

# BONUS: SHAPING YOUR IDEA

## EXAMPLE

### PAST and INTRO TO STORY'S INTERNAL CONFLICT:

Set up family of talkers. Little girl chiming in, wanting to be a talker, too. It works, but she picks up a bad habit of needing to get and hold attention.

### BUILD. WHAT HAPPENS BECAUSE OF THIS? HOW DOES SHE GROW?

Talking led to lots of fabrication at school, bulldozing her way through with erratic and somewhat nonsensical fantasies to stay "safe."

### RECENT PAST:

An incident in early high school reveals the power of silence.

### PRESENT:

Though she loves and enjoys her family's talking culture, she now plays with two dynamics of powerful sound and silence.

## SHAPE YOUR STORY

What part of your background or identity creates a world around the theme of your story? Example: mine was a family of talkers.

How might you set up your story?

Begin in the past and lead to the present?

Or begin in the present then flash back to the past and back to the present?

You can always rearrange this structure later, depending on what appears to best serve your story. This is also where revision and skilled feedback might be helpful.

What's your journey in the main character in the story (both psychologically and plot-wise) ?

## SHAPE YOUR STORY

How does your character develop from beginning to end?

Is there a pivotal incident that triggers this character development?

How do the other characters, setting, mood, and tone contribute to your story's theme? In what ways can you flesh them out concretely in your next draft? (Suggestion: Use as many nouns and strong verbs as possible. Rely less on adjectives and adverbs.)

Example:

Bob Marley's soul-strung verses broke dawn at our house.

vs.

Music played every morning at my house.

The first version hints at sound as a theme, and helps establish the mood and the character's background.

The second sentence wastes an opportunity to build layers around the story's theme.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

You did it!

You found a college essay topic and began exploring its deeper meaning. You've taken a major step towards your college goals. Bravo!

Do me a favor? Email me at [liz@inkwellcoach.com](mailto:liz@inkwellcoach.com) to let me know how this process works for you. I'd love your feedback. I can't wait to hear about your college successes. I'm rooting for you!





A two-time Harvard University graduate (Masters in English Education and MFA in Acting), and a graduate of the University of Rochester, Liz is an educator with over a decade of experience. While in Boston, Liz served as a teaching assistant for two literacy and curriculum development courses at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. After her first year of teaching, Liz was awarded permanent teacher status, surpassing the five-year qualifying mark.

Liz believes in helping students foster a growing awareness of themselves as learners so they can build confidence in their thinking and writing skills. Her training in the arts allows her to develop creative, engaging ways to teach difficult topics, adapt to different learning personalities, and create a fun and relaxed learning environment.

Liz was born and raised in England, then Nigeria, Buffalo N.Y., and finally in California. She lived and performed briefly in Moscow, and currently lives in Los Angeles. Liz loves acting, writing, yoga, ridiculously spicy Thai food.

Connect with Liz on Instagram and Facebook [@InkWellCoach](#)

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