

Prompt: “Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.” (650 words)

I am an introvert. I am also a writer. And as I have learned, these two slices of my personality are not separate. Rather, they combine to create a singular facet of me, which has driven me to discover my true self.

As a writer, I have perpetually dreamed of writing a book. The past two years, I acted upon that dream by taking part in the National Novel Writing Month challenge. Participants work rigorously to create a draft of anywhere from one-third of a novel to an entire one in thirty days. Participating, I saw I was using my characters to escape into a sense of self I didn't have in reality. Both years, my novels' protagonists were extroverts. With this in mind, I began to reflect upon a common theme among writers: we write to create an ideal version of life, of ourselves. Often, our characters are fictional manifestations of our own personality. But that was the thing: if I was writing these characters to be an ideal version of myself, were they hints at who I really was inside?

To my surprise, the answer came through none other than my writing. In middle school, I had developed an inverse relationship between my social confidence and intensity of writing: as my confidence decreased, I wrote more, and my passion for writing increased. That's when I fell in love with poetry. It was more than lines and stanzas, but a way of declaring what I was afraid to say aloud. In high school it became a documentation of my life, experiences, and emotions. Three years and thousands of words later, I found a narrative arc within: the character, me. The conflict, none other than my introvertedness.

This was somewhat of a shock to me: I knew I was quiet, but assumed that was simply

who I was. Yet as I wrote more on this subject, my story's path began unfolding. Most literary narratives follow Three-Act Structure: step one, a character faces conflict. Step two, they decide to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to solving it. This decision is referred to as the Act-Two Break: from this point on, there is no turning back. Reading through the miles of writing I'd amassed, it became obvious the Act-Two Break of my story was to confront my introvertedness: to decide to burst out of it and become who I have always longed to be.

Yet each time I revisited that decision, something didn't add up. Attempting extrovertedness felt more unnatural than introvertedness: I was, in trying to become myself, developing a false picture of that self.

Revision is integral to the writing process, arguably as important as the original writing part: no draft is ever final, only settled for. The only way past this second-guessing was to revise my newfound definition of myself.

Narrative structure also includes an Act-Three Break: the character realizes they had it all wrong and develops a new plan, grounded in the truth they have learned. My Act-Three Break came as I learned the difference between *introverted* and *restrained*: my natural personality is to be an introvert. What I needed to revise was the years I spent learning to accept this one aspect as my entire identity, withholding my genuine self out of mistaken obligation to remain only the shy, reserved girl I had carved myself out to be. Writing was once the only way I could express my entire self, but breaking into Act Three, I resolved to bring my true personality out of notebooks, into life.

To me, writing is more than simply graphite on paper. It is the water to quench my thirst

for expression. Where I am quiet to the ear, it is my voice. And now, it is my confidant as I attempt to become who I was trying to be all along.