

Prompt: Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, please share your story. (650 word max)

For as long as I can remember, I have been hopelessly in love with words. I am in love with their liberty, how they stand proudly and alone. I am in love with their harmony, how they intermingle and wed, forming unlimited combinations of meaning. I am in love with their wild nature, how they refuse to belong to any one person, but instead hold different value for each individual. I am in love with their aesthetics, their sounds, their associations. And, most deeply, I am in love with how they have come to love me back.

Of course, words did not always love me back. Theirs was a love that I had to earn. I first realized the power of language as a small child. I was scanning *The Giving Tree*, tracing Silverstein's opening line countless times: *Once there was a tree, and she loved a little boy*. They flowed effortlessly, a chain of mysterious creatures that stuck with me. I sensed, even at a young age, there was something deeper in them than a *boy* and a *tree*. They possessed a beauty that could be harnessed and then expressed.

As I grew older, I began to find special significance in certain words. A word like *fascinating* rooted itself in *nature* and *science*, *exciting* brushed against *waves* and *wind*, and *comfort* laid itself softly next to *blanket* and *book*. *Fascinating*, *exciting*, and *comfort* were mine to use as I pleased. By degrees, I began to develop a unique relationship with words; I shaped them, and in turn allowed them to shape me.

Along the way, my favorite authors have demonstrated grace with words. Ever since Annie Dillard pointed out to me that *sycamore* is, for its consonance, the most intrinsically beautiful word in English, I have adored the sound of it. My ears have unfolded to the great abundance of lyrical words like *pulse*, *colossal*, and *spindling*. David Foster Wallace taught me

about the elegant angularity of the world through his words. A boy can sit “consciously congruent” to his chair, his fingers can “mate” into a “mirrored series of the letter X.” They all contributed in their own way: Hemingway handed over *caroming*, Plath dropped *annihilate*, and Salinger tossed *swell* my way. These are people of diverse backgrounds and vocabularies whose words have changed me.

Without doubt, I have built a deeply personal bond with words through my own writing. I’ve felt the rush of dovetailing my pen off precise words. I’ve felt the heavy unease of placing the wrong word in the wrong place, and the triumph of finding the one that fit. I’ve re-read, with joy, pages covered in words that I had forgotten I’d written. Over time, I’ve developed a style – a distinct and thriving society of language that is all my own. It’s no secret that I write somewhat indulgently; I favor the showy words, the ones that unfurl proudly from the middle of a page. Words that glimmer like *clinquant*, arc like *conchoidal*, and blaze like *fulgurant*. They are exact – written sparingly, and by daring hands – meant to be used only once in a lifetime.

I love words for their artistic value and intrinsic beauty. They are woven through the fabric of who I am, and with them I communicate my innermost thoughts. This past summer, I wrote my first short story. Through the writing process, the words had been unstoppable. They whispered sweet beginnings to me in an art museum; they laid in jumbled shreds upon notepaper; they jolted me from bed in moments of dazed insight; and, finally, they formed a plot. When it was finished, I was moved by the story I had created. From the title to the final page, it composed a love note, addressed to language from me. (Word Count: 634)