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Personal Statement  
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Being a major bookworm ever since first grade, I constantly sought out opportunities to expand my knowledge on books and entertainment. Among my childhood novels of Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, and Percy Jackson, I never thought that sifting through books in a Savers thrift store would hook me onto my very first manga, or Japanese comic book.

From then on, I found an entirely new passion for reading, and found myself advancing in English classes in every grade level. However, there was something else I sought from the manga I found besides the driving story and eloquent artwork: learning about the source.

I often found inklings of Japanese language and culture within the used manga I bought, and thereby became intrigued in Japanese culture. I began watching anime, listening to Japanese music, playing Japanese games, and finally, in high school, I had the chance to choose Japanese as my mandatory language course.

My freshman year of high school, I was practically shaking the entire way through the day until my sixth period, as I was so excited for my very first Japanese lesson. There, I met Ms. Minako Kamimura, who was my first Japanese teacher and one of my highest sources of motivation all throughout high school. Ms. Kamimura saw the determination in my eyes and the rush of motivation I had for every assignment. She introduced me to upperclassmen taking Japanese, who thereby introduced me to the school's Japan Club. My junior year, Ms. Kamimura welcomed me as a Teaching Assistant to her Japanese 1 classes, which I continued throughout my senior year, as well as supported me in my decision to become the Vice President of the Japan Club. Ms. Kamimura remains one of my main motivators towards learning Japanese and is always the person I know I can fall back on in difficult times in my education.

The same year, Ms. Michelle Lupisan taught advanced Japanese for those who wanted to continue their education past the mandatory amount. She established the Japanese National Honor Society, in which I learned more about global citizenship and being an active member of my community. Through JNHS, I visited the Japanese American Museum in San Jose, spoke to Japanese American elders who had been interned during WWII, and became witness to Monterey County's official apology to Japanese Americans at the Salinas Courthouse.

This same year, I had the opportunity to travel to the city of Tokyo, Japan as well as the island of Okinawa. Prior to our trip, my fellow classmates and I created a thousand paper cranes to offer as a tribute to the Battle of Okinawa and to wish for world peace. This was done at the Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum where, alongside the thousand paper cranes, we collaborated on creating an entire peace ceremony. To further this mission, myself and a handful of other students who had gone to Okinawa developed a fundraiser for a Peace Pole, an obelisk which stands as a monument for peace with the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth" written in eight

languages of our choice on each side. We chose to add languages that relayed the diversity of the Salinas community: English, Spanish, Tagalog, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Arabic. Upon purchasing the Peace Pole, a ceremony was held to place the pole in front of the [Salinas City Hall](#) as a reminder of our constant mission for peace.

My senior year of high school, I became President of my school's Japan Club and Vice President of the JNHS. I also became a founder of the Japanese American Citizens League Student Leadership council.

After graduating high school, I had no hesitation in choosing to become a Japanese major at CSUMB. I continued my exploration of Japanese language and culture by becoming the Vice President of the CSUMB Japan Club my sophomore year of university and becoming a tutor at the Cooperative Learning Center (CLC) to tutor both Japanese and English Language Learning (ELL).

Through all of my leadership positions I've held in the past few years, I've developed a love for helping my community and sharing my passions in various mediums. Through my teaching assistant positions throughout highschool, service learning instruction, and time spent tutoring at the CLC, I have developed a passion for teaching Japanese language and culture.

Due to this passion, I would like to become a member of the JET program as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) in order to teach English in Japan and further advance my Japanese language skills as well as my classroom management and lesson planning skills. After returning from JET, I plan to return to CSUMB to acquire my single subject teaching credential to teach Japanese at the high school level. In terms of where I would like to teach, I am hoping to return to where it all began, Salinas High School, to complete my cycle of learning Japanese and to spread my knowledge to others who I hope will share the same passion and drive that I did and still do have to advance their education into Japanese language and culture.

