

The past year of my life—being an international student at [Название Школы]—has been a formative experience that triggered my reflection on my identity and future development. I used to largely define myself through my passion for and expertise in humanities and social sciences. Living and studying in another country also brought me increased awareness of my cultural background, the way it affects my perception of the world and the way others perceive me.

Since my childhood I had proclivity for humanities, especially for Russian history and literature. My proficiency in history was a well-known fact in my high school, which brought me a number of useful, but sometimes amusing experiences. For example, my history teacher once asked me to conduct a lesson instead of her, when she could not come to the class. Obviously, I encountered some issues with discipline, as I had to teach my own peers, but in the end my “students” learned their topic well, and I received an invaluable experience. My academic passion also drove me to apply to [Название Школы]—one of the most respected schools in Russia—for the last year of my high school. Among all applicants, I received the highest score on all admission tests, which included history and literature (oral presentation). I am very proud of this acceptance, which was the result of hard work and became my most significant achievement for the time being. Unfortunately, my experience with humanities in the U.S. so far has been limited. Currently, I cannot take as many classes as I would like, because I am involved in the ESL program—having concentrated on developing my English skills. However, I am continuing doing my independent reading from sophomore History and Literature textbooks, and planning on taking more classes next semester.

An added perspective to my current self-identification comes from my cultural background. Being born in Russia, I bear certain perspective and intuitions about the world, which become evident as I encounter different cultures. As all international students, I had “cultural shock” when I first came to the U.S. It took me a long time to get accustomed to simplest things, e.g. realize that the phrase “what is up?” does not in fact represent a question, but merely a greeting. However, it also helped me to understand certain things about the American culture, as well as about my own: I came to think that Americans often communicate in an indirect or metaphorical way—this sometimes is a difficult thing for a Russian, as my language cultivates a direct and straight communication. This fact about the Russian language and culture would not have become evident to me if it were not for my cross-cultural experience. Another interesting thing that I have noticed is how much my nationality affects my perceived identity: many of my friends in the U.S. recognize me as a Russian, and will use this description ahead of naming my personal traits. This has probably resulted because of the comparisons that I make between the American and Russian environments, as my background and knowledge about my national culture and history allows me to bring this additional perspective into my classroom discussions and

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personal conversations. All these aspects prompt me to critically evaluate my own background and identity, and aspire to develop further.

To conclude, participating in the New York University Summer Session will help me to achieve two main objectives, associated with the two crucial aspects of my identity. First, I want to understand the process of studying in the American academia: to learn more about the differences, both in the general approach and in the way of perceiving humanities and social sciences. Second, I want to continue my exploration of the American culture. New York University, being a prominent U.S. institution located in an iconic American city, will be an ideal fit for my goals.