

## Outline

### On Writing the College Application Essay: The Key to Acceptance at the College of Your Choice

By Harry Bauld

Harper Collins Publishers, 1987, (This paperback edition 2001) pp.138

As former admissions officer at Brown University and assistant director of admissions at Columbia University and now a writer, Mr. Bauld presents issues from the perspective of the tired admissions officer who must work through thousands of dull and commonplace essays. Because the guidance he offers is just as sound for college admissions now as it was decades ago, this book is a classic.

**Introduction-** “This book will help you ask (and answer) the right questions. Two reasons to concentrate on the essay: 1. “It’s not easy.” 2. The essay might be the ticket that differentiates the applicant from “the faceless applicant hordes” and leads to an acceptance into the “First Choice” school.

Everyone can write a good essay, but nobody can “just ‘dash if off’”. First, do two things: 1. Read other essays 2. Practice

#### **I. GETTING READY:**

- A. Chapter one- The Gray Area- p. 3** Discusses that most students are neither the “easily accepted” nor the “easily denied”; rather in the middle “gray area”. He goes over the parts of the total application including the transcripts, the board tests, the myth of the interview, teacher recommendations, and the essay as the only “place they can hear **your voice**, just as you want it”.
- B. Chapter two- Know Your Audience- p.10** This chapter gives one a great perspective from an example of two admissions officers, “Bleary” and “Haggard”, as they discuss reading the essays. Also the author covers how the admissions office reviews the applicants, who decides, first and second readings, adjunct readers, and the committee meeting.
- C. Chapter Three- Danger: Sleepy Prose Ahead-p.22** The author offers nine topics that typically puts admissions officers to sleep: “The Trip, My Favorite Things, Miss America, Jock, My Room, Three D’s, Tales of My Success, Pet Death, and Selling and Telling- Autobiography”.

#### **II. WRITING**

##### **A. Chapter Four-Chilling out-p. 29**

- 1. No Bad Topics- What to write about- Despite what is written in Chapter three, the author contends that in the end there are really no bad topics, only good or bad essays.
- 2. Getting ready to write-
  - a.” If you ask what “they” are looking for, you are already on the wrong track.”
  - b. “Find a reader.”
  - c. “Write something only you can write about.”
  - d. “Know what you write about.”
  - e. “The college essay is an informal, or familiar, piece.
  - f. “Entertain.”
- 3. A Word about Humor- It’s okay. “If you think of something funny about your topic, write it down. If you don’t, don’t.”

##### **B. Chapter Five- Warming Up- p.38**

- 1. What do I have to say?- Plenty.
- 2. How to figure out what to say? “ THE NOTEBOOK” of ideas and observations...
- 3. Writer’s Block

**C. Chapter Six- Coming Alive-p.49**

1. Tell a story.
2. Look for the “Entertainment Quotient”. Look at ideas for sense of detail, metaphor, and verbs and nouns.

**D. Chapter Seven- Rewrite!!-p.49** The chapter discusses topics looking at revising the first draft-shape, beginning, ending, and hearing your own voice.

**E. Chapter Eight- Tinkering-p.68**

1. Tone- “Admissions officers read your essay to discover the “type of person” you are, and your mood is one very transparent clue.”
2. Diction-practical guidance on what words to use.
3. Transitions- Skillful versus formal words that “clank”.
4. Trimming the fat. Six ways to simplify.
5. Correct doesn’t count. Correct doesn’t make it good. “Thing what you are trying to say and don’t be concerned about correctness.”
6. Taking the time to be short.

**F. Chapter Nine- Evolution of an Essay-p. 82** Discusses with examples “the distance an essay must travel before it’s ready to make the final trip to the admissions office.”

**III. READING**

**A. Chapter Ten- Questions-p.93-** A practical guide to reducing the amount of completely new essays the student must write to be able to answer all the “special” and “general” essay questions posed by varying colleges and still keep them fresh and projecting a “personal statement”.

**B. Chapter Eleven- Exhibits: The Quick and the Dull- p.100-** Essay examples of the good and bad and comments from the author.

**C. Chapter Twelve- Anthology-p.123** This chapter gives examples of professional essays from E.B. White, John Updike, Russell Baker, and others.