College Application Essay Examples About Yourself

When I was very little, I caught the travel bug. It started after my grandparents first brought me to their home in France and I have now been to twenty-nine different countries. Each has given me a unique learning experience.

At five, I marveled at the Eiffel Tower in the City of Lights. When I was eight, I stood in the heart of Piazza San Marco feeding hordes of pigeons, then glided down Venetian waterways on sleek gondolas. At thirteen, I saw the ancient, megalithic structure of Stonehenge and walked along the Great Wall of China, amazed that the thousand-year-old stones were still in place.

It was through exploring cultures around the world that I first became interested in language.

It began with French, which taught me the importance of pronunciation. I remember once asking a store owner in Paris where Rue des Pyramids was. But when I pronounced it PYR–a–mides instead of pyr–A–mides, with more accent on the A, she looked at me bewildered.

In the eighth grade, I became fascinated with Spanish and aware of its similarities with English through cognates. Baseball in Spanish, for example, is béisbol, which looks different but sounds nearly the same. This was incredible to me as it made speech and comprehension more fluid, and even today I find that cognates come to the rescue when I forget how to say something in Spanish.

Then, in high school, I developed an enthusiasm for Chinese. As I studied Chinese at my school, I marveled how if just one stroke was missing from a character, the meaning is lost. I loved how long words were formed by combining simpler characters, so Huǒ meaning fire and Shān meaning mountain can be joined to create Huǒshān which means volcano. I love spending hours at a time practicing the characters and I can feel the beauty and rhythm as I form them.

Interestingly, after studying foreign languages, I was further intrigued by my native tongue. Through my love of books and fascination with developing a sesquipedalian lexicon (learning big words), I began to expand my English vocabulary. Studying the definitions prompted me to inquire about their origins, and suddenly I wanted to know all about etymology, the history of words. My freshman year I took a world history class and my love for history grew exponentially. To me, history is like a great novel, and it is especially fascinating because it took place in my own world.

But the best dimension that language brought to my life is interpersonal connection. When I speak with people in their native language, I find I can connect with them on a more intimate level. I’ve connected with people in the most unlikely places, finding a Bulgarian painter to use my few Bulgarian words with in the streets of Paris, striking up a conversation in Spanish with an Indian woman who used to work at the Argentinian embassy in Mumbai, and surprising a library worker by asking her a question in her native Mandarin.
I want to study foreign language and linguistics in college because, in short, it is something that I know I will use and develop for the rest of my life. I will never stop traveling, so attaining fluency in foreign languages will only benefit me. In the future, I hope to use these skills as the foundation of my work, whether it is in international business, foreign diplomacy, or translation.

I think of my journey as best expressed through a Chinese proverb that my teacher taught me, “I am like a chicken eating at a mountain of rice.” Each grain is another word for me to learn as I strive to satisfy my unquenchable thirst for knowledge.

Today, I still have the travel bug, and now, it seems, I am addicted to language too.