

Jennifer D. – Creative Writing Sample – Common App Essay

I was still Jennifer. My ID band proved it. I was still Jennifer, but I had someone else's lungs. I awoke to the steady moans of my ventilator. My eyes were still glazed from surgery, and I began drifting in and out of consciousness. My malnourished body was carefully draped over the hospital bed. Cystic Fibrosis tried to kill me, and for a while, defeat was inevitable, but a child saved me.

I was being kept alive by machines that had more life in them than I did; however, my life was just about to start. I sighed, but my breathing tube got in the way. I pointed to my chest, and the realization set in. After years of fighting, I finally had the bilateral lung transplant I so desperately needed.

In and out of dreams, my entire life played out behind my heavy eyelids. I saw the little girl, with a toothy grin, ride around her neighborhood in a pink Barbie jeep. Young Jennifer loved spending time on the beach; she loved to draw, sing, and dance. Jennifer loved being on stage, in a tutu, dancing away from her troubles.

But with all dreams, I saw some of my nightmares too. The little girl's smile was still there, but not as bright. She was tired. Tired of spending hours doing breathing treatments and identifying her pills by their chalky texture and mundane colors. But this kid was tough; she played on her soccer team after having invasive surgeries. She sold friendship bracelets to her doctors. Most importantly, she learned that life was not guaranteed, and that over the course of her life, her chronic illness would span over three states, six homes, and the division of her family.

With warm saline vibrating in my veins and fluid draining from my lungs, I saw myself in the sun, surely just the hospital's fluorescent lights, but in that imaginary glow, I was back home in California; it was beautiful and my home was full of laughter. The airy house, which captured the sun's rays, suddenly became smaller. Coping with genetic illness was hard on my family, so after eight years of marriage, my parents divorced, but the real devastation came when I contracted a deadly environmental bacteria. Mycobacterium Avium Complex chased me out of California, to Colorado, then Philadelphia.

Cystic Fibrosis is not easy to treat. And we are far away from a cure. Like a virus invading a host, everything in the body is affected. Cystic Fibrosis gifted me countless infections, sinus surgeries, three feeding tubes, 30 Peripherally Inserted Central Catheters, multiple exploratory surgeries, and extraordinary coping skills. Early on, I realized that a cure was never going to chase me, and a healthy life might evade me, I had to begin creating joy within myself. Sick and dying my entire life, I took great strides to fit life and experience in-between month-long hospital stays. Finally, Jennifer D. was given a gift that she should have never had to ask for - new lungs.

After my transplant, I woke up rather abruptly. I tried to remember my dreams, but I had tunnel vision; all I could see was the fight ahead of me. I would have to learn how to run,

walk, and perform basic tasks. I would have a lifetime of countless medications and doctor's appointments. Suddenly, a pair of eyes stared down at me and said, "We are taking your breathing tube out now. Are you ready?"

I mustered enough strength to nod my head. I heard the air escape out through my mouth then felt the cold air dance below my nose. My dank hospital room was now filled with a sea of smiling faces. I took my first breath, my first deep breath, and with a broken voice I spoke to the silent child who gave me my life and said, "I can breathe!"