

College Admission Sample Essay #1

I wake up every morning to its rich scent. My parents cannot start the day without it. I often wait in line and pay \$3.85 to buy it. The senior lodge at my school is littered with empty Starbucks cups containing only the remnants of skim lattes and mocha frappuccinos. Coffee is a staple of American life that many take for granted, but few take the time to think about how they get it.

In the rural village of Cadillo in the Dominican Republic, the people's livelihood depends on coffee. Rows of green coffee plants line steep hills and scatter the countryside. The people there pick and sell the coffee beans but receive little profit for their hard work.

During the week I spent in Cadillo, I witnessed the poverty these coffee farmers endure. Their homes are small and dark, furnished with only a few wooden chairs, a table and a few beds. There is no electricity in Cadillo and I especially remember the emptiness of the village at night, when I could only vaguely see the faces I illuminated with my flashlight. I can still see the shiny metal bowl in which they used to bathe, and Jose, a neighbor who was missing several teeth because like most people in Cadillo, he lacks a toothbrush.

These images still burn in my mind, but it was the people of Cadillo more than anything who opened my eyes to the importance of social justice. Before I met them it was just a concept I heard about a few times a year at church when a missionary would come to speak about the poor people in Africa or South America and explain why it was our duty to help them. These people were far removed. A small fraction of my weekly allowance, once a year, and I could remove them from my mind. After living for a week with a family in Cadillo, however, I understood for the first time that it was real people leading these lives.

The family I stayed with there took me in as part of their family and gave me a taste of their life. I remember my Dominican father, Barilla's face as he played guitar and how he laughed kindly when I struggled to play the chords he had taught me. I could feel the warmth and sincerity of my Dominican mother, Marsela, when she sat and talked with me about my home and family after a long day of work. And I will always remember how much fun I had playing catch or blowing bubbles with their two children, Jendi and Andisco.

I will not forget the images I saw or the people I encountered. They made me realize that my work does not end with the school I helped build, the holes I helped dig, or the roads I helped widen. They showed me that there are real, wonderful people being treated unjustly and that I cannot sit back and let that happen. I cannot be silent when I know that people are getting rich off the coffee Barilla receives so little for. It is my responsibility to be active, to teach what I have learned, to fight injustices in my community and the world.

I am not sure if I will ever visit Cadillo again but I do know that I can continue what I started there. I can tell people what I saw and spread awareness about injustice in the world. I can volunteer in my own community to help make changes at home and fundraise to aid third world countries. And tomorrow, after I wake up to the smell of fresh coffee, I can make a difference.

College Admission Sample Essay #2

All eyes were focused on me. This was it. The tension had been building up to this point, and I knew there was no way out. I had gotten myself into this predicament, and I was the only one that could get myself out of it. There was nobody to turn to, for they were all waiting for my final move. I had never felt so alone, so isolated.

I thumbed through my cards for the fourth consecutive time, and I could still not decide which one to throw. I glanced up from my cards and caught a glimpse of each player. I immediately felt the intensity of my brother's eyes glaring at me from across the table. He did not provide me with the support and reassurance I was looking for from my partner. I shifted my eyes to the right. My mother, having just discarded a five of clubs and seeing that it was of no use to me, was sipping coffee with a carefree grin of relief. Then I peered directly at the most intimidating canasta player I have ever encountered. Great Grandma Rose was calmly humming a tuneless tune which added to her enigma. As this crafty eighty-eight year old lady squinted at her cards through her bifocals, I knew that time was running out; I had to make my decision. The most obvious choice was to discard the king of spades for which I had no use, but I was afraid that she was waiting for this card. My alternative was to break up my meld and throw the six of clubs, a card which I felt somewhat safe in throwing.

In the midst of my despair, great grandma delivered the final blow. She stopped humming and uttered these dreaded words: "It only hurts for a minute."

She could not have dug a knife any deeper. My brother's eyes were flaring with tension, I had complete control over his fate, and I knew our team unity was riding on the outcome of my decision. I therefore decided to play defensively and throw the six of clubs. No sooner had my discard settled on top of the pile than my great grandmother's hand darted out to snatch up the stack of cards and my brother simultaneously belted out a scream. "The six of clubs? How could you throw the six of clubs!"

I wanted to ask him if the king of spades would have been any better, but I knew a rebuttal was useless. I knew he would get over it soon enough, and like Grandma Rose says, "It only hurts for a minute!"

After my great grandma laid down her meld and sorted her cards, the game continued (and so did her humming). Although we lost that particular hand, my brother and I miraculously came back to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. As we reveled in our triumph (my brother had now forgiven me for discarding the six of clubs), I could not resist directing my newly acquired quote at our opponents, who were mulling over their defeat. "Well, I have only one thing to say." My smile was so big that I could feel my cheeks stretching. "It only hurts for a minute."

Although my great grandmother had no intention of being profound, this quote actually embodies an important concept. Many people spend so much time worrying about the infinite possibilities that may result from any decision they make that they actually never make a decision at all. Although it is necessary to weigh the options and consider various viewpoints, excessive deliberation can often be detrimental. From personal experience, I have found it is usually better to think about the choices and come to a firm decision rather than to prolong the problem and perhaps create a new one by avoiding a commitment one way or the other. The best course of action is to make the wisest choice possible with the available information and then to make the most out of your initial decision. Even if in retrospect you see a better alternative, you can always pursue a new direction based on what you have learned through this experience. Surprisingly, what may at first appear to be failure may often spark an unforeseen success. I have learned not to let undue hesitation hinder my ability to take advantage of opportunities. After all, as my great grandmother so eloquently remarked during those heated canasta games, "It only hurts for a minute!"