

# 50

SUCCESSFUL HARVARD  
APPLICATION ESSAYS

# 感动哈佛—— 成功进入哈佛 经典陈述 50 篇



哈佛大学《克里姆森》报选编  
(中英文对照)

人民文学出版社

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陈冰 张颖 译 杨彩霞 校订

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## “写”入哈佛,写出成功

中央电视台的胡劲草在电话里说:“今天在哈佛书店买到一本好书,是给我女儿买的。”我说我不知道她有一个女儿,她说:“现在没有,以后就不会有吗?”

胡劲草说的就是你现在读到的这本《50 Successful Harvard Application Essays》。她当时在哈佛作尼门基金会的访问学者,我那时在哈佛教中文。这本劲草要为未来女儿准备的礼物让我好奇,于是我也去了一趟哈佛广场,在哈佛书店为自己买了一本。看完后又去,并一口气买了四本,用彩纸包好,等圣诞节把它们分别寄给好友的儿女们。

我和劲草再一次提到这本书时,我们都认为它应该在中国出版。该书的编选者是哈佛的学生报纸《Harvard Crimson》,而报社的社长碰巧是我的学生 Matthew MacInnis。于是我们征得了他的同意,把这本书推荐给了中国的人民文学出版社。

在美国申请上大学的高中生,每人都要写一篇短文,作为申请大学的重要参考寄给大学。和中国语文高考中的命题作文不同的是,这篇文章所显示的并不仅仅是作者的写作能力,它最主要的功能是让申请者用自己的语言在有限的空间里告诉那些像法官一样评判他们的陌生人——录取委员会的读者们——“我”(申请人)是谁,并使他们相信录取“我”将会给学校带来荣誉。

虽然申请者有充足的时间在自己家里把这篇文章写出来,但仅仅用几百字就让陌生人了解你、相信你、甚至喜欢你并决定在你身上押宝投资,这可不是一件轻而易举或可以掉以轻心的事。高中生们,特别是那些准备申请好学校的学生,都要使出浑身解数来写好这篇短文。申请大学时的考试分数、特殊才能以及你自己的

经历都是重要的录取参考指标,但它们都是死的或不可变更的,唯独这篇文章为你留下了展示自己、打动别人的最后一个机会,一个可以由你自己选择和支配的机会。学生在选题和风格上都有相当大的自由。

这种自由对于没有创造力和想像力的人而言,与其说是一种解脱不如说是一种苦难。自由意味着选择的不可避免性。作为申请人,你自己必须选择一件事、一个人或一个瞬间来展开实际上是关于你自己的陈述。表面上,你要展示的是你驾驭语言的能力,但你的读者却要透过你的文字来判断你的兴趣、性格、价值观、观察力和判断力,从而了解你的历史和评估你的未来。也就是说,你选择的人或事件本身就向你的读者传递了许多关于你的信息。像本书中的“To Freeze a Moment”这篇短文,作者选取了关于“记忆”这一颇为抽象的话题,但通过一次游览的瞬间体验,作者把笔锋转向了“记忆”本身并对其意义进行反思。作为读者,我们既看到了作者对记忆的迷恋这一知识分子所必备的特征,又看到了作者超越自己的反思能力和在这一年龄段的青少年所罕见的对生活的悟性。

美国学生和学校对申请生的这篇小文章的重视反映了美国社会对个人写作能力的重视。写作是每一个大学学生的必修课。有的学校还规定,学生必须选上不只一门写作课才能毕业。我在美国大学教英文写作课时,第一堂课总是首先要和学生讨论写作的意义这样的话题。我们对写作所做的一个定义很能说明它在美国为什么如此重要:写作是要你自己搭建的一座你与世界之间的桥梁,通过这座桥梁你走进世界并按照你自己的意志影响它、改造它。写作,也就像我的一个教授所说的,是参与民主的活动(Writing is your participation in democracy.)。作为一个社会成员,你通过文字来表达自己的信念和意志。只有当你自己的声音(voice)被别人听到,你才是真正意义上的社会成员(a functioning



member of society)。写作的这种社会和政治意义也决定了它在美国教育中的地位。

充满个性的声音,这是每个大学招生委员会的读者们都渴望在申请者的短文中听到的。但作为美国政治家和社会各界领袖人物的摇篮,哈佛这个以文科为主的大学对学生写作能力有着更高的期待。当然,本书中的文章并非篇篇都是完美无缺的杰作(也正因如此,文章后的哈佛老生的点评才显得更具可读性),但作者们毕竟只是十七八岁的中学生。透过这些文章,我们也可以了解到哈佛大学挑选人才的标准。这对中国的教育家和从事各级教育的老师乃至政府和企业都有一定的参考价值。哈佛教育的成功在一定程度上归功于其选才的准确性。它能够在众多优秀的申请生中甄选出最具潜质的青年人并在为他们提供良好教育的同时,鼓励他们尽情发挥自己的潜质和才能。虽然比尔·盖茨书没念完就去开创自己的事业,不算是哈佛的毕业生,但他被选进哈佛这一点也足以证明哈佛选人的眼光。

《感动哈佛:50篇成功进入哈佛的经典陈述》这本书在中国出版的意义还在于,它也向我们提供了一个了解美国中级教育的窗口。这五十个学生的作文使我们有机会去观察美国中学生,特别是本书中这些将要成为国家栋梁之才的未来哈佛毕业生们各自在思考什么、如何思考,以及为什么美国教育会鼓励这些思考。

就在这本书即将在中国出版的一个月前,我收到一封电子信,是我在波士顿的一个朋友的儿子写来的。他感谢我一年前送给他的礼物:一本英文版的《哈佛的入场券》。他说:“这本书是我现在新的圣经。”(The book is my new Bible now.)今年他在申请大学,所选的学校也包括哈佛。几个月来他一直在修改自己的申请短文。他母亲最近告诉我,他已经参加了哈佛的面试。

贾志杰

2002年11月20日于北京

## 申请哈佛：一个哈佛母亲的经验

在美国，申请大学会是一段可怕的经历。当然，并不是所有人，或者大多数高中生都会如此。超过一半的美国高中生会继续接受某种高等教育，原因是本地的社区学院一般会接受所有的申请学生，大多数的私立学院或者大学也会接受所有的、或几乎所有的申请学生。但事实上，许多学生在九月的学年开始时仍然在焦急地寻找着学校。

不过，对于那些立志进入为数不多的精英学校的学生来说，情况则大为不同。在申请的关键时刻到来以前的许多年里，这些学生 and 他们的家庭已经在梦想着这些大学的录取通知了。在一些极端的例子里，家长甚至会为了让自己的孩子最终进入哈佛（或者耶鲁、斯坦福）而为他们选择幼儿园。

在这些被无比仰慕的大学中，哈佛是最顶尖的。这不是因为它必定比对手优秀，而是因为它是美国最古老的、最有名的和最富有的学校。所有人都听说过哈佛，因此所有那些想为自己或孩子获得最好的教育的人，都会把哈佛列在目标名单上，而且通常列在第一位。这样一来，哈佛常常会收到二万份的申请书去竞争它所提供的一千九百个本科生学位。这些申请者中，即使不是全部，至少也是大多数，都是自己高中班上的状元学生，不但体育、艺术、音乐成绩显著，社区服务记录优秀和受到老师、社区领导甚至某些名人的极力推崇，而且还有许多其它才能。那么哈佛如何决定录取谁、淘汰谁呢？

哈佛，以及其它顶尖的美国大学，都希望自己录取的学生具有鲜明的、多样化的性格特征。所以他们会从不同背景的申请人中

## Applying to Harvard: a Mother's Perspective

Applying to college can be a terrifying experience in America. Of course, that is not true for all, or even most high school students. Over half of all high school students in the United States go on to some sort of higher education. Local community colleges generally accept all applicants, and even the majority of private colleges and universities accept anyone, or almost anyone, who applies. Indeed, many are still anxiously seeking students when the academic year begins in September.

The story is very different for those who aspire to a handful of elite institutions. These students and their families are obsessed with college admissions for many years before the crucial period of application. In extreme cases, some parents even choose their child's kindergarten with eventual admission to Harvard (or Yale, or Stanford) in mind.

At the pinnacle of this envied group of universities is Harvard, not because it is necessarily better than its rivals, but because it is the oldest, most famous, and richest school in America. Everyone has heard of Harvard, and therefore everyone who wants the best for themselves or their children will have Harvard in their list of goals, often in first place. So Harvard receives about 20,000 applications for 1900 undergraduate places. Many, if not most, of these applicants will be the first in their high school classes, and offer a range of other talents besides: athletic, artistic, musical accomplishments, a strong record of community service, glowing recommendations from teachers, community leaders, and even famous people. How can Harvard decide who to accept, who to reject?

Harvard, and other top universities in America, try to create a group of students with strong and diverse characteristics. That is

挑选自己想要的学生——不同的种族、不同的国籍、不同的经济、社会群体。因此，如果你不属于那种典型的哈佛申请人，那么其实你已经拥有一个优势了。下一步，录取委员会就会挑选出那些无论对学习还是生活都具有强烈兴趣和高度责任心的学生。虽然申请表上会列出所有能表明该学生资格的各项活动和奖项，但委员会怎么判断这些不仅仅是为了进大学而编撰出来的“纸上谈兵”式的承诺呢？他们靠的就是学生的申请文所提供的依据。

学生和家长们当然都知道这一点，所以他们往往不会指望一个十七岁少年本身的能力。如今，在网上或其它地方声称能“编写”学生申请文的机构正大行其道：我曾经发现有一家机构以一万四千美元的价格提供全年的申请援助，以及以每小时两百二十九元到三百二十九元的价格提供钟点服务（这些服务由前申请委员会负责人提供）。

而在大学这一方，他们会尽力清除掉那些找过高价代理帮忙的申请文，并且精心挑拣出那些出自学生内心的、由其本人写的申请文。虽然他们鼓励高中辅导老师或者家长和朋友通过阅读申请文为申请者提供意见，但他们同时也很在行判断是否有申请者以外的人代笔撰写了申请文。如果你来自一个非英语国家，你得谨慎行事。委员会将会判断你是否能够熟练运用英语来表达自己及完成大学要求的工作。但除非他们知道你曾经在英语国家生活或者学习过，一份用语精确、毫无语法错误的申请文会使他们认为那不是你写的。因此，不要刻意追求完美的英语。

我的三个儿子都申请哈佛，而且都被录取了。下面是他们写申请文的一些经历。

我的大儿子高中时代沉迷于战略-幻想游戏。这些游戏现在

why they seek applicants from varied backgrounds— different races, different countries, different economic and social groups. If you are not the typical Harvard applicant, you already have an advantage. The admissions committee next seeks students with deep interests and commitments, both in their studies and in the rest of their lives. The application may list activities and awards that claim the student has such qualifications, but how does the committee know these are not just paper commitments, undertaken only with college admissions in mind? They count on the student's essay to provide the evidence.

Students and their parents know this, of course, so they often prefer not to depend on a seventeen - year - old's own abilities. Services that claim to "edit" student essays proliferate on the web and elsewhere: one I found offers a full year of admissions assistance for \$ 14,000, and hourly services (provided by former admissions directors) at \$ 229 - \$ 329 per hour.

Colleges, for their part, do their best to weed out applications that have benefited from such high - priced assistance, and find the essays that come from the student's own heart and speak in the student's own voice. They expect high school guidance counselors, and possibly parents or friends, to read the essay and offer advice, but they are quite skillful at determining whether anyone besides the student has actually done the writing. If you are from a non - English speaking country, you must walk a fine line. The committee will try to decide if you can use English well enough to express yourself and do college level work. But unless they know that you have lived and studied in an English - speaking country, an essay in polished English with no grammatical errors at all will show that you have not written it yourself. So do not aspire to perfect English.

My three sons all applied to Harvard and were all accepted. Here is the story of their essays.

My oldest son spent his high school years obsessed by strategy -

是互联网上的,那时候却要求参与游戏的一组人进行面对面的会议商讨,创造出他们自己的国家、人物和人物的历险故事。玩这种游戏不会有很大收获,而且肯定会占用学习时间。假如他不那么沉迷于这种游戏,他的成绩还会更高一些。然而,这些游戏是他的热情所在,他写的也正是这些游戏。在文章里,他描写了为使自己的角色和幻想世界更真实生动而做出的种种尝试,以及这些尝试是如何导致他对中世纪历史产生浓厚兴趣的,还提到了他为此所做的相关阅读和研究工作。或许那个时候的很多哈佛申请者都曾经玩过这些游戏,但帕特里克对游戏的满腔热情感动了录取负责人。因此,尽管他被几所声望稍逊的大学拒绝了,最终却被哈佛录取了。后来他在大学里主攻了历史并继续在剑桥大学攻读中世纪历史的博士学位。

我的二儿子在写申请文时碰到的麻烦要少得多。他是一位音乐家,自然写的就是音乐。在文章里,他描写了参与演出勃拉姆斯弦乐四重奏的经历。一点一点地,他描写了四个演奏者如何互相应和,领奏权如何在乐器间轮回,演奏者们如何逐渐感觉到他们这次演出的无与伦比,以及那一点一点积累的兴奋如何感动他们,引导他们坚持心无旁骛地努力演奏、演奏得更好、直到最后乐曲終了、大家带着狂喜会心相视的胜利时刻。这样的描述也可用于某一成功的戏剧演出或者体育赛事。虽然我不是音乐家,但在看这篇文章的时候,我觉得自己生平第一次明白了与人合奏音乐的个中滋味。我知道他将会被任何一所他申请的大学录取。事实也的确如此。他选择了去耶鲁,现在是一支著名弦乐四重奏乐队里的小提琴手,并且在美国最著名的音乐学府——茱利亚音乐学院任教。

fantasy games. These games, now usually played on the Web, were then face - to - face sessions, played by a group of friends who invented their own countries, characters, and adventures. It was not the most productive endeavor, and definitely took time from his academics. His grades were lower than they would have been if he had spent his time differently. But the games were where his passion lay, and it was the games he wrote about. In his essay, he described how his attempts to make his characters and his fantasy world vivid and authentic led to a deep interest in medieval history, and mentioned some of the reading and research he had done. Probably a large number of Harvard applicants in those days had spent time on such games, but Patrick's passionate enthusiasm came through and impressed the admissions officers. Although he was turned down by several less prestigious universities, Harvard accepted him. He majored in history and went on to get a Ph.D. in medieval history at Cambridge University.

The middle son faced much less of a dilemma when he sat down to write his college essay. He is a musician, and quite naturally wrote about music. His essay described the experience of playing a Brahms string quartet. Movement by movement, he told how the four players responded to each other's playing, how the lead moved from instrument to instrument, how the musicians gradually sensed that their performance was better than anything they had done before, and how the mounting excitement moved them to greater efforts and accomplishment, without a word or glance being exchanged, until their final triumphant moment when they looked at each other with euphoria. The description could have fit a successful dramatic performance or athletic event. When I read it, as a non - musician I felt that I understood for the first time what it must be like to play great music with others. I knew he would be accepted to every college he applied to. And indeed he was. He chose to go to Yale, and is now the violist of a well - known string quartet and a teacher at Juilliard, American's most famous conservatory of music.

我最小的儿子当时为自己写什么踌躇不已。不像哥哥们，他没有什么强烈的兴趣爱好。他是一名好学生，但不特别偏爱某一科目；他喜欢运动，但不是一个出色的运动员；他喜欢唱歌和演戏，但没有足够的才华使他可以二选其一作为他的职业。最后，他也决定了写音乐——但不是从演奏者的角度去写，而是以聆听者的身份去写。在文章里，他比较了勃拉姆斯和柴可夫斯基，通过对前者作品的主题和变奏手法的分析，他认为勃拉姆斯是更胜一筹的作曲家。他也被哈佛录取了，主攻音乐专业。经过几年的作曲生涯，他决定投身医学院，现在很快就会成为一名医生。

我能给申请哈佛的学生，或者申请任何一所美国大学的学生的最好建议是：自己亲自写申请。申请委员会重视的是那些真情流露、充满热情和展示奉献精神的文章。我的小儿子还让我想起了一件事，我曾经只协助过他写其中一份申请文，那是一所逊色于哈佛的学校，也是惟一所拒绝了他的学校。的确，没有人能比你自已更能写好一篇申请文。

——朱迪丝·M·艾默瑞

2002年10月6日于波士顿

(陈冰译)

注：Judy Amory女士本人和她的丈夫Hugh Amory分别于1959年和1952年毕业于哈佛。



My youngest son couldn't decide what to write. Unlike his older brothers, he didn't have a consuming passion. He was a good student but not in love with any particular subject. He liked sports, but was not an outstanding athlete. He enjoyed singing and acting but was not talented enough to consider either as a profession. Finally, he too decided to write about music— but as a listener, not a performer. In his essay, he compared Brahms with Tchaikovsky, supporting his argument that Brahms was the better composer by examining his use of theme and variation. He too was accepted to Harvard, where he majored in music. After some years of working on musical composition, he decided to go to medical school and will soon be a doctor.

The best advice I can give a student applying to Harvard, or any selective American university, is to speak in your own voice. Admissions committees value the essay that is self-revealing, and shows passion and dedication. My youngest son reminded me that I helped him on only one of his essays, for a university that is less selective than Harvard. That was the only university that rejected him. No one can write a better essay for you than you can write for yourself.

*Julie M. Anny*

Oct. 6 2002 Boston.