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College Essay Essentials

A Step-by-Step
成功申请美国大学

写作要点及范文

伊森·索亚

著

何智孝 石晓园

注译

Plus
24 REAL
ESSAYS
that Ivies &
Elite Colleges
Loved

中国科学技术大学出版社

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a Successful College
Admissions Essay

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Why This Book

IMAGINE YOU'RE A SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD HIGH school senior given the task of writing a 650-word personal statement for your college application.

You're perplexed. Do you tell the story *of* your life or a story *from* your life? Do you choose a single moment? If so, which one? You feel your options are endless.

After an hour mulling over the possibilities, you're now more than perplexed—you're stressed. You start to wonder about what “they” (the admissions officers) want, even though you can neither predict nor have any control over their thoughts. So you start to panic. *What if they don't like what I write? What if I say the wrong thing? Is there a wrong thing?*

Then you remember you have just 650 words. That's one page of single-spaced Times New Roman to express the entire depth and complexity of who you are. You want to throw up.

Then you do.

关于本书

假如你是一名17岁的高三学生，为了申请大学，你需要完成一篇650字的个人陈述。

你会困惑：你需要写的是你自己的故事还是来自你生活中的故事？你需要选取的是某一个片段吗？如果是的话，那么是哪一个呢？你会感到你的选择是无穷无尽的。

经历了一个小时的纠结过后，你变得更为困惑——你感受到了压力。你开始疑惑“他们”（招生办的工作人员们）要的究竟是什么，因为你无法预估也无法控制他们的想法。因此你开始恐慌。万一他们不喜欢我写的东西怎么办？万一我说错了话了怎么办？会不会有什么问题？

你这才想起来你只能写650字。你只能用单倍行距的一页新罗马字体去诠释复杂深刻的你。你想要放弃。

最终，你放弃了。

每年，在准备大学申请文的时候，这样的情况会在很多学生身上出现，尤其是当他们需要用短短650字的文章来决定他们的未来时。

但如果我告诉你，17岁的高三学生，写一篇大学申请文，并不像你想象的那么繁琐且没有头绪，而是可以选择四种可行途径，你会做何感想呢？

你不妨选取一种途径，回答两个问题。

这样会不会简单很多呢？

This is the position many students find themselves in each year when it comes to writing the college application essay, an essay that—given the current landscape of college admissions—is arguably the most important 650 words a contemporary human will write.

But what if I told you, the seventeen-year-old high school senior, that your options aren't as endless as you might think? In fact, what if I told you that you only had *four* choices—just four potential paths you could take to write your essay?

And that, furthermore, you could choose a path by answering two simple questions.

Would that make things easier?

* * *

请依次对号入座：

- 你对你的文章充满了忧虑，因为你不知道你想成为什么样的人，你也缺少一个能够打动人的故事。
- 你的故事足以打动别人，但是你担心它过于煽情，适得其反。
- 你的申请文素材范围太过宽泛，你无从下手。
- 你有自己的想法，但是你不知道如何谋篇布局。
- 你已经完成了你的初稿，但是你对它并无太大把握。
- 你的身上或多或少会存在以上问题，关键取决于时间。

重要的是：针对以上问题，除本书外，没有任何一本现存的大学申请文图书可以帮助你逐一彻底地解决这些问题。

但是，这本书可以！

Tell me if this sounds like you:

- You're worried about your essay because you don't know what you want to be when you grow up, or you don't have a sob story.
- You do have a sob story, but you're worried it's too dramatic or that the reader will judge you for it.
- You feel like you have too many options for stuff to write about, and you don't know how to pick.
- You have a couple ideas, but you're not sure how to structure them.
- You've written a draft, but you're not sure if it's any good.
- You have some combination of all these, depending on the hour.

Here's the thing: no other college essay book out there helps you solve all these issues in an in-depth, step-by-step way.

But this book does.

Questions You Might Have and Where You Can Find the Answers

How do I figure out what to write about?	page 1
How do I structure my essay?	page 13
Is there a step-by-step process for writing the essay?	page 39
Are any topics off-limits?	page 75
How much sharing is too much?	page 77
How do I revise my essay?	page 102
How do I make my essay not boring?	page 107
What are some different ways I can start my essay?	page 107
How do I show the reader I'm really smart?	page 112
How do I brag in a way that doesn't sound like I'm bragging?	page 119
How do I make my essay, like, deep?	page 121
How do I end my essay?	page 137
How do I know whether my essay is good or not?	page 183
I'm in a jam: How do I write my essay in one night?	page 202
Should I share my essay? With how many people? When?	page 204

您所关心的问题及解决方案

文章构思 (第1页)
谋篇布局 (第13页)
申请文“手把手”教程 (第39页)
禁忌话题 (第75页)
如何把握案例分享的度 (第77页)
如何修改文章 (第102页)
如何让我的文章更出彩 (第107页)
文章如何开篇 (第107页)
如何展示我的才华 (第112页)
如何低调地“自吹自擂” (第119页)
如何让文章立意深刻 (第121页)
文章如何收尾 (第137页)
如何自行判断文章优劣 (第183页)
我很犯难: 如何在一晚上搞定一篇申请文? (第202页)
我需要在什么时候请多少个人来帮忙看一下我的申请文? (第204页)

That's right. This book answers all these questions.

And you don't even have to read the whole book.

You can jump around.

In a few minutes, you'll already be writing your essay. But first, let me tell you why I'm the perfect person to guide you through this process.

是的，这本书可以回答所有这些问题，你也不必读完整本书，你也可以阅读其中的部分章节。几分钟内你就能开始写申请文了，但首先让我告诉你为什么我是最适合指导你如何写申请文的人。

为什么我是最适合
指导你写申请文的人

Why I'm the Perfect Person to Guide You through the Essay- Writing Process

THIS MAY SOUND WEIRD, BUT being the College Essay Guy is my dream job. Why? Not because, as a kid, I thought to myself, "I really want to be the College Essay Guy when I grow up." In fact, I first studied to become a screenwriter (BS in speech, Northwestern), then an actor (MFA, UC-Irvine), and then a counselor (Interchange Counseling Institute). And when I considered all the things that I loved to do and that I'd trained for—writing, speaking, counseling—I realized that I'd uniquely equipped myself to become the College Essay Guy. So I created this really cool job for myself.

How? To paraphrase Joseph Campbell, I followed my bliss. I kept doing what I loved until I found myself in this place.

But things really clicked for me when I realized how being the College Essay Guy actually brought together some of my core values, and I think sharing those with you here might help you understand why I'm the only person who could have written this book.

作者的核心价值观:

Here are some of my core values:

实用

Practicality. I can't stand general writing advice that suggests,

“Use your authentic voice!” or “Write what you know!” Why? Because I have no idea what these things mean, and because they do not tell me *how* to do these things. I prefer advice that actually gets me from point A to point B.

高效

Efficiency. I love getting things done and I especially love finding ways to streamline my productivity. (It's something I'm actually kind of obsessed with, and my wife likes to joke that in one day I can get done what it usually takes three people combined to finish.) It's why the word “essentials” is in the title of this book.

藏拙

Vulnerability. I grew up as a missionary kid, moving twenty times before I graduated high school. Even though I often found myself meeting new people, I began to dislike small talk (either because I knew I'd be leaving soon anyway or because, well, small talk sucks), which is why when you meet me, I'll probably ask you some deeply personal question within the first five minutes. I'm interested in your deepest story. And I believe vulnerability is a more efficient way of finding that story.

So here's something that feels vulnerable for me to admit: the number one thing I look for when I meet people is their ability to listen and be present. If I sense someone is unwilling to at least try to listen and be present, I tend to distance myself emotionally for fear of being hurt. This feels vulnerable to admit because I think it makes me sound super judgmental. But I'm about to ask you to get vulnerable, so I figured I'd go first.

范式及贯通

Patterns and connections. I loved watching movies as a kid, and those stories helped me make sense of my world. When I started teaching story structure to my college essay students, I loved how it helped them make sense of their worlds.

But it wasn't until I was introduced to narrative therapy that I really began to understand how powerful personal statement writing could be. Through narrative therapy, I discovered how I could reframe events of my past and, in effect, rewrite my identity. It was like learning a superpower. And guess what? You have this superpower, too. It's one you'll be upgrading as you read this book.

洞察力

.....**Insight**. In college, one of my theater professors wrote the word "Illuminate!" at the bottom of a performance analysis I'd turned in. He was challenging me to answer "So what?" in a compelling way. I took his note to heart, and it's become something I strive for both in my work and in my life. It's something I challenge you to do, too.

创意

.....**Inspiration**. I thrive on helping others realize their own brilliance, and I have worked to weave inspiration into every chapter of this book. In fact, if I had to sum up the goal of this book into one phrase, it would be this: I WANT TO INSPIRE YOU. And that feels extra vulnerable to share with you.

Which brings me to...

You. I believe in the person you are and in the person you are becoming. And that's what I believe your personal statement is—a record of your becoming.

So here's what you'll find in these pages: an efficient, practical process that will help you access your deepest story, recognize new patterns and connections, and generate insights that express how brilliant you are. Because you are.

But there's one more thing I haven't told you yet.

This process could change your life.

这个过程将改变你的一生

That's right. The personal statement writing process can be empowering, therapeutic, and even life-altering. Why? To paraphrase Joseph Campbell:

[A] good life is one hero journey after another.

Over and over again, you are called to the realm of adventure, you are called to new horizons.

Each time, there is the same problem: do I dare?

And then if you do dare, the dangers are there, and the help also, and the fulfillment or the fiasco.

There's always the possibility of a fiasco.

But there's also the possibility of bliss.

Writing your personal statement is a hero's journey. There are dangers. And there is the possibility that you might fail. But there's also the possibility that, if you stick with it, something amazing might happen.

Do you dare?

If so, continue to the next page.

自我陈述的撰写过程是一个有助于自我提升、自我修整，甚至可以改变人生的过程。为什么呢？转述约瑟夫·坎贝尔的原话：

生活充满了跌宕起伏。你需要一次又一次地经历冒险，穿越陌生地带。

每次，你都遇到一样的问题：我敢吗？

倘若你勇往直前，你会遭遇险境，会有人向你伸出援手，会有成功，会有失败。

总会有失败的可能性。

使用说明

How This Book Works

FIRST, YOU'LL SPEND ABOUT TWENTY minutes brainstorming.

Next, you'll spend ten minutes learning story structure and ten more minutes reading some sample essays and analysis.

Then I'll ask you two questions that point to four essay paths and you'll get to decide if you'd like to:

- a. choose a path and start writing your essay, or
- b. read about all four paths before choosing.

Then you'll write a draft of your essay.

Once your draft is done, I'll show you how to revise your essay, bring it to life, make it "like, deep," and then I'll introduce a few advanced essay-writing techniques.

Then you'll write a second draft (or third, or ninth) and come back to take The Great College Essay Test.

After that, I'll give you a few more step-by-step exercises to help you make sure your essay is doing what you want it to be doing, and finally you'll be ready for feedback (but do read my feedback tips first).

接下来，在下列两个关于四种申请文写作方式的选项中选择一个：

- a. 选择其中一种方式，写一篇申请文；
- b. 在选择前，先了解一下这四种申请文的写作方式。

Quick note:

Even if you've already written a draft, I recommend reading the first four chapters anyway. It won't take long—I've designed the first part of the book so you can read it and write a draft in a day.

Sound good?

Let's do this.

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