

## Fulbright Personal Statement Luxembourg 2018-2019

This 1-page narrative is designed to give the reviewers a picture of you as an individual. It is an opportunity to tell the committee more about the trajectory that you have followed and what plans you have for the future. Whereas the *Statement of Grant Purpose* focuses on what you will be doing in the host country if offered a grant, the Personal Statement concentrates on how your background has influenced your development and how that inspired you to apply for an English Teaching Assistant Program.

The personal statement can deal with your personal history, family background, intellectual development, and the educational, professional, or cultural opportunities to which you have or have not been exposed; explain their impact. This should not be a reiteration of facts already listed in the Biographical Data sections or an elaboration of the *Statement of Grant Purpose*.

I am perfectly aware that it is abnormal to spend a long flight delay in a state of complete bliss. Yet there I sat in Charles de Gaulle Airport, discussing worldwide women's rights in French with a new acquaintance from Algeria, and smiling. Not because women's rights is a fully positive subject, but because there is a combination of joy and amazement that washes over me when I am conversing in French. It is thrilling, empowering, and a real manifestation of years of study. My friends tell me that my face lights up when I am speaking in French, and I think they might be right.

Foreign language education has had a profound impact on my life. As an eleven year old raised in a small town in Massachusetts, I sat in my first year of French class on the edge of my seat. A completely different world was opening up before me, and I began to realize I could create the key to discovering it myself with every verb conjugation and every valiant attempt to create the sound of the French "r". Today, I thank that eleven year old self for holding on tight to a language that has challenged and guided me every year since.

There is no doubt that French is a beautiful language, but its aesthetics pale in comparison to the tangible ways in which it has shaped my understanding of the world. In French, I interviewed North African market vendors in Marseille, discussed the complicated history of Versailles at its research center, and read the works of renowned authors like Emile Zola and Albert Camus. Through French, I have developed a more profound, more comprehensive, and more truthful understanding of the world and its people. Speaking another language is a real life example of walking in someone else's shoes.

In the U.S., language acquisition is a privilege, but in Luxembourg, it is a responsibility. When second and third languages are not considered foreign, but expected, they certainly may lack the novelty that I have experienced. However, they must retain their power to broaden the learner's sense of self and deepen the learner's understanding of one's place in the world. I am fascinated to see the subtle and tangible ways that trilingualism impacts students in Luxembourg, and would be so honored to be a part of their journey to add English to their repertoire.

It would be invaluable for me to develop teaching skills in an education system where such language learning is paramount, and where multiple languages are a part of daily life. In time, I hope that I can be part of a movement that brings foreign language closer to the core of the curriculum in the United States. Being able to speak another person's language is at the heart of any honest international dialogue and diplomatic policy.

Every morning as I left for school, my host mother during my summer in Avignon, France would say "profites-bien, Meaghan!", which translates roughly to "enjoy" or "make the most of it". This was her way of reminding me to take advantage of the opportunities the day ahead would offer, however big or small. This philosophy will be at the core of any lesson I teach. It is my hope that, through teaching, I too can get a young child to sit on the edge of his or her seat as I try to teach the next generation about a world so different from their own.