

PERSONAL STATEMENT

xxx, Teaching English as a Foreign Language
English Teaching Assistantship

If you had asked me a year ago which character from The Wizard of Oz was most in need of the wizard's help, I would have, without hesitation, responded that with his lack of a brain, the gangly, zany scarecrow was most impoverished and at the greatest disadvantage. As the daughter of an English professor, I come from an academic background in which the pursuit of knowledge has always been a top priority. From a young age I have been taught to associate knowledge with opportunity and independence. My desire to find these things lead me to study in Munich for a year, where I had the chance to follow my passion of learning about the world from the perspective of another culture. Presented with a foreign way of life in which even the simplest daily tasks and interactions were a learning experience, I came to realize just how complex and fascinating the world really is, and my passion for learning and absorbing knowledge ignited as it never had before. My heightened interest in knowledge and the human intellect has now inspired me to pursue teaching, since as a teacher, I will be able to share wisdom with others, and because, as my Dad always reiterates, "the best way to learn is to teach."

But while I have not forfeited my love of and desire to obtain knowledge, my experience in Munich provided me with a new kind of knowledge—the knowledge that other sources of strength are equally as important, and sometimes more important, than even knowledge itself.

Recently, as I read through the journals I kept during my time in Munich, I repeatedly stumbled across one common theme: courage. Time and time again I had reminded myself, "nothing is worth doing unless it takes hard work and courage." Before entering Munich's Ludwig Maximilians Universität, I had been terrified to the point of tears in anticipation of my first class with native Germans. After days of dread, I decided to harness my fears, and when I walked into the classroom, I sat down next to a girl and immediately introduced myself in the best German I could manage. To my surprise, I had sat next to the only other non-German student in the class, who was equally as anxious as I. Elisa, an exchange student from Italy, quickly became a close friend. In addition to having shared areas of study, those of international studies and German, we shared a love of the musician Björk, travel, and the clarinet.

Throughout my time in Munich, I realized that it was just as much my acts of courage as my acquisition of knowledge that created opportunities for me—opportunities to meet new people, to speak German, to relinquish my reliance on the help of others and gain independence in a big, new city. So while I cannot really say that I find the doltish scarecrow's lack of a brain any less unfortunate, I have come to realize that I may have been too hasty in overlooking the plight of the Cowardly Lion. I have learned that both wisdom and opportunity come from courage. The best way to learn and to experience the world is to have the courage to leave your comfort zone and seek out the interesting and the unknown. I am ready to learn. I'm ready to muster the courage to once again find myself in a foreign place, to feel scared, meet locals, speak German, and become an active member in a new community. I'm ready to summon the courage to expand my knowledge of our world, because maybe there is no place like home, but when the world is your home, that's not very limiting.