

## Long Essay Prompt

“Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit is having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future, day-in, day-out. Not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years. And working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it’s a marathon, not a sprint.” -

Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth, author of Grit

Think about what you are passionate about, what you have shown not just enthusiasm for but also endurance. Share an experience that shows how you have demonstrated and/or cultivated grit in your own life.

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### Valerie Kwok

Grit is courage and resolve, strength of character. My life is a demonstration of grit.

I was the first child of a well-off family. I got all the attention and affection one can dream of. I was a kind of daddy’s girl. With a pout or puppy eyes, I always got what I longed for. I was perspicacious. I grew up having dreams and being wishful. I was optimistic and even overweening. That was before reality struck.

At the age of six, I welcomed the baby sister I had always asked for. I hankered to have girl talk and play Barbie dolls with this innocent creature. This time, I did not get what I wanted as usual. She has autism. There is no way she will live a normal life or chat with me or play with other kids. My dream shattered into pieces. How I love and cherish this impaired angel is beyond words. I would give anything in exchange for her health. That was what my parents did, spend all their money to try all sorts of therapy. The rational side of my head told me we were just grasping at straws and it would somehow end up in vain. We went through bankruptcy and were disillusioned by my sister’s lack of progress. This was the very first upheaval of my life. I had to become mature too fast for my liking.

My family is my passion, my strength and my enthusiasm. At my insistence, my sister and I did speech therapy practice while mother was working day in, day out. To study hard so as not to give further burden to my parents was my perseverance. To put the priority of my family in front of myself was my endurance. I shrouded my sorrow and gloom with a facade while the spotlight focused on my sister. For a child, it is never easy to put themselves aside and love someone unconditionally but I managed to do so. I should have been susceptible to loathing and jealousy under the circumstances, but on the contrary, this cultivated my personality for the better. That is why my parent said I was like born 30 years old and grew closer to middle-age every year.

The worst was yet to come. My bubble of blessing burst when father left us a year ago and my life turned upside down. The ignorance of my sister must be the gift of God as she would never go through the angst and anguish I felt. Mother was in great depression. I struggled hard not to have a meltdown. I went to school, got good grades and joined competitions acting like my old self as if nothing has happened. My obstinacy would not allow me to shed a tear in front of my family or friends. I am working extremely hard, not only for my future, but also for my beloved ones. My grief is converted into motivation. This is my long-term goal.

Grit is the courage to get out of bed and start a brand new day when you are disheartened. Grit is the resolve to not succumb to doom and take hold of your own destiny. Grit is the strength of character to reach for the stars when you are trapped in the abyss of despair.

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### **Catherine Chu**

I was born twice: the first as an infant, the second an artist embracing the world and its mesmerizing colors.

Art gives me life. When I was little, I drew all over the walls at home and the pages in textbooks. My journey truly began when I was accepted at an art school. I was no longer the little girl who liked drawing and painting, but a student of art history, style and the artists themselves. I started to explore the art world, analyzing artwork and developing my own style. It was no longer an interest or pastime, but a vehicle to a world where I could find “the real me” – the deeper side of myself where emotions and thoughts were unspoken.

Visual art thus became my major. As students, we worked on a number of projects, all to have our work displayed in our renowned schools’ gallery during exhibition. At one point, I was inspired by “Fountain” by Marcel Duchamp. This was a breakthrough for me: questioning what art is. I made a miniature toilet sculpture in fluorescent colors. My classmates laughed. Their pieces were delicate sculptures, mimicking what is typically defined as “beautiful.”

This is what an artist has to go through. I stay up all night thinking of ideas, researching my theme, painting or making the artwork. When a piece is done, I feel proud... satisfied. Whereas others quit when faced with people judging their work out of shallow appreciation, relentlessly writing off their efforts, I continue, producing more than your basic conception of “aesthetics”.

What is the definition of “art” and “beauty”, anyhow? In my opinion, everything is art, no matter if it is a toilet, a table, or other. Lines and shapes are designed for a reason. As long as there is meaning, it is “art”. My insistence on sharing my vision of art ultimately won approval and display in the school gallery.

People see the glamorous surface of art. I see it as a life. In life, we need experience. We meet challenges and have doubts at the same time. I may sometimes question myself when others show displeasure, or do not prefer my art, but I take it in, treat it as inspiration, and modify my accumulated technique. I persist in “life”.

I won’t do paintings that win everyone’s applause for a moment. I know that. I do art that allows me to truly express my feelings and myself. Such deep art requires years of studies, life experience and technique, all while facing skepticism from universal ideas of art. I may not have those years yet, but I strive to hold tightly to all that I already have and know, to persevere on my journey to express my dreams and beliefs in art.

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## **Janis Khan**

Grit can be implemented in life only if you are passionate about your dreams and long term goals as well as you are firm enough to face all the difficulties and pass all the hurdles of ups and downs of life. I have cultivated grit in my life as I have been through unexpected crises and circumstances.

Getting into medical field is a passion of mine ever since I was a kid. As time passed by, I finally had to face the examination of secondary school in Pakistan and it was the key for me to get into a college. I passed my secondary school examination with A+ grade and I easily got into a Medical program in college. Unfortunately, I had to leave my studies in the middle and move to Hong Kong along with my family.

As soon as we reached Hong Kong, I found it totally different from my home country. Nevertheless, I tried to adapt to Hong Kong's culture. The unexpected and the toughest part of my life started when I had to give up my studies and worked to support my family with numerous struggles in our lives. I started working in a restaurant and earned enough to support and ease part of my family's burden. During the time when I worked in my teenage years even the customers used to point at me asking me to study, not to work, but I always hid my feelings behind a simple smile saying that this was my part time job and I was studying, but deep inside their words were the same as rubbing salt on one's wound. I also tried to look for some private part time courses but none of them was related to my ambition.

Working in night shifts, I used to arrive home at 7 o'clock in the early morning, while tired, I saw many students heading to their school. Their uniform and school bag reminded me the taste of schooling that I could also be like them. Fortunately, my family was more settled in Hong Kong, so I could finally start being a student again.

Finally, I was free for my studies. After a few applications, I got admitted to a local secondary school. However, I am a Form 5 student now and I reached Top 10. Because I have a passion and interest in medicine, I put more effort and hard work in Science subjects. Hopefully, I will try to continue to get good grades. I will never give up on my dreams and the courage came from the grit I had towards my dreams. I have been strongly motivated through all the tough days I have had, and the difficulties made me able to push myself closer to my dreams and goals. I feel happy that grit and the perseverance made me able to get back on the right track to reach my dream.