



Instructions for completing Poly Prep's Upper School Application Essay – Required for applicants to Grades 9 through 11:

1. Get ready! Read through the various essay options and decide which question or topic will represent you best.
2. Write! Once you have decided on the topic, compose your essay as a Word document on a computer. Save your document electronically so it may be submitted.
3. Submit! Upon completion of your essay, send it to the Poly Prep admissions office by sending the document as an attachment to essays@polyprep.org. Your name should be the subject line: Last name, First name. You must submit your essay by January 13, 2012.

Essay Topics—choose one of the following eight topics and write a response that is between 200 and 350 words in length. Remember, quality and quantity of words are not interchangeable. What you say is far more important than the length of the response.

If you have written something in the past two months that might tell the admissions committee a bit more about who you are, please feel free to submit that as your writing sample. Please do not submit a research paper, book review or other academic-centered writing. We prefer a personal narrative or creative writing piece so that we can learn more about you.

#1: Describe the environment in which you were raised—your family, home, neighborhood or community—and how it helped mold you into the person you are today.

#2: The late scholar James O. Freedman referred to libraries as “essential harbors on the voyage toward understanding ourselves.” What book—fiction or non-fiction—would you include in your personal library? Why?

#3: A middle school curriculum does not always allow much intellectual freedom of choice. Describe one of your unfulfilled intellectual passions and discuss briefly how you hope to pursue it.

#4: “The instructor said,
Go home and write a page tonight.
And let that page come out of you—
Then, it will be true.”

---“Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes

Saying who we are is never simple. Each of us is of a certain age and of a particular family background. We have lived somewhere and been educated. We are each what we feel and see and hear. Write a truthful page about yourself for us.

#5: “One of the nicest things about life,” as the great tenor opera star Luciano Pavarotti once said, “is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.” Pavarotti, in all of his well-fed wisdom, suggests that eating and meals are a separate kind of activity—often a break from the work and play of life. Tell us about an ordinary food or meal that may seem uninteresting to the rest of the world but holds special meaning for you. Do you eat it in a special way? At a special time? In a certain place or with select company? Most importantly, how does this everyday food sustain you or satisfy you in a way another food or meal could not?

#6: In his autobiography *A Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela writes, “There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.” Tell us about an unchanging place to which you have returned. In what way has the place never changed? How does its constancy reveal changes in you?

#7: Storytelling is an integral part of the formation of our identities. The stories that our parents and our communities tell us about themselves and the world form our first map of the universe.

At some point, we begin to tell our own stories to ourselves and to others. Tell us a story you tell. Your story does not have to be either true or a story you would tell anyone but yourself; but the story should be your own and it should be significant to you.

#8: Shakespeare wrote in his play *Hamlet*, “To thine own self be true.” What do you believe it means to be true to one’s self? Tell us about a time you had to be true to yourself.