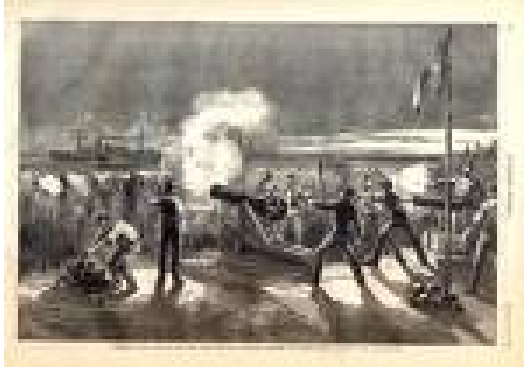


## Scholarship Essay #1 Sample:

*This scholarship essay question (Who has been the most influential person in your life?) is a common scholarship prompt. The example posted here is a winning scholarship submission that deals effectively and affectionately with the question:*



As we sped down the highway, the quiet and calming hum of the car seemed somehow at odds with the late-summer lushness of the Pennsylvania landscape.

Without warning this quiet calm was shattered when my Uncle Alex yelled, “Firsts!”

“Uh, military railroads”, I mumbled, drawing myself out of a sleepy reverie.

“A working submarine”, Alex countered quickly.

“Hospital ships.”

“Flame throwers.”

Back and forth we went. We were playing one of our many Civil War word games. This one consisted of calling out all of the many things that the Civil War saw the first instance of. It was a great way to pass time when on a long road trip. I remember this particular trip with such clarity for two reasons. One was that we were on our way to visit Wheatland, the home of James Buchanan, a destination that I had been looking forward to for some time. The second reason is that the very next day was my birthday. I was turning six.

I suppose for most children it would have seemed strange to be spending their birthday at the former home of a pre-Civil War president. To me it only seemed like a long-awaited treat. My Uncle Alex was an amateur Civil War historian with an infectious love of learning. Alex's sickness took the form of believing that late 19th century American history was more exciting and more worthy of our attention than any other period of human existence. It would prove to be an illness that soon held me under its spell also. It all started when Alex bought me an Abraham Lincoln action figure for my 4th birthday. I remember unwrapping the gift paper, revealing the strange gaunt figure as my Uncle described to me in hushed tones who this man was and what he had done for our country. The real gift that Alex gave me over the years, however, was that he never acted as if it were odd for a young boy to have a keen interest in history. Because staying up late debating whether or not Stonewall Jackson was a hypochondriac was treated as perfectly normal, perfectly normal it became.

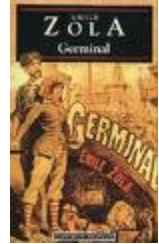
Looking back, I first remember thinking about what I would later realize was ethics or morals in relation to Robert E. Lee and his decision to support his home state of Virginia against the Union. My first contemplation of death took place after reading the correspondence of a young Union soldier who was shot and killed at Manassas before his younger bride ever received his letter. In short, my entire awareness has been shaped and influenced by my Uncle Alex's colorful pedagogy. I don't know what my life would have been without his influence but it certainly would have been different. I am grateful that I shall never know.

Uncle Alex didn't just teach me about a period of history. He taught me about life. He taught me the power of opening young minds to the mystery of knowledge. Most importantly, he taught me how to live life with excitement and passion. They are lessons I shall never forget.

## Scholarship essay #2 Sample:

*This scholarship essay addresses the following question: "Choose a book or books that have affected you deeply and explain why." In this case the applicant has chosen the novel *Germinal* by Emile Zola. The essay is strong and well-written although not without it's flaws.*

At 13, I was an ordinary young teenage girl. I had my favorite movie stars, my secret 'crushes', and an overwhelming addiction to chocolate. School mattered very little to me and learning even less. I worried about getting good grades in school but only to please my parents. My happy little life consisted of sweet treats and even sweeter thoughts, an endless array of bite-sized banality. All of that changed the summer of my 13th year, the year my older sister went away to college.



I idolized my older sister. She was five years older than me and my link to the shadowy world of adulthood that seemed so out of my reach. When she went away, I was devastated. It was a very wet summer that year and one particularly rainy day, I was lying in her empty bed looking at the artifacts she had left behind, clutching an old sweater of hers. My eyes travelled around the room and came to rest on her bookshelf. For a reason that I will never be able to explain, I picked one volume up and began thumbing through it. It was Emile Zola's *Germinal* and it was to change my life forever.

*Germinal* woke me up from my slumber. I began to see the world around me, to look at it with new eyes. I always thought things like poverty, greed and injustice happened elsewhere, to people that more or less deserved it. But the more I read about Etienne, Catherine, and the Vandame mine, the more I began to realize the universal nature of suffering. This is part of what makes Zola's novel a great work of art. It has the power to change the way you think while also being beautiful. I realized that there were actually striking miners in my own state. I then became an avid reader of newspapers and current events. I held a bake sale outside my school for the families of the miners. I didn't raise that much money but it felt good to at least to be doing something.

The affect *Germinal* had on me was not just limited to social awareness. I also became more aware of other literature, history, and art. I read other Zola novels which led me to discover Balzac and his wonderful books such as the sweet sad tale of *Pere Goriot*. I also became interested in the French Revolution in order to find out how the month of Germinal came to get its name. When I learned that the young Zola was a early champion and admirer of Monet and the Impressionists, I began to notice art for the first time.

Now that I am getting ready for college, I feel the effect that *Germinal* had on me more than ever. I have read it three times since I first discovered it and each time I seem to learn new things. It isn't just that I have a pet rabbit named Poland or that I have a pen-pal who is an orphaned miner's daughter. It goes much deeper than that. *Germinal* has changed the way I look at myself and the world around me. No other book has done that.

# Admissions Essay - Sacrifice and Family

*This is a before and after look at one student's attempt to discuss the value of sacrifice and the importance of family:*

I have always believed that family is the most important thing in the world. I come from a really huge family. I have seven brothers and sisters and then there is my Mom and Dad too. And that's not even counting aunts and uncles. There are two brothers and a sister that are older than me and the other four are younger. My Mom says that we have such a large family because we are Catholic and are blessed. I like being the middle child. I don't have all the responsibility of the older kids but I still get to tell my younger brothers and sisters what to do just like I am always being told what to do. Of the brothers and sister that are older than me, none of them have gone to college. My sister is married and a cosmetologist and my two brothers work in construction. They all seem to enjoy what they do, especially my sister who is such a great artist with her scissors and brushes but they all seem to think that I should go to college.

My aunts and uncles too really want me to go to college. They are even older than my brothers and sister and I've noticed a connection between how old people are and how much importance they place on me getting a college education. That seems strange to me because the older people never even went to school at all and they seem ok. I guess its a case of the older generation wanting the younger generation to do better than they did.

But the two people who are the most excited about me going to college are my father and mother. My dad is a mechanic and my mom is a nursing aid. We moved to the United States from Honduras when I was four years old. They both really love America and consider it their home. They want me to do well and to raise a big family of mine own so they can be grandparents.

I really want to go to college too. I want everyone in my family to be proud of me, the first college graduate in the family. I sometimes daydream about what it will feel like. In my dreams I am always wearing a scarlet cap and gown and holding some kind of speech where I get to thank everyone that helped me. It's a long list.

If I am accepted at your University, I promise to be the best student and person I can be. I look forward to all the opportunities and challenges I will face.

*This essay is an attempt to describe what it's like/why it's important to be the first person in a family to attend college. While it has it's strengths, overall it rambles and does not succeed at getting any one idea across. More importantly, it contains almost no information about the applicant, choosing instead to discuss the ideas and viewpoints of other members of her family. After speaking to the client, it was decided that the focus of the revised essay would be the value of sacrifice and how it will help her succeed at college and at life. The essay that appears below is the end-result of a rough draft process that included five revisions:*

One of the starkest memories I have from childhood is of the windy, rain-drenched night that my family and I began our journey from Honduras to the United States. I was not yet five but I somehow seemed to pick up on the seriousness of the occasion. Something was in the air that suggested this was no ordinary vacation. We would not be returning home with sunburns and happy memories. We would not be returning.

What saved this experience from being even more terrifying was the strength and courage of my parents. They were leaving behind everything they had known all their lives – friends, careers, the ghosts of loved ones- just so that my siblings and I could live a better life. The journey taught me many things and although I was just a child, I believe this is when I slowly started to mature into the person I am today. I learned about compassion, love and sacrifice. I learned the value of believing in yourself and the value of helping others. I cannot now imagine my life without that journey.

Now that I am finishing high-school and starting the next phase of my life, I am more convinced than ever of the importance of the values I learned in my extreme youth. I wish to honor the memory of my parents by being an example for others. I know from experience the benefit of having someone around to show you by example that there is more to life than your own hedonistic pleasure. I wish to be this example. Not because I think the world needs my shining morality to set it straight but because this is the only way I know to give back to society part of the riches I have received. Having learned early the value of self-sacrifice, I now wish to immerse myself in a culture of higher-learning and community-mindedness.

When I graduate from college, I will be the first person in my family to have done so. This will be a great honor for me and my family. It will allow me to pursue my goal which is to teach at the high-school level. What motivates me is the ability to open young minds to the beauty of the world around them, to teach them the value of sacrifice and of helping others. I also hope that by being the first in my family to graduate from college, my younger brothers and sisters will also be encouraged to follow their dreams.

I have often daydreamed about what graduation day will feel like. In my dreams, I am wearing a cap and gown and clutching some sort of speech where I get to thank everyone that helped me. It's a long list. If I'm really lucky maybe one day I'll be thanked in some young graduate's speech. That would sure make my parents smile.