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College Application

Process 101

Tips from a recently admitted homeschooler

by Zoe Goncalves

Stress, anxiety, fear and excitement. These were the emotions I cycled through during the college application process. It would have been a better experience without the stress, fear and anxiety. Here are some things that I wish I had done before applying to college.

1. Start early! I regret not starting the application process earlier. Starting earlier gives you more time to figure out what paperwork you need, what each school requires, and which ones accept the application and which ones do not. Start touring schools during junior year and have a list of your preferred school by the end of the summer before your

senior year. Every school has a different timeline, it is useful to know what these are in advance, especially if you intend to apply for early decision for any school. I decided to do my application in late November, early December, so I did not have as much time as I wished I had and missed the first round of early decision for my preferred school. Luckily I was accepted during the second round of early decision. You may want to begin writing or at least brainstorming topics for your essays no later than the summer before senior year as well. Trust me this will help abate the stress of the application process.

2. Keep a list of every book you read in high school. Many colleges require a

list of all books read from home-schooled students. My mom and I had to sit down and make this list. It was a tedious and time-consuming process. Freshman, please take my advice: keep a log of the books you are reading this year and continue to do this for the rest of high school.

3. Get help with your essay, and not from a parent! Having someone help me with my college essay is one of the best decisions that I made. My tutor helped me brainstorm ideas. She asked me questions that helped me to reflect and focus. Tutors know what colleges are looking for and can guide you in writing a cohesive essay that truly represents who you are. I thought writing my essay would be easy, but it

was not. Having someone to help will help you realize what is great material for your essay, and more importantly, what should be left unsaid.

Things to remember: keep a list of every book you read in high school, start the application process in your junior year and get help with your essay. If you take my advice it will make the process easier and less stressful, and your parent(s) will be able to sleep at night

Finding Family in the Dominican Republic

by Emma Ledesma

At age twelve, I dreamed of a wonderful place where I could go to the beach without taking a train, a place where the air smelled fresh, and a place where I was surrounded by cousins, aunts, and uncles that I never met. I had no idea that February 20, 2019, I would have the privilege to go to the Dominican Republic! My mom and dad grew up there before they immigrated to New York. My dad would go every year, and one day he decided I should also be able to visit the beautiful country. Since then, we have been here in 2019 and 2020. Sadly, due to Covid-19 we were not able to go in 2021.

February of this year we boarded our plane to the Dominican Republic. We were re-united with my dad, who had left a few weeks before, and visited my Tia Francia, primo Raymond, and the rest of my dad's family members. I had not seen my aunts, uncles, or cousins in two years! We always come to my Tia Francia's house for dinner the first day we arrive. I get to see Blancita, a white dog that Tia Francia adopted. Blancita has six black and white puppies who are so adorable. Tia Francia also has another dog named Toby.

La Zona Colonial, or the Colonial Area, is where I got to see a statue of Christopher Columbus, the first Cathedral in the New World, and the house of Columbus and his son Diego's home. They are located in the capitol of



Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. I learned all about the roots of the Dominican Republic, and I felt a bond with my history. Dominican Flags with the words Dios, Patria, Libertad. God, Patriotism, and Liberty. I never really felt a connection with my Dominican roots. I never felt a longing to dive in and uncover the rich and vibrant history of the country my parents grew up in. Inside the house of Christopher Columbus, I saw his office, a painting of Ferdinand and Isabella, a painting of Columbus with his son Diego, and a replica of the Santa Maria ship. Christopher Columbus discovered the unknown island we now call the Caribbean Islands.

Going the Cathedral, helped me learn more about the foundation of the Dominican Republic. The Spaniards were devout Catholics and they established the Catholic religion. The Cathedral was the place of reverence to God and even now there is a room especially for prayer. The trip was an educational and cultural awakening for me. I knew my mother had

grown up Catholic, but understanding the way she lived and learning how she had grown up going to a Cathedral similar to the one I saw. That experience impacted me so much, that now I would like to continue researching the history of the Dominican Republic. Christopher Columbus discovered the unknown island we now call the Caribbean Islands.

I now have realized coming here is not only for the beaches and escaping the cold of New York, but it also for me to learn more about my roots and history of my ancestors and my parents. I want to research more about the history, and I want to know more about this wonderful island that was home to my parents.

Learn some Spanish Vocabulary!

hola:hello
 primo:cousin
 tia:aunt
 adios:goodbye
 playa:beach
 libertad: liberty

Life on Other Planets

by Xander Heisler-Martin and Rachi Mackerras

There are many, many galaxies in the vastness of the universe, and all of them have millions upon millions of planets in them. All of these planets orbit a star or two but a planet is never without a star, these stars help the formation of life itself. Not all planets are close to their sun, and some planets are too close to their sun, thus making the formation of life on those planets impossible. Some planets are placed just right, this area is called the Goldilocks zone, and this is the perfect placement of planets for life on these planets to begin.

The idea of life on other planets has been around for many decades, but none of it has ever been proven. There are many different types of life that could form on other planets, such as single celled and multi celled



organisms which can lead to complex life through evolution. On Earth the cells need oxygen to survive, although this may be different on other planets. It's possible they don't need oxygen, but instead need methane gas or carbon monoxide to survive. There's really no guaranteed way to tell what they need to survive, everything works differently

There are many, many planets in our universe, over 50 quintillion of them. Some of them are inhabitable for life to form but we have yet to find any life on any of them. This is called the Fermi Paradox. One of the main theories on why we haven't found any life on other planets is because there is a metaphorical "filter" called the Great Filter. The Great Filter was created by Robert Hanson and theorizes that there is a metaphorical filter in which civilizations have to pass through in order to progress through evolution. The filter could be many things, for example, agriculture, fire, and hunting. If a civilization is able to pass these filters then they may be able to become advanced civilizations. As for life on Earth, we are not sure if we have passed the filters or have yet to hit a roadblock to progress to an advanced civilization. If we haven't yet passed all the filters and can't get past one of the filters, it's possible we may go extinct like the other possible civilizations that couldn't pass one of the filters.

There are 3 main civilization types: Type I, this civilization is able to harness the entire energy of its home planet. Type II, this civilization is able to harness the entire energy of its star. Type III, this civilization is able to harness the entire energy of its galaxy. These 3 types were created by Nikolai Kardashev, and it is called the Kardashev scale. Currently we are 0.72 on the Kardashev scale, estimated to reach Type I in the next 100-200 years.

In conclusion, the possibility of life on other planets is very possible but it could only be non-intelligent life such as mammals and birds. Or there could be a Type III civilization out there which passed all the barriers.

What If I Hate Homeschooling?

by Lenny Jelisavcic

I absolutely hate homeschooling, and I know there are some who agree with me. While there are many cons to homeschooling for both parents and their kid(s), others like it. Unhappy homeschoolers even have found ways to cope with not being in a traditional school.

There are lots of cons to homeschooling for kids. When your

parents are your teachers, you may become more reliant on them helping you, so you may develop a dependence on them, which is not what many kids want. Some homeschooled kids socialize less since they're not at a traditional school always around a bunch of kids their age. Nina Watson, 14, says "I like the idea of going to a real school because of the social aspects of a real school." When kids are homeschooled and not frequently socializing, they sometimes feel like they're losing the social skills they would have learned in a traditional school.

When kids are instructed by their parents, they're more likely to get into fights with them out of frustration, which can damage their relationship with family members. Arguing can also create a stressful work/study environment. And because some people outside of the homeschool world may not be in favor of homeschooling, others may discriminate against the kids and/or their parents. While some, like Zoe Goncalves, 17, enjoy homeschooling, others wish they were in a traditional school. Some, like Zoe, like it because it supports their main goals. There are even homeschooling classes and programs, but some homeschoolers imagine them not being as fun or big as school classes. Margie Campbell, another homeschool mom says, "I would say the most difficult part about homeschooling is finding a peer group and consistently being able to connect with other homeschoolers. Children who go to a traditional school will see their friends every day. This isn't the case with homeschoolers."

Homeschooling can be really hard for parents. Unlike a traditional school, when kids are homeschooled, they don't have as many teachers: the parents might be their only teachers. Parents have to spend a lot more time on their kids, which can be overwhelming. If you decide to send your homeschooled kid to



homeschooling classes, they'll probably cost money, unlike a public school. When you homeschool your kid, the school system monitors the kid's academic work to ensure they're covering the core subjects and other basic requirements like fire safety. When you have multiple kids, it can be a lot of work to give each of your kids the attention they need. According to homeschool mom Adrienne Jensen, "The burden of your child's whole education can feel really heavy at times. I don't want to mess it up, so there's always a voice in the back of my mind worrying about all the things we are not getting to and the ways I may be letting my kids down."

The best solution for coping with negative feelings about homeschooling is to focus on what you have and can do, not what you don't have and can't do. You should identify your strengths and weaknesses. Look online for homeschooling classes you may prefer. If you long for a traditional school, thinking about it may make you sad and it may be harder to focus on your homeschool work. Finding a tutor you get along with can help with work and may make homeschooling easier and less stressful. Your parents may be able to talk to you about your problems and put you in a traditional school, or help

you get through your homeschool work. Your parents may be supportive of your future goals and help you reach them. According to a comment on Quora (a question and answer website) If you cannot go to a traditional school and homeschooling isn't working out either, and you're old enough to drop out of school (age 17 and up), you can quit school and find a job to support yourself.

As many cons to homeschooling as there are, there are ways to deal with it some may find helpful. Another reason I hate homeschooling is that only 3.3% of the U.S. population is homeschooled, so I feel like I don't fit in. Most importantly, once you leave the traditional school world and enter the homeschool community, it can be challenging to get back to a real school (at least in NYC). Unhappy homeschoolers, however, sometimes either get back in a traditional school, or adjust to homeschooling.

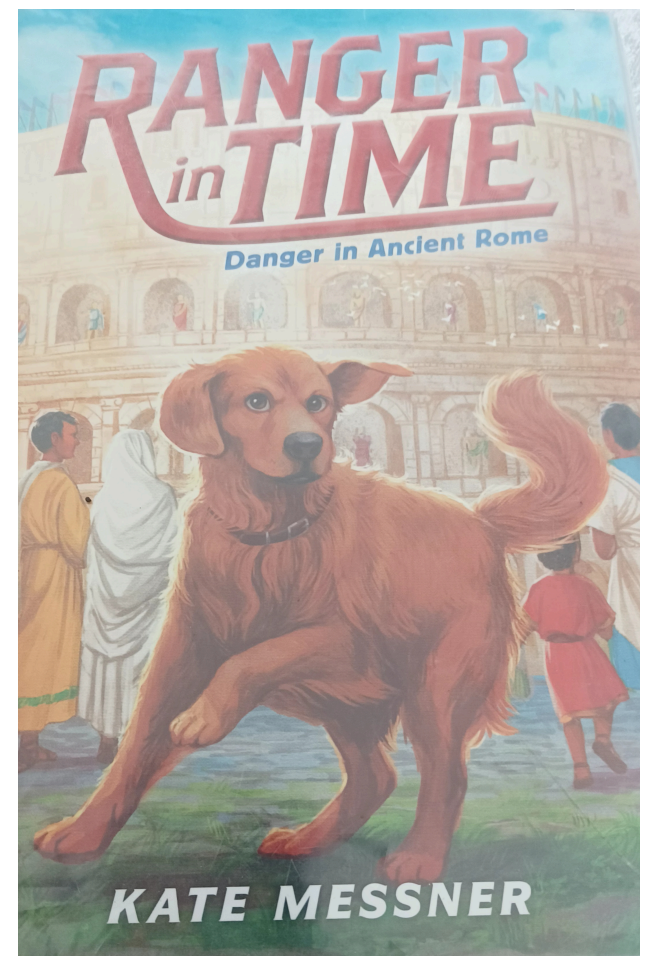
Children's Book Day

by Emma Ledesma
Children's Book Day

I loved reading children's books when I was younger, and I still read them now! Saturday April 2nd is Children's Book Day so I will be sharing my top six favorite children's books! This Children's Book Day, relive the days of your childhood by reading any of the books listed here! I know I will read a few!

William Shakespeare His Life and Times is written by Kristen McDermott and Ari Berk. It is a great book for children of all ages. I read it recently and I love the art and the writing. The book makes you feel as if you are in Shakespeare's time. The book is only thirty-one pages, but the lift the flaps give hidden details about Shakespeare's plays and about his time. I recommend this book for ages nine and up, since it has a variety of information about Shakespeare.

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie is written by Laura Joffe Numeroff. This adorable story is about a mouse who loves to eat cookies, draw pictures, and more. I love the art, which looks like a six-year-old



wrote the story. I recommended this book for ages four through eight.

Fox in Socks by Dr. Seuss is a hilarious story about a crazy fox who loves to wear socks. The fox goes on an adventure making clever rhymes along the way. If you have read Dr. Seuss you will probably enjoy *The Fox in Socks*. I have always enjoyed Dr. Seuss rhymes in all of his books and the fantastical characters. This book is for all ages.

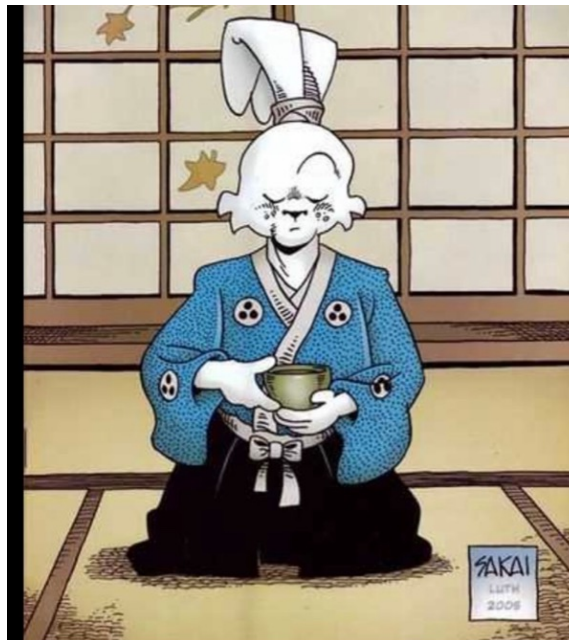
I also enjoyed reading various fairy tales such as *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and more. I have always enjoyed fairy tales, because they transport you to different places. I also recommend any of these fairy tales for all ages.

A book series I enjoy reading is *The Magic Treehouse* by Mary Pope Osborne which shares the adventures of the brother and sister Jack and Annie. They love reading and their magic treehouse magically transports them to the places mentioned in their books. This series is for all ages.

Ranger in Time by Kate Messner is also a great children's series for all ages. If you enjoy stories about dogs, time traveling, or historical fiction, you might enjoy the *Ranger in Time* book series. I discovered this series recently, and I am officially obsessed! *Ranger* is a time traveling golden retriever who failed as a rescue dog due to his love of squirrel chasing. He uses his magical first aid kit, which transports him to any child that needs his help. *Ranger* goes on the *Titanic* in *Disaster on the Titanic*, travels to the time of slavery in *Long Road to Freedom*, and travels to Rome in and learns about gladiators in *Danger in Ancient Rome*. There are many thrilling stories to choose from!

Usagi Yojimbo: An Epic Samurai Tale for Everyone

Part 2 of a 2-part Book Review



by Pablo Garces Kiley

You may remember that a few weeks ago I published part 1 of my book review of Stan Sakai's *Usagi Yojimbo* series. I explained that I like Stan Sakai's *Usagi Yojimbo* series because of his fun action scenes, his detailed drawings, and his hand-drawn illustrations. And now I am going to talk about how Stan Sakai's comic teaches us the amazing culture and history of Japan without droning on in a boring fashion that we might associate with dull history lessons that could be far more interesting.

This next story, *Death Rites*, is an example of Sakai teaching us culture in a fun way. Here, a Buddhist priest named Sanshobo finds the body of a woman named Haruko who hung herself in despair. Sanshobo and his fellow priests discuss and prepare to cremate the body, a customary way of respecting the body after the person has died. It's also interesting how they say they will chant holy Buddhist sutras over her body. Because they are Buddhists, this shows how much respect they have for her spirit even though she was not related to them in any special way, and they never knew her in life. I like how this story makes me curious about their culture, and then I get to follow the characters around and learn more about their culture as they themselves experience it.

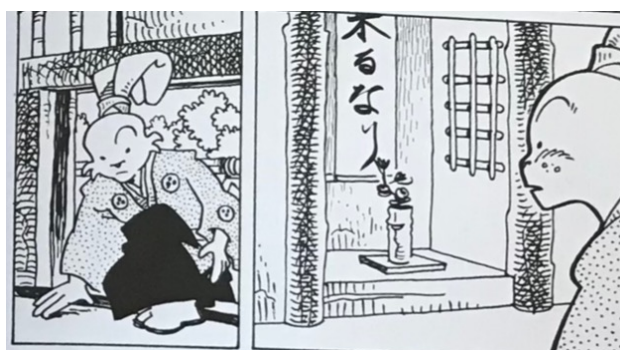
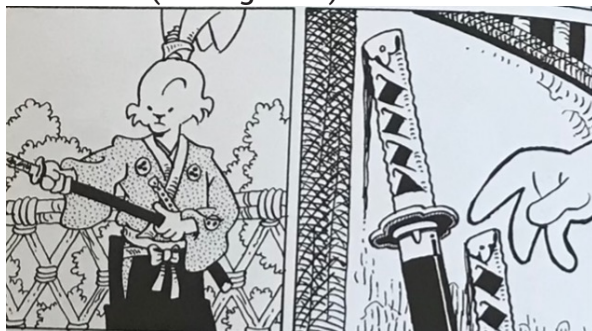
It sort of reminds me of reading *Harry Potter*. In that series, whenever something is said or happens that I don't understand, Harry also wants to know about it and asks a question, so I get my answers along with him as he is growing and learning about the world of magic.



In this next example, from the story *Foxfire*, Sakai teaches us about an ancient Japanese legend about kitsune (foxes). Kitsune are foxes that, after they grow to be 100, can shapeshift (sometimes into humans), and when they reach the age of 1,000 years, they grow 9 tails, and their fur becomes golden. Kitsune have widely varying personalities; some of these kitsune can be wise, helpful (especially to travelers), and others can be tricky, untrustworthy, and mischievous, if provoked. Sometimes kitsune appear as mysterious, ghostly lights that can merge the shapes of fox and fire so that in the heart of the fire is a face or voice of a fox, or the fox's fur takes on a ghostly glow. These foxes, who work for Inari, a Shinto Kami, (a deity of the native Japanese religion before Buddhism) are called Kitsunebi, or Foxfire. In Sakai's story he shows the two side of the kitsune personalities. At first in the story, Usagi saves a fox being chased by hunters. This fox appears to be just a normal fox, is not magical in any way, and is only interested in jumping into Usagi's

kimono (robe) to hide. Later, Usagi asks a peasant woman for shelter for the night, but we soon realize she is not your normal peasant woman. She is in fact a Kitsunebi, the most advanced type of fox that can shapeshift and control minds. She is a malevolent trickster and wants to take advantage of Usagi and take him to a gathering of Foxfires. And it is here that the fox that Usagi saved earlier on reappears and fights the mischievous Kitsunebi controlling Usagi's mind. With this other fox, Sakai shows us an example of the helpful type of kitsune, especially to travelers. Sakai makes the old legend engaging and fun to follow. This really opened me up to learning about all kinds of Japanese myths and folklore that wouldn't have drawn me so quickly before. And what really gets my goat is that people believed this. It's not just something that Sakai made up to entertain his readers. And it shows how they felt like nature was unpredictable, and was not always under their control.

In this next example, Sakai teaches us about Chanoyu, the Japanese tea ceremony that is still practiced today. What I think is brilliant is that at first as we read the story, it is not clear what we're reading about because there's no narration or explanation of what is happening. Instead, he is just showing it, and that is the wonder of how comics allow to "read" without words. All we see is Usagi walking through a little garden of stillness and silence. We look peacefully upon him through many perspectives; we get aerial and face-level perspectives, and also from the ground looking at his feet. We then see him wash his hands, and take off his sandals, and it all seems coordinated, like a ritual of respect. Even more special than that is how he leaves his swords outside the tea house before kneeling respectfully and quietly entering a fusuma (sliding door).



We know that he takes his swords with him everywhere, even when he's sleeping, so this is surprising when he removes them. He then looks up and sees the writing on the wall; Kitaru-nari (welcome). All of these actions show that the tea-house is a place that welcomes you to calm your senses.

At first, this story seems quiet and retained. But when you think about it, it is bursting with internal action and emotion because the tea ceremony, in a way, is more powerful, as his best friend Tomoe is hosting it. Everything in the ceremony is planned and part of a tradition that helps to calm the senses. She boils hot water, pours crumbly green tea leaves into a traditional, tiny teacup, and whisks the two ingredients thoroughly, turning the teacup around so it faces Usagi in a respectful manner. He takes it in his hands, sips the drink down, admires the craftsmanship of the cup, turns it around once more to face Tomoe, and then they end the ceremony with a very short conversation about the calligraphy and pine sprigs that Tomoe has carefully arranged. It would be different if this were just a random person, but he can appreciate it more because his best friend is hosting it. We also know that he will soon be leaving the Geishu province where he is right now, so this is his last special interaction with his best friend for a while. The tea ceremony is Tomoe's way of honoring him, and by accepting the invite, and being respectful while drinking her tea, he is honoring her as well. Chanoyu is a two-sided tradition; if someone is honoring you, you must honor them back.

Since I discovered Usagi Yojimbo a few years ago, it has been the best

comic I've ever read. It's an easy read, and the sword-fighting cats, rats, rabbits, dogs, pandas, and stoats have been easily likable from the first panel. Usagi has also opened my eyes to this amazing culture that I'd never really payed attention to before. The thing that is so cool about Sakai's works of art, is that he inspires people to enjoy Japanese culture using a samurai rabbit from the Edo period. And man, does he do a good job. I've enjoyed Usagi with my family and also my friends. Long story short, Usagi is for everyone.

