



Essays That Worked (Class of 2019)

Your essays are some of the most important pieces of your application. A well-crafted essay will convey to the admissions committee why Hopkins could be a good fit for you, and how you might contribute to the campus community.

[Get essay writing tips](#) from the Hopkins Insider.

Below, read selected examples of essays that “worked,” as nominated by our admissions committee. These selections represent just a few examples of essays we found impressive and helpful during the past admissions cycle.

These entries are distinct and unique to the individual writer; however, each of them assisted the admissions reader in learning more about the student beyond the transcripts and lists of activities. We hope these essays inspire you as you prepare to compose your own personal statements. The most important thing to remember is to be original and creative as you share your own story with us.

- [Breaking Into Cars—Stephen](#)
- [How to Become an Adult—Michaela](#)
- [Building a Twenty Story Apartment Building—Kyle](#)
- [Returning to Peru—Anna](#)
- [Shelves One Through Five—Neha](#)
- [The Red Room—Brontë](#)
- [Community Service Isn't For Me—Kyla](#)

مقاله اول: دستبرد زدن به یک ماشین توسط استفن

Breaking Into Cars—Stephen

I had never broken into a car before.



We were in Laredo, having just finished our first day at a Habitat for Humanity work site. The Hotchkiss volunteers had already left, off to enjoy some Texas BBQ, leaving me behind with the college kids to clean up. Not until we were stranded did we realize we were locked out of the van.

Someone picked a coat hanger out of the dumpster, handed it to me, and took a few steps back.

“Can you do that thing with a coat hanger to unlock it?”

“Why me?” I thought.

More out of amusement than optimism, I gave it a try. I slid the hanger into the window’s seal like I’d seen on crime shows, and spent a few minutes jiggling the apparatus around the inside of the frame. Suddenly, two things simultaneously clicked. One was the lock on the door. (I actually succeeded in springing it.) The other was the realization that I’d been in this type of situation before. In fact, I’d been born into this type of situation.

My upbringing has numbed me to unpredictability and chaos. With a family of seven, my home was loud, messy, and spottily supervised. My siblings arguing, the dog barking, the phone ringing—all meant my house was functioning normally. My Dad, a retired Navy pilot, was away half the time. When he was home, he had a parenting style something like a drill sergeant. At the age of nine, I learned how to clear burning oil from the surface of water. My Dad considered this a critical life skill—you know, in case my aircraft carrier should ever get torpedoed. “The water’s on fire! Clear a hole!” he shouted, tossing me in the lake without warning. While I’m still unconvinced about that particular lesson’s practicality, my Dad’s overarching message is unequivocally true: much of life is unexpected, and you have to deal with the twists and turns.



Living in my family, days rarely unfolded as planned. A bit overlooked, a little pushed around, I learned to roll with reality, negotiate a quick deal, and give the improbable a try. I don't sweat the small stuff, and I definitely don't expect perfect fairness. So what if our dining room table only has six chairs for seven people? Someone learns the importance of punctuality every night.

But more than punctuality and a special affinity for musical chairs, my family life has taught me to thrive in situations over which I have no power. Growing up, I never controlled my older siblings, but I learned how to thwart their attempts to control me. I forged alliances, and realigned them as necessary. Sometimes, I was the poor, defenseless little brother; sometimes I was the omniscient elder. Different things to different people, as the situation demanded. I learned to adapt.

Back then, these techniques were merely reactions undertaken to ensure my survival. But one day this fall, Dr. Hicks, our Head of School, asked me a question that he hoped all seniors would reflect on throughout the year: "How can I participate in a thing I do not govern, in the company of people I did not choose?"

The question caught me off guard, much like the question posed to me in Laredo. Then, I realized I knew the answer. I knew why the coat hanger had been handed to me.

Growing up as the middle child in my family, I was a vital participant in a thing I did not govern, in the company of people I did not choose. It's family. It's society. And often, it's chaos. You participate by letting go of the small stuff, not expecting order and perfection, and facing the unexpected with confidence, optimism, and preparedness. My family experience taught me to face a serendipitous world with confidence.

به این دلایل مقاله استفن مورد علاقه و توجه ما قرار گرفت:



“We liked Stephen’s essay because it catches your attention right away and continues to demonstrate critical thinking, initiative, and problem solving. His personality comes through as he naturally conveys humor. Through his anecdotes from growing up, we got a sense of how he might approach his studies here at Hopkins.”

—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

مقاله دوم: چگونه بزرگ شدم و به بلوغ رسیدم توسط مایکل

How to Become an Adult—Michaela

In the US, legal adulthood comes at 18, but it is my understanding that adulthood comes through responsibility, tears, laughter, and most of all: parenthood. It is effortless to watch other people’s children grow and flourish, but having my own was a terrifying new world for which I was ill-prepared. I was not ready for my first, Stanley, but now I cannot envision a world without him. Today, I am the proud parent of not one, but seven beautiful, boisterous, carnivorous plants. Within my small family I have four sundews, two Venus flytraps, and one tropical pitcher plant. Of course they have scientific names, but I only use them when I am angry and my inner-parent reveals itself. Many might ask, “How does a person become the parent of seven carnivorous plants?” and I can only answer that with a story, my story.

It was an ordinary Wednesday afternoon when I came home from school only to find a charming plant that resembled a leafless, dew-splattered fern perched on the counter. With the eloquence that only a teenager could muster, I asked my mother, “What’s that?” She carefully explained that he was our new carnivorous plant and he was going to be on fruit fly kitchen duty. Over the next couple of weeks my fascination with him grew, and eventually I adopted him as one of my own. In all sincerity, I did not begin as the ideal parent. I would give Stanley water to drink if he looked drier than usual and that was the extent of my nurturing efforts.



However, my complacency did not last. Come winter, around his half birthday, Stanley became afflicted with a mysterious ailment. His stems curled and his one delicate green frond dried up. After carefully examining him, I concluded that not only was the lake water I had been using contaminated with some sort of root-eating larva, but my mother's African violets had given him aphids. It was then that I was faced with the harsh reality of the situation: I had a plant that I was absolutely obsessed with, but knew nothing about.

In my desperation to keep my sundew alive, I began to contact other plant enthusiasts in an increasingly desperate attempt to help my poor Stanley. To my great surprise, a close friend was also a carnivorous plant caregiver and was well versed in childhood care. His advice, coupled with some new dirt and the stocked shelves of the nearby library's horticulture section, allowed me to nurse Stanley back to health. Stanley regained his strength and shortly after the winter incident, I adopted Simone, another sundew. Then came Diana, my first Venus flytrap. Consequently, the carnivorous plant aficionado was so impressed with Stanley's care that he entrusted me with the care of his carnivorous plants when he left for college. This brought my family's size to the current seven.

My true reward of having Stanley is that he opened the door to the world of botany. I would never have invested so much time learning about the molecular structure or chemical balance of plants if not for taking care of him. I have loved learning for his benefit, whether it be discovering the best fluoride-free water, finding the ideal amount of sunlight, or reading that he uses a form of electrical signaling to improve digestion. I also love the rarity of being Stanley's parent. People have their judgments, but I have also found that most people are genuinely curious and I am always open to questions. Ultimately, I love how Stanley has forced me to be adaptive. That first winter I did not have a "Gardener's Guide to Carnivorous Plants," I simply had my own observations. This was the most significant lesson that Stanley and friends taught me: the universe lacks a guide to the galaxy, and life is all about discovering your own way.



به این دلایل مقاله مایکل مورد علاقه و توجه ما قرار گرفت:

“Michaela showed her innate curiosity through a unique topic. The beginning of her essay is intriguing and makes you want to learn more. More importantly, she elaborates on an interesting aspect of her life outside of academics, yet still demonstrates the depth of her desire to be perpetually learning. It also gave us insight into how she responds when she is passionate about something.”

—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

مقاله سوم: ساخت یک آپارتمان ۲۰ طبقه توسط کیلی

Building a Twenty Story Apartment Building—Kyle

“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with others.”

As an intern at a construction engineering firm this past summer, I learned first-hand about the challenges of building a twenty story apartment building: not just the structural or mechanical challenges, but also the intricate ways in which groups of people interact to complete a project properly. While I am primarily interested in core structural and civil engineering subjects, I have learned that engineering needs to be approached in a holistic manner that incorporates economic, environmental, and interpersonal systems. I want to be taught engineering in a way that encompasses all of these different frontiers. I hope to one day build technologically innovative and environmentally friendly skyscrapers designed for a rapidly urbanizing world.

Hopkins’ professors are change agents whose research connects structural engineering challenges to economic and environmental considerations. I am fascinated by Professor James Guest’s work in modeling the ways in which production costs can be incorporated into designing the optimal structure of a building. This work illustrates the power of combining fundamental engineering concepts with economic considerations. Studying AP Physics, I can already see



the practical utility of applying fundamental science concepts such as Archimedes' principle of leverage to engineering, and I look forward to building my core knowledge through Hopkins' two-year sequence of math and science courses while putting it to work through research opportunities in labs such as the Center for Advanced Metallic and Ceramic Systems. Under the guidance of the engineering department's professors, I will be able to develop both my theoretical knowledge and practical engineering skills to their full extent.

Hopkins attracts students from across the world, creating a global forum. Every student brings a different perspective and unique insights that can enrich, challenge, and improve the academic community as a whole. As I traveled through Africa, I heard a proverb that has stayed with me: "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with others." During my blood cancer research at Northwestern University, I saw that our team was able to tackle more advanced issues than any individual would have been able to accomplish on his or her own. An essential component of engineering is complex problem-solving, and with a varied group this process becomes far more effective. Student groups—such as Hopkins Baja and Design, Build, Fly—provide powerful examples of teams coming together to make something bigger than themselves. These groups give me the opportunity to combine applied engineering with hands-on learning while helping me develop an international viewpoint. I hope to further extend this perspective through study abroad opportunities in Madrid, Santiago, or Rome, learning about the growing needs of an interconnected global community.

The world-class faculty, cutting-edge labs, global student community, and innumerable research opportunities provided by Johns Hopkins will help me achieve my goal of designing and building structures that meet the economic, technological, social, and environmental needs of the twenty-first century.

به این دلایل مقاله کیلی مورد علاقه و توجه ما قرار گرفت:



“We liked this essay because it provides a clear and coherent explanation for Kyle’s interests in civil engineering, and how he plans to pursue that here at Hopkins. Throughout the essay, he uses specific examples of how he would take advantage of all Hopkins has to offer—programs, research positions, and professors. The real strength of the essay lies in how the writer talks about his engineering passions in relation to other fields like economics and environmental studies. He makes a good argument for interdisciplinary studies and why studying these things at Hopkins will aid his experience.”

—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

مقاله چهارم: بازگشت به پرو توسط آنا

Returning to Peru—Anna

Returning to Peru to visit my father’s homeland, I was disturbed by the significant pollution, land degradation, unsustainable practices, and lack of clean water surrounding me. The memory of a destitute boy, surrounded by waste, consuming water from a filthy communal tap in a dilapidated shantytown of Lima, Peru still haunts me.

Exploration drives discovery. This pivotal experience formulated my passion and career objective: preserving the environment and protecting our resources.

Since my discovery, I have never stopped preparing for a future in environmental engineering. I’ve immersed myself in rigorous classes of environmental science, chemistry, biology, math, physics, and geology. I have organized a “Walk for Water” to raise awareness of water conservation, worked extensively with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Youth Ocean Conservation Summit, and even received my first grant for a project designed to install a green roof, rain barrels, and a rain garden at my school.



For billions of years, Earth's structure and composition has developed to maintain a balance of order for the prosperity of life. Unfortunately, humans have not returned the favor. Instead, we have created unprecedented amounts of habitat destruction, resource depletion, toxic waste, and water insecurity. Environmental engineering is the integration of science and engineering principles to develop solutions to these eminent and future crises. I want to collaborate with the top school of public health to address the risks of contaminated water, and develop efficient ways to conserve and purify water resources globally while preserving major ecosystems. I want to end land degradation in endangered and vulnerable biomes such as my father's homeland. I want to create alternatives to produce clean energy. I want to reduce the ecological footprint left by our species.

The Hopkins Overnight Multicultural Experience allowed me to appreciate the spirit of exploration and discovery that radiates from students and teachers, and still from my parents who met during their doctoral studies at Johns Hopkins. Hopkins students don't submit themselves to demanding internships or research due to requirement; they yearn from a deeper understanding of what is at hand. That is who I am: self-driven and determined to go beyond what is necessary. I loved immersing myself in a culturally diverse environment, interacting with passionate individuals, and being constantly stimulated by new ideas. I want to be deeply connected with my original work, knowing that I will make a difference in the world yet still be able to absorb streaming information around me throughout my life.

Naturally, I will always continue my love for music, soccer, art, and the outdoors. My passion for the environment serves as my roots, connecting me to the very earth which "natured" me. My interests continue to anchor my identity, while branches grow of ambition and curiosity. Exploration and discovery flower as the fruit of my tree, as I strive to reveal as much as possible about not only myself, but the world we inhabit. I remain intrigued by the ongoing stream of what is already known, and what remains to be exposed.



به این دلایل مقاله آنا مورد علاقه و توجه ما قرار گرفت:

“This essay does a great job of providing background on Anna's interest in environmental engineering and explaining why she wants to pursue the area as an undergraduate here. What stood out the most to us was Anna's ability to connect with the way students learn at Johns Hopkins in a meaningful way by relating it to her own interests and passions. We could tell she has thought about why Hopkins is where she wants to pursue her intellectual passion.”
—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

مقاله پنجم: قفسه اول تا پنجم توسط نیها

Shelves One Through Five—Neha

Pushed against the left wall in my room is a curious piece of furniture. Initially, it was a six foot tall and three foot wide red oak bookcase. Strangely, as the five shelves began to fill with books, the dimensions of the bookcase slowly evolved into a looking glass. Now, years later, my reflection is almost complete: each bookshelf cradles the stories of my life.

Shelf One is the base, and rightfully so. It contains my building blocks. Among the bright covers and large lettered titles lie countless fairy tales, fables, and legends. My Indian heritage mixes with my American lifestyle as the spines interchange from gifts from my father's father to Barnes and Noble bought, creating a cocktail of the morals I grew up on. The heroes in my childhood storybooks were my teachers, driving me to my own heroic actions of enthusiastic community service, whether it was volunteering at the Parks and Recreation center or serving at the Special Olympics.

As I grew out of the innocence of *Aesop's Fables*, I developed a ravenous hunger for words. I wanted to read as much as I could, absorbing each book that chanced my way. Shelves Two and Three sag with the weight of the dialogues that satiated



my hunger. Everything ranging from the science fiction of *A Wrinkle in Time* to the ridiculous amusement of *The Big Friendly Giant* to the horrors of *Columbine* gathers in those shelves. Here is the embodiment of my curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Here is the explanation for my desire to do more, learn more, and see more. My parents aided these passions, constantly introducing me to new cultures and new places. Our travels all over the country and the world taught me the importance of adaptability and an open mind. With these characteristics, I am always able to communicate to whomever I speak to, regardless of their language or culture.

Shelf Four is the stinging slap I received from reality in my early teens. No longer could I spend all my time trying out the delicious foods at this new restaurant or learning from the displays at the rare exhibit. Now my weekends were filled with daunting math textbooks, designed to help me conquer the beast of numbers. While Shelf Four holds the memories of slogging through countless hours of math, it also displays my development of a logical and rational mind. This is where I grew the qualities of being a strong leader. Now, well versed in the feeling of failure, I am also educated in perseverance and success. I use these experiences to help those who come my way. I am able to connect with others easily because I am willing to share the trials I have faced, and the knowledge I have gained from them.

Looking to the very top, Shelf Five waits patiently. It is partially filled with an assortment of articles from *The Economist*, *New York Times*, and *Washington Post*, all of which highlight my love for the political sciences, fostered by the debate team. Alongside those, stacked neatly, are aerospace engineering papers, about plasma propulsion, pork chop plots, and Hohmann transfers. They feature my fascinations with physical science and innovation for the future. Countless college brochures, scribbled on with notes and reminders, complete the first half of this top shelf, and they are the present.



Now, standing in the front of a bookcase, I find that I am completely content. I can see myself with a simple, yet comprehensive clarity, like staring into a mirror. Though Shelf Five is unfinished, it is no less hopeful or less promising than the previous four. Soon, I will fill this shelf with the ideas that will further define who I am. I will look upon this shelf in the future with a sense of wholeness, because I know that this bookshelf is me.

به این دلایل مقاله نیها مورد علاقه و توجه ما قرار گرفت:

“By transforming her bookshelf into a metaphor for her life, Neha's essay is creative and shows an affinity for learning beyond textbooks. She writes about books in a way that demonstrates a process of self-reflection. We got a good sense of who she is and how she would participate in the intellectual community at Hopkins.”
—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

مقاله ششم: اتاق قرمز توسط بونتی

The Red Room—Brontë

My name is Brontë, and if you ask me, I'll tell you my favorite book is *Jane Eyre*. This may or may not be a coincidence. Throughout my life, I've read this book a total of three times, although it would be untrue to claim that the same person read it each time, as I believe I've been drastically different people at each reading.

The first time I read it, I was in fourth grade. I'd been raised on a diet largely composed of poetry and dreams, nurtured by parents whose literary tendencies allowed me to read just about anything. My brother and I had spent most of our childhood wandering around the woods, creating fantasy worlds akin to those that we read about.

My family has books where other families have religion, as well as books where other families have furniture. Our coffee and tea mugs often perch haphazardly on



shifting geological structures of multicolored novels. Most of their spines are broken, and my mother's lacy annotations usually peep out from the yellowed pages. In our family, books are both carelessly treated, a place to stack a dirty dish in the absence of a table, and simultaneously worshipped. Each line is parsed, with cursive handwriting pointing out the important bits. Reading in my house is like having a conversation. In my parent's books, I can pick up where they left off twenty-five years ago, writing my own replies to decades-old thoughts in the margins.

At first reading, *Jane Eyre* had everything a romantic eight-year-old could desire. The subtext was over my head, but I was completely entranced by the red room. The horror of it all piqued my curiosity: how would Jane survive the night?

I read *Jane Eyre* the second time, in secret, the summer after eighth grade. On "brain rest" for a concussion, I had missed the last two months of school and reading was forbidden, so I hid in my closet, or sat outside in the sweltering DC heat where I knew no one would follow me. I hid the book under my bed for nighttime forays when I couldn't sleep due to an almost constant migraine. I was well into my fourth month post injury, with no real signs of progress. Reading made the pain almost indescribably worse, yet I couldn't resist. I felt as though I was Jane in the red room. Escape was beginning to look unlikely. It was lonely and boring and nearly unbearable. I couldn't understand how Jane was capable of moving on. That summer, it seemed unthinkable that either Jane or I could carry on with our lives after experiencing the horror of the red room.

The most recent time I read *Jane Eyre*, I was working at a center that provides temporary housing for homeless women and preschool education for their children. There, I observed many kinds of metaphorical red rooms. As I became closer to the teachers and mothers, they began to share pieces of the children's stories with me. These young children had suffered in ways that were foreign to me, a fifteen year old, who had thought herself so mature. For example, a four year old boy,



who grew to feel like my own child, came to school with increasing numbers of bruises and a black eye.

The thing that became most remarkable wasn't how these children had suffered, but that they kept on living, learning, and developing. Everyone has a red room, and I'm sure I will experience many more as I mature. But, as Jane says, "I am no bird: and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will."

به این دلایل مقاله بونتی مورد علاقه و توجه ما قرار گرفت:

"Brontë's essay does a great job of letting us know who she is. She successfully connects pieces of her life experiences (the concussion, work experience, and nuances about her family) in an interesting way that demonstrates an evolution of learning and reflection. By examining the story many times through different lenses, it's clear she has the same kind of intellectual curiosity that Hopkins students embody."

—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

مقاله هفتم: من برای خدمات اجتماعی ساخته نشده ام. توسط کیلا

Community Service Isn't For Me—Kyla

I've recently come to the realization that community service just isn't for me. Now before you start making assumptions, keep reading.

In September of my sophomore year I joined a club called buildOn that focuses on breaking the cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and low expectations through service and education. Little did I know, just twenty-two months and \$57,794 of fundraising later, I'd be headed on a plane to the Kasungu District of Malawi to break ground on the construction site of a second village's first school!



The experiences of immersing myself in the Malawian communities—of sharing the same straw-thatched, mud-brick homes of host families, of learning bits and pieces of the Chichewa language, of exploring the dynamics of multi-chief, polygamous villages—have been the most enriching aspects of my education to date. I may have traveled a world away, but by the time I left, I was no longer an outsider. To see my eight-year-old host sister, Esther, thirst for knowledge as she meticulously traced letters of the alphabet into the sandy floor of her Standard-Two schoolroom, makes me wonder what stories she’ll tell when she finally gets the chance to put pen to paper. To know my host mother, my amai, will no longer have to tie strips of fabric onto public buses to know which ones to take home from the market because she’ll be able to read their destinations herself, reassures me the adult literacy program is empowering women to be self-sufficient. These memories, though seemingly not monumental, drive me to go the extra mile now that I’m home. They fuel my passion for the case I’m investing in, legitimizing the work that I do.

On trek, I have the ability to directly impact the communities in which we build. I strive relentlessly to confront the stereotypes of gender roles and female inferiority, volunteering to work beside men in the trenches of the foundation, though it’s traditionally seen as a male-only job. Furthermore, buildOn’s arrival places a spotlight on the village, giving impetus for the people to highlight their needs in front of an audience of district legislators and international agencies. Our presence speaks to the idea that the people have a voice, and more importantly, their voice is being heard. This attention is a catalyst for change, inspiring the villagers to become assertive in their quest for aid in a way that giving a check never could.

That being said, as well-intentioned as I may have been in committing to Trek, I also acknowledge that every one of the aforementioned factors is a priority of my own doing. The people of Malawi asked for a school, not a student. I’m not a professional architect or builder. I don’t profess to being a “superior” individual. As charming of a companion as I can be, it isn’t my presence in these villages that



changes the peoples' lives. So *why*, I ask myself, *did I incur the expenses to fly myself to Malawi for this endeavor instead of donating that money to hire skilled laborers in my place?*

It seems there comes a time, in all our lives, when we find ourselves stopped at the crossroads. Sublimation meets moral obligation, and taunted are we as we weight them head-to-head. For two years now, the NCHS chapter of buildOn has accomplished many great things. But did we do the *right* thing? I think about it in the context of philanthropy overall: when is giving money better than giving time? Who benefits when I arrive as an unskilled laborer in a village? How do you measure positive contributions, and from whose perspective? I'm still wrestling with these questions as I strive to strike the right balance between making a contribution and raising awareness while maximizing the ultimate benefit to the recipients. Truly, community service isn't for me, it's for Esther and Amai and all the others I seek to serve.

به این دلایل مقاله کیلا مورد علاقه و توجه ما قرار گرفت:

"Kyla's essay highlights her ability to think critically and conveys her true passion for service. As she wrestles with philosophical questions about how to make the greatest impact through service, it became clear to us she is a person who wants to make a meaningful impact in an area that really matters to her—an excellent quality of our student body here at Hopkins. Rather than simply stating that building schoolrooms in Malawi was something she did, she deeply considers her role in this service experience."

—Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee