



Statement of Purpose Sample

In the following sample Statement of Purpose, donated by an Academic Writing Center GA, you can get a sense of the structure and flow of a statement of purpose, as discussed in the corresponding “Crafting a Statement of Purpose Workshop.” Though not perfect, this sample reflects some of the principles discussed in the workshop, including following guidelines, tailoring to a specific program, and using concrete examples.

While I was an undergraduate, I was fascinated by literary theory and the critical context it created for literary work within the world. Although I wrote and read poetry during this time, I actively avoided taking creative writing courses because I feared that creative writing would cause me to somehow “stray” from the more criticism-based path. Perhaps I was right. Once I had taken the only two poetry courses offered by my undergraduate institution, I had fully switched gears.

Much of my incubation as a poet has occurred within the studio-based atmosphere of Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s MFA program; its flexibility and creative writing focus have allowed me to delve into contemporary poetry and fiction in a way that a more theory-heavy program may not have. Although this approach has been extremely beneficial to me as a poet, I would like to learn more about contemporary poetic theory. I’m drawn to the University of Cincinnati’s program of study specifically because of how consciously the program marries these two approaches – allowing its students a flexible, studio-like atmosphere, while remaining in conversation with critical and literary approaches. Given this unique approach, UC’s program would allow me to blend my fascination with theory and my love of poetic craft in a way that no other program would.

In addition, UC’s openness to cross-genre work is essential to my particular scholarly and creative interests. At SIUC, I explored genres outside poetry by taking a forms course in literature-to-screenplay adaptation, a fiction workshop, and a fiction-based independent study that focused on cross-cultural archetypes in fairytales. Outside of the MFA program, I also

completed Rochelle Hurt's short forms class through the Loft Literary Center and Francesca Lia Block's fairytale writing class through the Fine Arts Works Center.

Reworking fairytales for my fiction classes inspired me to begin writing persona poems that invoked a mythic or archetypal figure. I wrote so many of these persona poems that, in addition to my book-length manuscript, I also defended a chapbook-length manuscript of persona poems as part of my MFA thesis. This manuscript, titled *Love & a Loaded Gun*, recasts various well-known stories from history, folktale, and pop culture through a feminist lens. By borrowing the voices of Joan of Arc, Judy Garland, Bonnie Parker, and others, my poems reconstruct women's stories in their own voices and challenge the static, male-driven narratives in which these women appear. The manuscript is currently under consideration at two major chapbook contests, and I have plans to expand it into my second full manuscript after the first book-length project is complete.

My book-length project is built around two main epicenters; the first is my mother's decline and death due to leukemia. The second is an examination of two settings: central Pennsylvania, where both my mother and I grew up, and Toulouse, France, where I was studying abroad before and after my mother's hospice care. Despite the lyrical tone of the poems, I structured the manuscript to read like a fractured narrative, one that conveys my personal arc from child to motherless adult. I shaped these poems, and the manuscript itself, around themes of trauma, mental and physical illness, homesickness, and bravery.

Although my main focus in my pursuit of a PhD is my own writing, I am attracted to UC's emphasis on teaching creative writing. While at SIUC, I took a Creative Writing Pedagogy Class and subsequently taught two creative writing courses—ENG 119, an introductory creative writing course that covered basic craft techniques in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry; and ENG 382A, a more focused introduction to poetry course. Because students are not generally assigned contemporary poetry texts outside of creative writing courses, I emphasize exposure to living poets by choosing books by poets such as Adrian Matejka, Bruce Snider, Lauren K. Alleyne, and Traci Brimhall, and occasionally inviting authors to answer students' questions via Skype. In this way, poetry becomes a relevant part of their experience and allows me to open a conversation about literary citizenship.

My belief in literary citizenship extends beyond the classroom. Since entering my MFA program, I have served as an intern and editorial assistant for *Crab Orchard Review*, mentored

current and former creative writing students in applying to graduate school, and served as a volunteer instructor and RA for SIUC's Young Writers Workshop. In the past few years, I won several poetry prizes, including an Academy of American Poets University Prize, *Jabberwock Review's* Nancy D. Hargrove Editors Prize, and *Ruminate's* Janet B. McCabe Prize. In addition, my poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in journals such as *Nimrod*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Passages North*, and *Yemassee*, among others.

Thank you for considering my application, and I hope that the development of my creative projects, my commitment to literary citizenship, and my success in publishing have demonstrated my interest in your program.