

Sam chose to write his Common App essay using the highlighted prompt, writing about a volunteer experience in Nicaragua

Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

In the sixth grade, my parents made the decision to take my sister of 8 years and I of 12 out of school for a month to travel to Nicaragua to volunteer with a school. Along with three other families, we taught English and Spanish to students from the small town of Jinotega. While this was a fantastic cultural experience for the two of us siblings, it served a greater purpose as a wakeup call for us, a catalyzer for a series of realizations that would have profound impact on how I went about life.

In the rough draft, the essay begins with a somewhat generic introduction. In the next draft, we will want to restructure his essay so that it begins with an engaging narrative, illustrating the experience of being in Nicaragua and what life was like there

One of the hopes that my parents had for the trip was that it would widen my sister and I's worldview to incorporate different cultures and different socioeconomic lifestyles. My parents wanted us, as privileged white Americans living sheltered childhoods, to see firsthand that there is more in this world than the white middle class that we grew up in. What we saw there tore my heart apart. Families live in cardboard and tin huts, while children run around barefoot chasing chickens through the dirt alleyways.

I took my parents' message to heart, realizing that I was very fortunate just to be born to a family of respectable socioeconomic status. Not everyone was fortunate enough to live that life.

However, at the same time, I was shocked and angry. Prior to that cultural experience, I was enamored with the society presented to me. During and after the trip, there was a period of time in which I could not fully comprehend this new change to my worldview. My naive young self couldn't comprehend how society, with its trillions of dollars, could let communities like

Nicaragua continue living in poverty like that. My hateful emotions regarding this change were

rash but passionate. Little did I know how many more problems like this run deep in society.

So far, Sam's reflection is focusing more on the negativity of the experience, rather than the positive influence it had on him.

From these realizations, over time, I developed a wholehearted hatred for society. Because I consider myself an amiable extrovert, this hatred caused a great internal conflict for myself. It was only in the eighth and ninth grade that I was able to sort through my psychological/philosophical hypocrisies and refine my emotions under the mentorship of my

English teacher. He taught that the world is unjust

Sam's first draft didn't really cohere or have a strong through line that would 1. bring the reader into his experience, and 2. adequately demonstrated how he grew from that experience. In his next draft, I emphasized the importance of fleshing out the story/narrative part of the essay first and then working on developing his reflection upon that experience.

Malta incorporated lessons about inequality, education, ignorance, etc.

President/supporters made me give up on society, I thought it was the final straw

1984 gave me hope of likeminded individuals, means renewed hope for change.

In this first rough draft, Sam also included some notes about other ideas he might want to include in his essay. Note that in the next revised and expanded draft, Sam would add in a couple paragraphs discussing lessons he learned from books like Fahrenheit 451 and 1984 - as previewed by the notes you can see above.

From these realizations, I have made myself a promise: no matter what I do with my life, I must give back to the world community in ways that will have a long-lasting effect on generations to come. I do not yet know how I will achieve the impact that I desire, but I hope to discover that method during my time in college.