Personal Statement Examples For College

Example 1

Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

The valedictorian at my school can play the trombone. She's a black belt in jiu-jitsu, and she invented a new way to keep bread fresh. She's pretty amazing, but I don't think she's that unusual. In the stack of essays being considered for admission, I would guess she's the rule more than the exception.

I haven't invented anything. I can only play the kazoo, and the only belt I own came free with the suit. What I have to offer isn't as obvious as most applicants, but what I represent is important. My generation is one raised by pop culture, and while denigrating it, scions of elder generations ignore one simple fact: today's pop culture manufactures tomorrow's legends.

How can an encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture contribute to a better way of life? Partly because this is the language of the future. I already speak it fluently, and any other ideas will be layered on top. The other reason is that although things like popular movies, books, and video games get dismissed, they actually have a lot to say.

While teachers might struggle to bring the story of Oedipus to modern students, I got what was going on quickly…because I watch Game of Thrones. The plotlines of incest and revenge, as well as defying the gods, are explored in great detail on the show. So when it came time to understand, I was able to map the characters onto one another, facilitating both my understanding and that of my friends, whom I could help with the reading.

Additionally, when I learned about the Wars of the Roses, it didn't take long for me to understand the importance of the Yorks and the Lancasters. I already had a window into both art and history from a television show, and my knowledge of it helped me understand both incarnations better.

It's not just facts and art that pop culture helps illuminate; most of my moral leaders have been fictional. Katniss Everdeen and Tony Stark both taught me about the importance of perseverance. Spider-Man's motto is "with great power comes great responsibility." The Terminator movies pressed the importance of preparing for the future while pointing out that the future is not set. While the teachers of these lessons might be unorthodox, they are the cornerstones of many religions and philosophies.

These stories are often rooted, consciously or not, in religion and folklore. When Captain America chooses not to fight his friend, instead literally turning the other cheek in the face of violence, not only do I understand the significance, but I am also able to point to a concrete place in space and time where this was the correct response.

Many people will agree that books, movies, and even television can contain lessons, but they still say to throw video games away. They call them a waste of time at best. This falls apart under a similar examination of the form.

The Assassin's Creed series, for example, taught me a bit about history. While I understand the Assassins and the Templar are not really secret societies fighting a millennia-old war, the people they run into are real. During the Revolution section in American History, I was the only one who knew minor players like Charles Lee and understood his significance. I also know names like Rodrigo Borgia, Robespierre, and Duleep Singh thanks to these games.

We all embrace what we love, and I have done that with the culture that has raised me. While I appreciate it on the surface level, as entertainment, I understand there is more to it. It has caused me to learn more than I would have in school. When I fight a new enemy in a historical game, I look him up.

Many of your applicants will run away from their time appreciating the mass art of their generation. Not me. I am fluent in the language of my time. I am uniquely suited to understanding and applying these concepts to higher learning. What you're getting with me is someone who will be able to bridge the gap between past and present, and apply their education to the future.

Example 2

Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

It's pretty easy to think you already know everything. Yet beliefs can exist inside of you that you don't remember consciously making, like old files on a computer that somehow avoid being purged. Eventually, I had to do a little mental house-cleaning, if only because there's only so much space in my mind and I have a math test on Friday I would very much like to pass.

This leads me to the entire concept behind belief. Recently, on social media, a friend remarked (about an issue) that it was "just their beliefs." It doesn't really matter what the issue was, or what hinged on my friend's beliefs. What got me to thinking was the word itself.

"Belief" is one of those words we throw around without thinking about it. It tends to be the way people finish arguments rather than start them—when they stop thinking of an issue as opposed to analyzing them. This casual remark by my friend made me challenge the whole idea behind the word itself.

The first step was looking it up in the dictionary, and came up with "a feeling that something is good, right, or valuable." While on the face of it, this definition would seem to put everything to rest, it spurred more reflection on it. Namely, the one question we've all been asking since we learned how to speak: "Why?"

Specifically, why is this thought to be good, right, or valuable? For one thing, beliefs are not constant between cultures. They are not even constant in the same culture. If they were, no one would ever have to inform another that they thought or said something due to their beliefs. It would be known intuitively as everyone had the same ones.

What about any particular concept, idea, or action, would make it good, right, or valuable? "Right" is the most concrete of these words. While correctness is hard to determine, whether or not something is factually true has a whole subject devoted to it: science. I didn't think that science would tell me if something is "good," but "valuable," maybe. Living organisms have needs, and thinking ones have other needs. Fulfilling those demonstrates value.

Science is also intended to be predictive. The goal is to figure out how things will react in the future, and through that create things like self-driving cars or microwave burritos that don't burn the roof of your mouth. By predicting a course of action, i.e.: "This burrito is hot and could burn me," it can then figure out why and propose a solution.

I went back to the original post to see if my newly minted definition of belief would be valuable. As it turned out, this whole debate was on Star Wars. So science, or being predictive, rational, or much of anything didn't help at all.

Or so I thought. Because it didn't fall into these categories, I was able to look at it with clear eyes. The debate over it was just that: a debate. There was nothing predictive in either side. There was nothing concrete. An argument that people got pretty worked up for, and invoked their beliefs to settle, ended up being completely empty.

I was happy to challenge my definition of belief. Now that I know what it is, I can utilize it. My worldview can be a rational one, except when it's not. And when it's not, I'll know why. One thing, it's already saved me time arguing on the internet, and if that's not valuable, I don't know what is.