

“Creative writing,” I said, raising my voice slightly so the woman beside me could hear over the noise of the networking reception. She tilted her head, surprised. “That’s not a minor,” she said with a quick, dismissive laugh. “That’s just a fun high school class. Why would you study that?”

The nineteen-year-old at the table managed a practiced smile, but somewhere inside, a little girl shrank back, clutching the cardboard book she once made with glue, ribbon, crayons, and far too much of her parents’ printer paper.

I write for her. I’ve chosen to study writing, and I want to keep studying it, to grow worthy of her dreams and to honor her certainty, her wonder, and her belief that stories matter. To show her that her dreams weren’t naïve, but only waiting for someone brave enough to keep them alive.

That moment didn’t discourage me. It clarified my purpose. It reminded me why I write and why I’m committed to growing as a storyteller. It carried me into the writing spaces that shaped me. Each experience strengthened my conviction that writing isn’t just something I love, it’s something I am building my life around.

My pursuit of a career in writing isn’t just for me; it’s for the lives I hope to touch. Growing up on trilogies like *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, and having strong, brave female characters written by successful female authors to look up to, shaped how I understood myself and my place in the world. I want to provide not just entertainment, but a sense of power and resilience in readers from the worlds, characters, and narratives I build.

As for craft influences, an undergraduate professor once taught me a powerful lesson. He never allowed the workshopping author to speak, interject, or clarify a work, even after the

conclusion of the workshop. They essentially became invisible, an omnipresent viewer seeing how their work was being dissected. He told us, “You can’t go home with the reader. You don’t hover over their shoulder as they read. Your work has to stand alone.” This remains one of the most influential principles guiding my writing. I keep it at the forefront of my mind as I choose words, phrasing, and structure: Is my intent clear? Am I doing a disservice to my reader? Would I feel a need to jump in and clarify this? It has become a cornerstone of my creative practice.

In March 2025, I took my writing out of the Pennsylvania seminar circles it was used to and on a study-abroad trip to Belfast at the Seamus Heaney Centre of Queen’s University. There, writers truly spoke to me. I encountered a vulnerability and honesty I hadn’t experienced much in my studies in the U.S. One writer shared that “writing is the transformation from raw material of one’s own life... the traumatic wound that speaks,” and another told us that, in her community, “women were not meant to have voices and write books about politics and sex. They were just expected to plant a garden at their parents’ house.” Those words reframed what I understood writing to be. Workshops and one-on-one meetings showed me how varied the process can look, whether meticulously planned or joyfully chaotic, but also how universal its purpose is: to make sense of the world and to say something true.

For years, writing had been something I pursued whenever I could fit it into the margins of my life, between classes, internships, research projects, and responsibilities that always seemed to take priority. I don’t want writing to live in the margins anymore. As I finish my M.A. in Communication, I find myself returning to fiction with more intention than ever, and I’m ready for mentorship that challenges me to push my work further than I can alone. The momentum I’ve built, through study, practice, and lived experience, has reached a point where

the next right step isn't "one day," but now. An MFA isn't just an aspiration, it is the structure, community, and discipline I need to grow into the writer I am becoming.

Certain aspects of my education and experience as a writer will never appear on a transcript. I learned, through pen and keyboard, how to turn suffering into something tangible and meaningful. During my undergraduate years, I endured the loss of two family members and watched my father, a man I had long admired and who had always championed my dreams, face a terminal illness. I channeled the fear, rage, and grief that consumed me into characters, themes, and narrative power. In writing, I found a way to claim my grief, to make it speak, and to sustain myself when nothing else could.

I want to enroll in this MFA program because writing and publishing are among the strongest callings I have ever felt. Not everyone is lucky enough to know from a young age, or to know at all, what they feel deeply destined to do. For me, I know it is writing a novel, publishing it, and getting it into as many hands as possible with the hope that it might help, resonate with, or entertain even one reader who encounters it. This MFA program will provide the structure for the discipline required to tackle the strenuous process of writing a novel, and the one-on-one support and mentorship that are essential for a young writer like myself.

specifically offers a program that feels tailored to each writer and their own journey. With personalized mentorship and the ability to apply to a specific area like fiction, I know I wouldn't feel like one of many. I would feel seen, supported, and guided. I'm also optimistic about the skills I will gain to navigate the publishing field more effectively, a daunting process full of rejection and resilience, as many writers will tell you. I have always found deep value in conversations with writers and am fulfilled by learning from someone who thinks like I

Personal Statement

do and shares my dreams, so the prospect of visiting writers and the network [REDACTED] offers its students is very exciting to me. It feels like a crucial step toward achieving my goals.

I am also excited by the possibility of teaching and giving back to the teachers and professors who gave me the confidence to write. To be entrusted with a student's vulnerable emotional and creative work is a blessing and an honor I would not take lightly. I will always remember the caring approach my teachers took with the personal stories their students shared. I want to build meaningful relationships through this program, with myself, with other writers, with mentors, with publishing professionals, and with students I may teach one day.

If accepted into the program at [REDACTED], I hope to continue working on an in-progress novel draft I have revisited over the years that stands at about fifty polished pages, plus many Google documents of unpolished excerpts and 3 a.m. thoughts that woke me up and demanded to be written down. I am also brimming with new ideas and keep a glass jar in my bedroom full of small slips of paper. It holds the random lines, novel ideas, characters, and worlds that come to me, and I often sift through it to start new projects and get my creativity going.

I'd focus on the novel I have in progress now and potentially merge it with another working piece in a similar genre. [REDACTED]

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