

## Essay I : Describe an important intellectual experience you have had.

“You can’t possibly top the whole class in EVERY subject!” exclaimed A. frowningly, “You’re so good at Maths, Physics, Chemistry and even Literature; it’s too much for you to expect to excel at everything!”

I had always been proud of my continually being in the top three of my class in most major subjects, i.e. all natural and social sciences, except English. I was too proud to put up with such remarks of undervaluation. My ego was hurt, my competitiveness aroused, my aggressiveness stimulated. All I had in mind was to prove that she was wrong.

I got right down to piles of grammar books, doing hundreds of exercises of all kinds. I worked my way through heaps of old Times and Newsweeks. I replaced my fashionable backpack with a large-enough one to carry with me everywhere the thick, half-read novel and a small English dictionary! Soon my studying place was inundated with sticker-notes full of new words; and scribbling-books with words and grammar structures scrawled all over. My relaxing time was spent watching English channels and movies or listening to English songs certainly with ears wide open to improve my listening skill. I was obsessed with the desire to be acknowledged by A., to prove that she had in fact underestimated my abilities.

My efforts were well paid off. I got the second prize in the Municipal Contest for English Aptitude Ninth-Graders. I climbed to the third rank in English in my class. I was talked of

by my peers and teachers as being a well-rounded student. That was exactly what I had wished for.

I did feel much contented when I first knew of the prize I received, but not for long. An incomprehensible yet unfillable emptiness soon followed. At first, I did not understand why I no longer wanted to rave with others about my late achievements. I remember once asked by A.: “Why do you have to try so hard for just a prize, was it that important to you?”. Her words kept haunting me; and the more I thought about it, the more I knew I was wrong. With all the successes gained, I still could not feel what people used to talk of as a sense of accomplishment. None of those achievements in English afforded me such happy feelings as I usually felt when I could complete a chain of complicated organic chemistry reactions or apply a simple Mathematics formula to solve a tricky problem. I studied hard for those ten marks in tests and the prize in the Municipal Contest, for my pride and vanity, yet not for my own interest. I realized that learning English had been so tiring and stressful to me because I did not have a heart for it. All things considered, without passion, no accomplishment can be fully sensed!

Now that my thoughts are free from those distressing aims and misleading motivations, I find much more fun in all my studying. English was no longer a dry subject, learning it no longer a stress-producing toil. The rewards I received were not just the prizes I have won ever since. In addition to them was the feeling of a true sense of accomplishment that only an engrossed heart can feel. Even if I had not achieved those prizes, I would have been happy just the same, because I am having the best days in my academic life.

For me, there are many ways to achievement, yet there is only one to the true feeling of it. I believe the lack of an enthusiastic mind and a zealous heart will inevitably result in the lack of meaning of success. What I am looking forward to is a meaningful freshman year at a college full of opportunities as well as challenges for me to fully and passionately involve myself. After all, has somebody not said: “God gives man a mind to think, but above all a heart to love to think” ?...