

Hi Jane!

Thank you for sharing your personal statement with me. I love your newfound bravery and the realization that you no longer want to entertain limiting beliefs about your abilities. However, as you'll see from my marginal comments, I think the essay would benefit from more context around what inspired you to audition for the musical as well as exploring the ways in which you have "assumed center-stage" in other areas of your life – including as a woman in STEM. Most of the second half of the essay can be cut in favor of this new material. I would also like to see you add colorful and memorable details that root the reader in the moment. What costume were you wearing when you stepped on stage, and what was the show? How were you specifically not brave as a child – were you afraid of roller coasters or did you avoid public speaking? I have left you comments that walk you through each paragraph and outlined a path forward to work with me on reimagining this current essay (brainstorming, drafting, revising, and polishing). Thank you again for sharing your writing!

Best,
Becca

Revision:

The entire auditorium was quiet, you could have heard a pin drop. The opening chords began, and I knew it was my cue. I took a deep breath and entered stage right with shaky knees. Though the lights were blinding, I could feel the vibrations of a full house. I knew my family, friends, peers, and enemies alike were all watching. I opened my mouth to sing and like cockroaches skittering when the lights turn on, my nerves disappeared.

I never thought of myself as a performer growing up. I was the smart kid, I did well in math and science, and I liked doing puzzles with my stepdad on the weekends. I hated being the center of attention, and didn't speak to my brother for a week when he asked the waiters at our local restaurant to sing Happy Birthday to me as a prank. That's why everyone was so surprised when I auditioned for the school musical junior year.

Auditioning was the scariest thing I've ever done. I had to be vulnerable and sing in front of my peers, but it paid off, because I was cast in the musical. Though my role was small, I was the first to appear on stage, and so I had the responsibility of starting off the show on a high note. My parents were proud of me, and waited for me after the show with a bouquet of flowers. My mom even confided in me that she had wanted to audition for her school play in high school, but was too scared.

I haven't always been brave, in fact, when I was a child, I wasn't brave at all. But now, I am the kind of woman who takes charge of her own destiny. Auditioning for the school musical

Commented [1]: It's great to put the reader in a scene for your opening, but you want to avoid a cliché (and make sure you are using the correct word).

Deleted: pen

Deleted: my time,

Deleted: queue

Commented [2]: This made me laugh

Commented [3]: While I love that you open with a scene, we don't know what you are singing. It would be stronger to mention some context. For example, what are you wearing? If this is "The Little Mermaid," are you in a tail? I might also suggest a simile other than "like cockroaches," which initially gave me the image of bugs pouring out of your mouth.

Deleted: ,

Commented [4]: Given that the essay brings in STEM in the second half, you might need to address that these interests didn't require you to be the center of attention until later.

Commented [5]: I am also surprised given just how much you seem to dislike being the center of attention! The birthday sentence really suggests a strong aversion to eyes on you.

Commented [6]: The time jump here took me by surprise – we move quite quickly from auditioning to being cast, without a sense of why you even decided to audition. Were you always singing around the house but just nervous to perform? What changed so drastically your junior year?

Commented [7]: Literally? Could be an opportunity for word play/humor here.

Commented [8]: Your experience of being on stage should be the focus rather than post-show and your mom's feelings (although how sweet that she shared this). What show were you in? What role did you play? What were you wearing? Details will make the writing more memorable. Just as importantly, we need to feel how you felt in the moment of conquering your fear.

Commented [9]: This is an interesting turn in the essay. How were you not brave as a child? Again, what's missing for me is what compelled you to audition your junior year for the musical. I'm imagining you have a real passion for singing and acting but were previously held back by your fear of performing. But what changed and compelled you to be brave?

Deleted: that I look toward college and adulthood, I know I have to start walking the walk and talking the talk of

Commented [10]: I think you are already doing this, which is why I took out "I know I have to start walking the walk and talking the talk."



was my first step toward living the kind of life I want to live, one in which I don't entertain limiting beliefs about who I am and what I can do.

I aspire to be a leader in STEM who welcomes the spotlight. I can't wait to start this new chapter of my life as the kind of young woman who walks the walk.

Original:

The entire auditorium was quiet, you could have heard a pen drop. The opening chords began, and I knew it was my time, my queue. I took a deep breath and entered stage right with shaky knees. Though the lights were blinding, I could feel the vibrations of a full house. I knew my family, friends, peers, and enemies alike were all watching. I opened my mouth to sing and like cockroaches skittering when the lights turn on, my nerves disappeared.

I never thought of myself as a performer growing up. I was the smart kid, I did well in math and science, and I liked doing puzzles with my stepdad on the weekends. I hated being the center of attention, and didn't speak to my brother for a week when he asked the waiters at our local restaurant to sing Happy Birthday to me as a prank. That's why everyone was so surprised when I auditioned for the school musical junior year.

Auditioning was the scariest thing I've ever done. I had to be vulnerable and sing in front of my peers, but it paid off, because I was cast in the musical. Though my role was small, I was the first to appear on stage, and so I had the responsibility of starting off the show on a high note. My parents were proud of me, and waited for me after the show with a bouquet of flowers. My mom even confided in me that she had wanted to audition for her school play in high school, but was too scared.

I haven't always been brave, in fact, when I was a child, I wasn't brave at all. But now that I look toward college and adulthood, I know I have to start walking the walk and talking the talk of the kind of woman who takes charge of her own destiny.

When my friend, Chloe, told me she was a feminist in sixth grade, I didn't know what the word meant. She explained to me that even though feminism had come a long way, it still needed to be enforced, because girls are more likely than boys to develop eating disorders because of the harmful images in media, and women still aren't paid as much as men in the same jobs. Chloe opened my eyes, and made me want to be the kind of woman who is a leader and role model for other women, like Greta Thunberg, the climate activist, or Beyoncé, who recently became the artist to have won the most Grammys ever.

Auditioning for the school musical was my first step toward living the kind of life I want to live, one where I don't care what other people think, and I don't entertain limiting beliefs about who I am and what I can do.

Since I was in the school musical, my younger sister has started taking piano lessons, which shows me that I have already made a small difference in a young girl's life, and I want to keep doing that. This is why I would like to be a woman in STEM. I know that women are underrepresented and it's not always a welcoming space for us, but I know I can lead and

Commented [11]: I moved these sentences up and took out the phrase about not caring what other people think.

Deleted: When my friend, Chloe, told me she was a feminist in sixth grade, I didn't know what the word meant. She explained to me that even though feminism had come a long way, it still needed to be enforced, because girls are more likely than boys to develop eating disorders because of the harmful images in media, and women still aren't paid as much as men in the same jobs. Chloe opened my eyes, and made me want to be the kind of woman who is a leader and role model for other women, like Greta Thunberg, the climate activist, or Beyoncé, who recently became the artist to have won the most Grammys ever.

Deleted: Auditioning for the school musical was my first step toward living the kind of life I want to live, one where I don't care what other people think, and I don't entertain limiting beliefs about who I am and what I can do.

Commented [14]: I changed this from "woman" to "leader" because I don't think gender dynamics are at the heart of your essay.

Deleted: Since I was in the school musical, my younger sister has started taking piano lessons, which shows me that I have already made a small difference in a young girl's life, and I want to keep doing that. This is why I would like

Deleted: woman

Deleted: . I know that women are underrepresented and it's not always a welcoming space for us, but I know I can lead and succeed, even when my knees are shaking and the lights are blinding.

Commented [15]: I recommend cutting this ending, which ends on a cliché phrase, and instead call back to your opening and what it means to take the stage for what you believe in.



succeed even when my knees are shaking and the lights are blinding. I can't wait to start this new chapter of my life as the kind of young woman who walks the walk.

