

Prompt A Response

Writing has served as one of my strongest tools throughout my undergraduate experience. I started my ELA journey with ENG Comp 1 and 2 at SPSCC. These principle courses allowed me to dive straight into literary analysis, a subject I would find myself continually gravitating towards throughout my studies. Reading higher-level work by writers such as Flannery O’Conner and Alice Walker allowed me to activate a skill that eventually led me to Evergreen – the ability to dig deep. Pulling back the curtain on hidden meanings and digging for clarity through reading also allowed me to engage and collaborate with my classroom peers. I found myself eager to read others’ papers and offer advice when asked. Connecting with others, through writing, sparked a passion in my heart.

Upon entering The Evergreen State College, as a transfer student, I knew I wanted to incorporate writing into every program I took. While I was confident in my foundational abilities, I was further challenged as a Greener, specifically in Steve Niv’s upper division program, Refugees, Migrants, Borders, and Walls. This upper-division course required students to embark on intense political science research. I successfully found a way to match my creative writing skills with a strong opinionated thesis. My final research paper on empirical similarities between sovereign countries reflected on the individualist nature of our nation-state. My love for deep research and exploration was ignited, and I could now use my voice to produce in-depth work on urgent studies – topics that were socially and politically current.

While I feel most comfortable behind pen and paper, my biggest weakness is presenting those ideas in front of large crowds. Evergreen has prepared me to talk in front of intimate groups, but I believe student teaching will give me the experience I need to feel confident in my voice. Some of the growth I look forward to, as an MiT candidate, is learning how to practice an evolving pedagogy for myself, as an educator. While my work as an Evergreen undergraduate student has allowed me to push the envelope and dive into critical studies, I believe the MiT program will provide me with the skills to become the abolitionist teacher I know can have a positive impact on my community's future.

Prompt B Response

It may come as a surprise for the graduate admission department to see me again, as I was previously accepted into the MPA program. So, why the change of heart? I originally deferred my admittance to that program after the premature birth of my child. Instead of joining that cohort in 2021, I spent 4 months bedside in the NICU. Ironically, I was also in the process of finishing my last undergraduate program at Evergreen, a self-drafted creative writing ILC centered around entering and exiting trauma. I found myself thrust back into the realm of writing, and uniquely, doing so of my own accord. This ILC allowed me to reflect on my educational and professional experience. I started digging deeper into my passions and was posed with the question: how could I obtain my goal of being a steward of my community? Teaching ELA started creeping into my mind. The more I wrote, the harder it became to ignore the call to further those studies.

After reflecting on my own primary education, spread throughout 10 different schools, my circumstance became a driving force to why I want to teach. I went from an early high performer to experiencing burnout before entering secondary school. As I was shuffled from district to district, I became accustomed to being the new kid. As a child, I could sense if I was supported by my teacher. Would they help me navigate this new environment, or was I left to my own accord? Instead of connecting with my peers, I desperately sought validation and attention from my teachers. I found myself constantly yearning for a mutually respected and advisory relationship. This continued through my high school experience, spent in the state of Texas, where I was so unsupported I ended up graduating from a continuation high school and sent on my way the minute I turned eighteen.

While the end of my public school journey was bittersweet and coupled with constant feelings of imposter syndrome, I knew I wanted to go to college. It wasn't until I landed in Olympia and enrolled at SPSCC, that I had the honor of taking ENG 1 and 2 with Nancy Miller. Nancy was the kind of teacher I was desperately seeking as a child. She was engaged, respectful, and provided a curriculum that worked with my learning style. I had no idea it was possible to teach with an equitable foot forward, especially with subject matter that was both exciting and challenging. She put out a ferocious call to her students; to demand that their voices be heard. Empowering youth through reading and writing is one of the most powerful skills we, as future teachers, can hope to pass on to every student we teach. Nancy did it, and so can I.

Prompt C:

Systemic inequalities have and continue to plague the education realm children not only rely on for learning but are also forced to participate in. While schooling is a necessary tool to develop children into productive and meaningful members of their community, it is also systematically set up as an inherently racist and eurocentric institution. The COVID pandemic further exacerbated the systemic barriers that are currently faced by oppressed, marginalized, and low-income students. This included not addressing students' inaccessibility to educational resources, technology, and high-speed internet service during the most isolating times of the pandemic. Systemic barriers coupled with implicit discrimination in the schooling system, and society at large, further complicated and stunted access to free, engaging, and relevant education. These deficiencies are further compounded by the growing need for comprehensive and equity-centered mental health support.

Abolitionist teaching is a call to educators to dismantle the oppressive structure that currently plagues the public school system. While education is certainly a social good, not only for the reliance on participation in a capitalist society, it also has the power to uplift and break generational oppression seen in lower socioeconomic communities. One way to mitigate the systemic inequalities in education is to grade with equity. Allowing late assignments, make-up work, and not assigning unnecessary homework sets more students up for success. Culturally responsive teaching requires that educators engage in the community they teach in while also understanding and creating awareness of current, popular culture trends. Starting each class with a mission of mutual respect allows educators to create deeper connections with students, thus opening the door for a more contextually interesting experience.

While completely overhauling the current system is preferred, a more realistic approach is student-centered, starting with abolitionist teaching in the classroom. One of the biggest deciding factors that went into choosing a graduate program was ensuring the content aligned with my teaching mission. This year's theme, Teaching With Urgency: Language, Equity & Inclusion, and the addition of the EL endorsement will further allow me to gain skills in culturally responsive pedagogy. My goal as a teacher is to create a non-eurocentric curriculum by centering marginalized and subaltern voices, and Evergreen's MiT program seems just the place to begin my journey.