

## UC Personal Statement Sample A

### Prompt 1 (542 words)

I do not live in a clichéd white picket fenced home, glazed with the aroma of fresh pie; my mother does not greet me in an apron, and my father does not come in cheerfully through the door after his hard day at work to give me a kiss on the forehead. My world and my home consist of an alcoholic father and a mother who stresses out incessantly in vain attempts to keep my siblings and I sane. I have had to withstand myriad drunken monologues, countless arguments, and abject violence in the form of witnessing my dad breaking my moms arm in front of me. I have anxiously tried to get out the door, to avoid my fathers uncontrollable inebriated rage, accompanied by the sounds of my younger brothers trumpet being thrown against the window and the television shattering into pieces. Nights like that were alarmingly frequent, and continued until I was 13; it was in that year my dad was incarcerated for domestic violence. The shift in my world was immediate, but not improved. My living room, the host to the most turbulent encounters between my parents, was now replaced with hostile courtrooms, complete with judges who sat like menacing tyrants and lawyers who hovered over me like flies. I was forced to attend therapy once a week in an office with dirty carpets, smelly beanbag chairs, and harsh fluorescent lighting. Throughout this abhorrent process, my father stopped drinking and was sober for almost a year. Unfortunately, we are now back to square one and the drunken soliloquies still occur; as a matter of fact, he just performed one for me, hovering in the doorway of my bedroom as I type this essay.

Although my world has not been ideal, I am ironically grateful for it has inspired me to delve into my aspirations and persevere through treacherous obstacles. In dealing with adversity I have been able to look at my world through a different lens and redefine both myself and my concept of family. My dream is to become a psychologist in order to help thousands of individuals overcome their own horrific obstacles. Experiencing personal hardships myself has influenced my desire to assist those living in unfortunate, harmful circumstances the way I have. My future office will be a welcoming environment, and my goal is to help others rebuild and redefine their worlds just as I have done, and will continue to do for myself. For me nothing could be more fulfilling than changing someone's life for the better. Living in an apathetic society in which people no longer care about one another, that has inspired me to be the change.

I did not choose my world, but now I know that I can choose my reaction to it, and strive to overcome. Despite my dysfunctional surroundings, I refuse to be a victim, or use my upbringing as an excuse not to succeed. In truth, my world has been the motive behind my incessant battle to attain greatness and the goals I wish to achieve in my life. I can earnestly assert that my life has been meaningful and purposeful, and will only grow with my dedication to excellence and my fearlessness, all due to my tumultuous world.

### Prompt 2 (433 words)

I have lived in unfavorable circumstances my whole life and as a result I have obtained a blazing strength that writhes inside me like fire. Many individuals abide by their own sense of strength claiming it to be profound; however, my strength is far beyond. My strength has been hard won. It did not come easy or transpire out of thin air. It grew from the constant belittling I would experience on a daily basis and was fed by the alcoholic tirades of my father. Most teenage girls live to please their father's, tip toeing around the surface to avoid any confrontation and evading their father's disapproval. I on the other hand, have never hesitated to speak up for myself; I step on land mines to let my voice be heard. The strength I possess evolved from the hardships I faced and continues to develop with each new obstacle or challenge I encounter.

I was fourteen years old when my father got in my face and refused to let me out of the house after putting my family in danger. He stood over me as if he had absolute control over me because I was not six feet tall or a man, yet in that moment I felt triumph and realized how strong I could be. I refused to

be minimized and disparaged, and stood up for myself and for my family. I have since not allowed my own father to talk down to me or diminish my power as an individual; I will not allow anything to stand in the path of my potential.

I am exceptionally proud of myself that I am seventeen-year-old girl able to fend for myself and to speak out for what I believe in. Women in my culture are often denigrated and classified as the weaker sex but I challenge that label with my own menacing strength as an evident contradiction. I boast about my strength because it allows me to accomplish and achieve my endeavors, no matter how arduous the path may be. I am not fazed or distracted when I set my mind to something I am passionate about. I fight for what I believe in, paving the way to my ultimate aspirations.

My strength has empowered me to defeat the barriers that life inevitably brings and has set the stage for a new chapter in my life. I am composed of ardent ambition and powerful strength that not only will flourish in college but also will indisputably contribute to the campus I set foot on. I will achieve my greatest excellence through my strength.

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## UC Personal Statement Sample B

### Prompt 1 (433 words)

My world shattered completely the moment the monitor keeping my father alive ceased to beat. Once the unnerving sound that anchored me to my hope stopped, I did too. After months of the hospital being my home, after countless numbers of visitor's passes and elevator rides, and after an innumerable amount of nights spent in the waiting room, I returned to a normal that wasn't so *normal* anymore. My father was the glue that held my family together. He was the one person in my life that I couldn't live without. When he left, a part of me went with him. Slowly, I noticed myself becoming drawn inwards; introverted to the point where I didn't even recognize myself. I was no longer the gregarious child I used to be. At that point, I would've rather curled up in a corner and read medical encyclopedias than have gone outside and played. I started to forget about friends, realizing that the only real friend I had was my father. I was hidden from everyone: my family, my friends, and the rest of the world. I made myself into an inconspicuous child, so small that I almost stopped existing.

My father's departure from my life drew me into the world of medicine, even after I stopped living in it. My seclusion from the world combined with my father's abrupt departure helped me realize my true passion: helping others. I became fascinated by the world behind the ominous "restricted access" doors. Nothing could quench my insatiable desire to help those stuck behind the doors except for the act of helping, itself. I aspire to succeed at my goal. This life-ruining disease, this cancer, should cease to exist; and I dream to be a part of the whole that accomplishes that goal. I want to be the girl who was known for how she helped put this monster to rest. I want to know that I played a role in assuring that what tormented my family will never go near another.

By now, I have made a promise not only to myself, but also to my father to work to the best of my ability to aid others, no matter the consequences. I know better than to worry about trivial things such as salary and ease when the true satisfaction comes in knowing that you have helped put a family to peace. I am taking what my family and I never had and trying to give it to those who have a chance. In the end, my greatest loss became my strongest motivation, for which I am grateful.

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## UC Personal Statement Sample C

### Prompt 1 (523 words)

On a cool October morning, I walked into my AP Literature class expecting the usual lesson when my teacher announced that we would be assigned a new book titled “The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka. As my teacher, Mrs. Caruso, gave us introductory notes on the story and the narrative of Kafka’s life, I anticipated an interesting read. When I took the book home and began reading, I found it impossible to put down. I tore through the book in a couple of hours and I appreciated its timeless, vital themes and sublime prose. After much reflection and contemplation of this story and its multiple theses and implications, I realized that this literary classic, and more generally, this literature course, had changed my life by shifting my intellectual paradigm.

I projected myself into the life of Gregor Samsa and considered our similarities. Gregor worked as a traveling salesman to please and support his parents; however, he was miserable and was dying a slow, torturous death. Like Gregor, I was determined to please my parents so I had set a course to become a pharmacist. I had taken demanding AP classes and spent countless hours studying and planning courses and schedules to prepare myself for my goal. As I was progressing through my classes and semesters I had received hints and little indicators that this was not what I wanted to do. However, I was caught up trying to please my parents.

After a few months of this AP Literature course, I began to perceive myself differently. I realized that through literature, I was able to discover new connections between myself, others, and the world around me. During our discussions of the works we read in class, I was able to express my thoughts and feelings regarding the authors’ ideas and themes and how they related to my own life. After discussing these reads with my classmates, I found that my peers had been making personal connections with these works as well. After four years of high school, I finally felt connected to both my studies and my classmates. I no longer felt alone.

With this new revelation, I had found what I’d truly be happy doing for the rest of my life. I abandoned the idea of becoming a pharmacist and I knew that I now wanted to teach literature, first at the high school level and eventually at a college or university. Literature’s greatest value is that it encourages empathy and promotes genuine connections with our fellow human beings. As an educator, I will be able to share literature’s lessons and values with my students and in doing so, I hope to help them feel and understand that they are not alone. Like Mrs. Caruso, I want to help students understand that they can authentically connect with others.

Unlike Gregor Samsa, I am taking control of my own life and striving for what will make me fulfilled and happy. My future is filled with classes, lectures, and discussions on novels, short stories, essays, poems, and plays that I have yet to discover and I look forward to continuing my educational and literary journey.

### Prompt 2 (498 words)

As I walk into the band room every school day, I am greeted by the beating of drums into a new, yet familiar, world. But instead of meeting with the drumline in the band room on a school day, we met at Granada Hills Charter High School for the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Highlander Marching Band Competition on Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Our nerves were in a frenzy; Grant High School’s drumline had won second place two years in a row in this competition, but this year would be different. After our performance, I was confident we had performed to the best of our ability. As award time came around, we would find out if we performed the best in our division.

I stood with the leadership of our band and color guard. The MC began to announce the winners of our division for the percussion section. As the assistant drum major and the drum captain, I leaned forward and listened intently. Third and second place had been announced and Grant High School still had not been called. A sense of panic then struck me; either we won first place or we didn’t place at all. My

heart began pounding hard and fast. As the anxiety in me was reaching a breaking point, the MC announced that Grant High School had won first place. I wanted to scream out in joy and excitement, but I kept my composure and stepped up to salute. The award was then presented to me and I couldn't contain my happiness. I accepted the award and held it up high for my drum mates to see. They cheered loudly from the stands and I smiled as tears began to fill my eyes.

Every school year, I spend two to four hours every day, five days a week, practicing in band and in drumline. With band being such a big part of my life, I've still learned to be dedicated and determined both musically and academically. As the leader of the drumline, it's a necessity for me to know how to communicate and work well with others. I've learned patience, kindness, and how to truly be part of a team and more importantly, a family.

When the leadership was dismissed to present our awards, I saw my drumline brothers running towards me. I ran towards them and they picked me up. I then shouted, "FIRST PLACE!" I've been in band all four years of my high school life and through all the struggles and hardships I've faced while in the band, I knew it was worth it. It was worth it not because of a first place trophy, it was worth it because I won it with my second family. We spend copious amounts of time together practicing and rehearsing, and it is exhilarating knowing our hard work had paid off. We've become a family because of our shared passion in music and if I could do it all again, I'd do it exactly the same.

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## UC Personal Statement Sample D

### Prompt 2 (377 words)

A course grade does not always reflect the passion one feels for a subject. This happens to be true for me and my science classes. My passion is reflected by the amount of rigorous science courses I'm taking during my twelfth grade year of high school. I've always been interested in science, particularly biology. Unfortunately, the adjustment as I transitioned from a small, private middle school to a large and diverse public high school really took a toll on me in many ways, not just with my grades. I was on my own without anybody to help me adjust to public high school life. I attended a high school far away from where I live. It took me about an hour every day to get to school. I was upset with the grades I was earning. These first two years were very unhappy for me.

In eleventh grade, I switched schools from Birmingham Charter High School to Ulysses S. Grant High School. The change affected me in profound ways. During eleventh grade I volunteered at an elementary school near my home after school. The school had an "LA's Best" program where I would help out third and fourth graders with their homework. I wanted to help these kids learn to actually understand the problem and try to solve it themselves instead of me giving them the answers. We would have "Science Tuesdays" when I would help out the after school teacher with his group of kids. I would introduce the basics of science to those wondrous young minds. The Science Tuesdays lasted for two months; it was a fun experience.

Now I'm in twelfth grade and I'm more involved in school, taking advantage of the many activities and programs at Grant. I'm able to earn college credit in subjects that I'm mostly interested in, pursuing particularly in science. I'm able to take control of my future, gearing my studies towards what I want to do for the rest of my life. My dream since ninth grade has been to pursue a career in science. I will not lie, the road ahead of me is extremely challenging, but at least I have found the road I wish to continue driving on for the rest of my college years.

## UC Personal Statement Sample E

### Prompt 1 (652 words)

When I sat down to write this essay, I tried, as my high school English teacher always instructed, to imagine the audience for my writing. The more I thought about it, the more I pitied the college admissions screeners who would be reading a thousand essays on diversity. Along with the expected takes on race and ethnicity, how many of those essays would present their authors as outcasts, loners, kids who didn't fit in at his or her school? How could I present myself as someone unique and interesting—strange, even—without falling prey to the cliché of the self-pitying social misfit? Let me be direct: in some ways, I am the antithesis of what one might picture as a student who contributes to campus diversity. I am white, middle-class, and heterosexual; I have no physical handicaps or mental challenges apart from a tendency towards sarcasm. But when I receive college brochures picturing smiling, clean-cut teens dressed in the latest from Abercrombie & Fitch and lounging on a blanket in the sun, I think, *those people are not like me.*

Simply put, I am a Goth. I wear black, lots of it. I have piercings and ear gauges and tattoos. My hair, naturally the same sandy blonde that the rest of my family shares, is dyed jet, sometimes highlighted in streaks of purple or scarlet. I rarely smile, and I don't do sun. If I were inserted into those brochure photographs of typical college students, I would look like a vampire stalking her wholesome prey. Again, I am imagining my reading audience, and I can almost see my readers' eyes roll. *So you're a little weird, kid. How does that contribute to campus diversity?* Well, I think I contribute plenty. Diversity goes beyond the physical; race or ethnicity might be the first things one thinks of, but really, it is a question of what makes someone the person that he or she is. Diversity might be considered in terms of economic or geographical background, life experiences, religion, sexual orientation, and even personal interests and general outlook. In this respect, my Goth identity contributes a perspective that is far different from the mainstream. Being Goth isn't just about physical appearance; it's a way of life that, like any other, includes not only individual tastes in music, literature, and popular culture, but also particular beliefs about philosophy, spirituality, and a range of other human issues.

To give just one specific example, I am planning to major in Environmental Studies, and while it might seem odd to picture a ghoulishly-dressed girl who adores the natural world, it was my Goth outlook that led me to this academic interest. I read voraciously, and am drawn to subject matter that is somewhat dark; the more I read about humanity's impact on the planet and the near-apocalyptic dangers posed by global climate change, pollution, overpopulation, the manipulation of the food supply and other environmental threats, the more interested I became, and the more determined that I should become involved. I, along with other members of my school's Environmental Club, started a campus recycling program, and lobbied our superintendent to install in all classrooms power strips that are used to easily shut down equipment such as printers and computers at the end of the day, thereby conserving energy and generating significant savings for our school. I was drawn to this dark subject matter of environmental crisis, not to wallow in it or savor the Schadenfreude, but to change it and make the world a better place.

I know Goths look a little funny, as we wear our ebony trenchcoats in seventy-degree weather. I know we seem a little odd as we gather in shady nooks to discuss the latest episode of *True Blood*. I know professors may sigh as we swell the enrollments of poetry and art classes. Yes, we're different. And we—I—have a lot to contribute.

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## UC Personal Statement Example F

### Prompt 1 (548 words)

With convention comes conformity; with conformity comes the fall of the individual. Individual beliefs and ideals, however, are vital to the very basis of the society we as humans thrive in. Simply conforming leads to a backwards society in which a few hold power and the rest are subjugated, but people hate being subjugated: they just want to be free. This is the reason that people search for meaning in their lives; it is the reason that people are diverse in both intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics. It is this very diversity that not only defines us but also allows us to find a place in the world. Where am I in all of this? I am an individual who is defined by my experiences in both the eastern and western worlds.

The east is a mysterious world that has opened my eyes to a plethora of knowledge regarding the society, culture, life and so much more. I have been training in Shotokan karate, a form of Japanese martial arts, since 1999. In this discipline, I have been taught that the sensei, the teacher, was the master of all knowledge. With each day of training, every drop of sweat, with every kick, every punch, a sense of knowledge was passed on from sensei to student. It was this initial spark that led me to the Japanese culture. I was fascinated by the blind obedience, intrigued by bushidō, the way of the warrior: the sense of purpose in each individual who lived by it to protect and live with honor until death.

Countercurrent to this experience, are my experiences in the western world. It was in the western world where the crusades began, where Martin Luther blatantly defied an authority, where Galileo Galilei was excommunicated for refuting the theocracy, where new nations formed that would eventually influence the course of humanity. It is in this western world that I have been educated and have been led to think on an individual basis rather than a utilitarian one that is common in eastern cultures. During my rigors in AP European History, I interpreted the works of philosophers. From Plato to Aquinas, from Ockham to Descartes, from Kant to Nietzsche, I absorbed and integrated these philosophies to my own being, and also developed a bad habit of reading philosophy.

It was in my pursuit of knowledge and experience that I began to learn about the virtues and follies of humanity, the reason behind wars, and the impetus to live. I have realized that only by mixing the cultures of the eastern and western worlds can true harmony of diversity be achieved. Trying to attain this harmony is parallel to what Dr. William G. Ouchi, author and professor, attempted to do in the field of business management in mixing eastern and western management practices into a hybrid business management system. Assimilating the cultures and lessons of both, the eastern and western worlds, allows me to be more in balance with myself and the external world.

In connecting to the overall theme of cross-cultures, I am an adolescent of Bengali descent, but beyond that I am an individual shaped by the constant clash of different cultures and influences. It is in a chaotic system I was born into, and in this chaotic system I thrive.

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## UC Personal Statement Example G

### Prompt 2 (556 words)

In my life, I have been fortunate enough to not have any life changing tragedies, but I've had one certain life long situation that has shaped the person I am today.

Ever since I can remember I have felt like the oddball of my family. I have been the kid with no art skills, poor academics, and a struggle with weight. I was, and still am, different than my family. My dad is an accomplished poet and creative writer, my mom is multi-lingual in four languages and a linguistic expert for our local university, my sister is a national award winning ceramicist, and my brother is an accomplished carpenter and illustrator. I, on the other hand, am completely the opposite.

Other than fine penmanship, I can't write a poem, speak another language properly, create a decorative pot, or draw a decent picture.

My physical image has always been compared to that of my brother and sister; twins, who are lean, skinny, and fit. I had gone through a "fat" stage when having gained a total of 20-25 pounds when I was fifteen. My sister is petite and 5'2, while I am 5'7 and distinctly the contrary to petite. At family functions, I could hear my aunts talking about me at the next table. I could hear them snickering, saying that I should be the big sister rather than the little sister. They would also make judgments about my pale white skin, suggesting I should be darker or tanned like them. The constancy of hearing them put me down would literally tear me up mentally. I would leave family gatherings with those voices of criticism, relentlessly regretting the way I looked, wishing to have my sister's perfect physique.

As an aspiring academic, I have had to consistently work hard on keeping my G.P.A decent, "average"; despondent of my inability to be like the twins, full-time honor students with GPA's of 3.8 and 4.2. I have let this one situation, a comparison of "they" as a success story and "me" as a classic failure," to control my life. I have wasted so much time and effort feeling sorry for myself for not being like my family. I know this year opened my eyes to the person I truly am.

I have learned of the passion I hold for the study of Human Behavior and Science; and, of the outstanding AVID tutor I have become. To be the first in my family to pursue the field of Human Science, and to tutor AVID students, is a valuable part of my identity, something that I don't have to share nor compare to my family. I have not lived as long as my mom, dad, or the twins, so maybe I haven't found what exactly I'm good at or what I can proudly accomplish. I think whatever "it" is will come to me when it does, and when that time comes, I won't focus on the negative aspects. But, rather, on the strength of experience and the power to move forward. Most importantly, I won't compare myself to my family, because it is the distinction and peculiarity of each individual that allows progress to be made and character to take on new meaning. The necessity, then, needs to be in shifting and transforming while encapsulating a timeless tradition of gaining self-identity.