

# PERSONAL STATEMENT

Can I tell you a story? Once upon a time, a little girl raided her mom's office for a stapler and some white printer paper. Crudely stapling the pages together, she grabbed her markers and pens and began coloring shapes that somewhat resembled horses. She arranged her eight-year-old knowledge of words into coarse sentences. After a few hours, she beamed with pride at the little "book" she held in her hands. Though she didn't realize it, this was the moment the seed of a dream was planted in her. Though she would ignore that dream well into high school, it germinated, waiting for her to realize it was still there.

I began college majoring in Business Communication but quickly realized that part of my mind and heart remained cold and untouched, worsened by the lingering idea that there was something more I was missing. After briefly studying economics, business, and mathematics, I found the answer: all I was daring to do was stay within the boundaries of what I knew and could do instead of facing the uncharted realm of what I might be capable of doing or becoming. Like an unexpected summons from Gandalf, I followed the call to journey into the unknown: I changed my degree. Amidst the torturing fear of failure and rejection, I found within myself a burning light that grew with every writing and literature class. The seed planted in me as a child began to grow as I nurtured it for the first time. While earning a 4.0 in both my Creative Writing and Journalism degrees, I realized that my passion is communication and connection with people through the magical power of words.

As my college studies drew to a close and friends and family hurled many different ideas for my next steps, I began to panic. Should I start working full-time? Should I go on to graduate school? Can I really make a living in the writing world? Ultimately, the invisible hand guided me to the seeming answer to all my fears, hopes, and dreams: Harvard Extension School. One day, after many talks and sharing my fears and dreams, my older brother introduced me to this institution by sending me the link to the Master of Liberal Arts in Creative Writing and Literature. Writing? Literature? Learning the craft of writing and maybe someday teaching? Is this real? Would this be possible? Thus began my journey to this place of learning. I researched the school, program, and application process and knew that this was the path – the dream – for which I would fight.

Why does writing matter to me? Why fight for the life and career of which I dream? Because when life turns the tables, and a young girl becomes the caregiver for a dear and beloved adult, even though there is a sacred privilege in that role, other emotions demand a place...emotions like guilt and sorrow. *Did I do enough? Did they sense my impatience? Did they know I loved them?* Questions with no answers and no peace—at first. Only through the cathartic power of storytelling, of putting my pen to paper and writing about the experience of helping to care for my dying grandparents, was I truly freed from guilt and sorrow. As I grew into an adult and looked at the sheer love and sacrifices my parents had made for me, my heart reached through my pen with a need to immortalize the power of love they chose to give me. As for myself, writing is more than a call to adventure; it is also a personal responsibility. Through writing, the gifts given to me, the mistakes I have made, and the lessons I have learned can be shared with whoever can see or hear the words. Writing has made this overwhelmingly positive difference in my life, and I seek to grow and develop so that perhaps, by the grace of God, I might be able to offer this same good to others.

As countless other writers before me have experienced, there are times when the wise wizard who called you out upon your quest has suddenly vanished from sight and left you on this perilous journey alone. And yet, from my academic adventures, I have gained experience and skills that make me an ideal candidate to serve, support, and contribute to Harvard's student body and mission. Experiences and skills such as (1) Inclusive Communication, learned from working with classmates whose diverse backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences mixed with my own, taught me how much we can all learn from each other by sharing the knowledge that is unique to us and our experiences; (2) Initiative and Involvement, developed from projects that demanded critique and improvement, teaching me that we can improve ourselves and each other if we considerately and consciously seek the best for the best in us; (3) Writing and Research, many essays, research papers, classroom discussions boards, and creative pieces pulled me out of my comfort zone as I had to ensure, in whatever I sought to argue or create, that every word be rooted in truth, history, and context; and (4) Time Management, one of the skills for which I am most grateful to have mastered in college as I balanced my reading (in one semester, my class required sixty pages of reading per day in course materials), research required for my

papers and creative projects, and completing my course assignments by their due dates.

What initially drew me to Harvard Extension School is its commitment to excellence. I believe excellence is something we should all strive to achieve at most and pursue at least. We can seek and achieve excellence through learning – about life, work, art, and each other. Yet, there is another reason for pursuing excellence. There is a secret magic that excellence manifests: it transforms, and through that transformation, it leaves behind something better. The hope of becoming something better myself and of bringing something better into this world is what led me to Harvard.

The motto of Harvard Extension School, *Veritas*, is sometimes rendered as “naked truth,” a daunting and intimidating concept. Nonetheless, this school puts the pursuance of “naked truth” at the top of its goals. As a writer, I feel the burden of responsibility to serve and contribute to this ideal of thought, growth, creativity, and cultural nurturing. For this reason, I aspire to join Harvard Extension School. Among an endless well of stories, my story is a cry that each and every individual has something utterly unique to offer the world. If my writing could be an offering for the future of my world, should I not do all in my power to share it? I believe I must.