fishing trips, or anything else are other ways that I enjoy being outside with my family. In summary, I am a dedicated, hard working, creative, outdoors girl who treasures friendships.

This essay can be found at:

"MEHS Student Portfolios." *Mt. Edgecumbe High School Portfolio Page*. Nov. 2004. Mt. Edgecumbe High School 24 Oct 2005
<http://www.mehs.educ.state.ak.us/portfolios/portfolio.html>