

Andrew Oliveira
Personal Essay
Topic 2

For the past four years, I have had the pleasure of driving by Mono Lake on my way to school. I have seen it on days when frost cakes the trees, I have seen it when clouds obscure the other side and I feel like I am on the edge of a great and mysterious bay, I have seen it with the sun rising and setting on it, I have seen it from the top of Conway, from the Shell Station in Lee Vining, from the backside, and from the sky. I have seen it on cloudy days, rainy days, snowy days, foggy days, and windy days. I have seen it when it partially freezes over, I have seen it when its surface is glossy smooth, and I have seen it with white caps on it.

Mono Lake is my home. My mom went to school in Lee Vining, my brothers grew up in June Lake, and I grew up in Mammoth. My grandpa is buried along its edge, and my entire family will one day be buried next to him. I have been to Mono Lake to see the tufa towers, the unique inhabitants of the lake, and the incredible salinity of the lake. I get Mono Cones every chance I stop by Lee Vining, or ice cream at the general store when Mono Cone is closed for the winter.

Mono Lake inspires me every time I look out upon its waters. I am in awe of such a strange and yet majestic body of water that seems to defy all explanation. Its islands are alien, its waters serene. Its disposition can be gentle or chaotic depending on the day. Yet every day that I drive by the lake, an indescribable feeling comes over me as I am filled with imagination, curiosity, and purpose.

Mono Lake sparks the same feelings of comfort and awe that I feel when gazing upon the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, the Washington Monument, or the Golden Gate Bridge. When I see Mono Lake, I want to create, to design, to build something that might equal its beauty. I envision a world where my creations spark the same sense of reverence and self-realization that I feel every time that I pass the lake that time forgot.

This is why I choose to go into Engineering. This is why I wish to build. It isn't the money or the fame that comes with creation; it's the realization that I have done something great. That with my mind and with my imagination, I can create something inspiring for all who see it. So when I go off to college, I will not only be filled with immense excitement and joy, but also with a sense of loneliness as I will no longer drive by the symbol of my home on my way to and from school.