

Fulbright Bio Essay

There are two kinds of simple: simple because you don't see a complicated world, and simple because you do but you also have insight, integrity, and passion. Write a simple essay.

Think of this as a companion to the Project essay, one of two ways to make your case. The Project Essay is all business. The Bio Essay is an emotional battle. Take the reader somewhere unexpected, and leave the reader impressed by what he or she saw and felt on this "small walk of life," your curriculum vitae.

If you blend the two essays, you're missing a chance to show two important but *different* aspects of your personality. Let the reader do the blending. This is where most draft writers go wrong – by conflating these two different projects.

This personal essay is not about why you should win a Fulbright, or why a Fulbright would be good for you. Don't even think of going there!

Here are some tips:

1. Write about the one thing that makes you who you are. There might be a number of things to say. But your essay won't be memorable if you talk about two or more things. Needless to say, if you give a list of your many accomplishments and incredible experiences, forget about your essay ending up anywhere but in the "forgettable" pile.
2. Write with emotion. Write to your favorite aunt/uncle who hasn't heard from you in a while, rather than to an unknown reader. Allow someone in on what makes you tick. Be open.
3. Write a story. People like stories. They remember them. This is because we live in time, and we make sense of our experience narratively. Therefore, be narrative. Provide scenes of moments that capture space, time, and some truth about yourself.
4. Be like a fish, writing about water. Get to your essence, the thing that is so you that you don't even know how to articulate it. Get there by asking questions such as the following:
 - a. Why do I keep doing _____?
 - b. _____ really bugs me. Why?
 - c. I care about _____, but most people don't. Why?
 - d. If I could have any life, what would it be?
5. Be honest. Don't give an idealized version of you. You won't impress anybody if you aren't brutally honest and forthright.
6. Go deep. Write with insight. Push toward some clarifying remark that sums up what you think is important. Reduce yourself to an aphorism, but don't be sentimental.
7. Take care of the reader. Good writing is good etiquette. Anticipate the reader's reaction.

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