

Why I Want To Be a Geologist

I abhorred geology as a child. That is to be expected, however, if your geologist father makes you climb mountains for fun (when all I wanted to do was write). I grew up in Scotland, the birthplace of modern geology, so tall mountains and metamorphic rocks were not hard to come by, nor were father-led geological field trips. The rebellious child that I was, I quickly learned to ignore conversations focused on turbidite formation or the progradation of the shoreline. When we moved to Houston, Texas, however, this was no longer a problem. There are few geological beauties around Houston; one must drive hundreds of miles for topography. But I didn't care – I wanted to be a creative writer. While on a drive to Kansas City, Missouri during my senior year of high school, my family and I took a detour to Mt. Magazine, the tallest point in Arkansas. On the top of the mountain, my father explained how synclines formed the mountain ridges and anticlines occupied the adjacent valleys. To my surprise, I found this information intensely interesting. Thus, I decided to select geology on all of my college applications. I have absolutely no regrets.

Geology, in my opinion, is the most artistic science. The inside pages of most field notebooks I've seen look like professional landscapes. What attracts me, however, are the similarities between geology and creative writing. As a geologist, I am able to contribute to a story that is 4.56 billion years long. As a member of the Undergraduate Honors Research Program, I get to write the story of a magma's ascent to the surface to form one of the world's largest porphyry copper-gold deposits. By conducting research on magmatic xenoliths and by interpreting plagioclase zonation patterns, I will be able to tell the story of the magma's ascent. Did the magma assimilate any wall rock components on its way to the surface? Or was it recharged by hotter, more mafic magma? The beauty of geology is that most of Earth's history has manifested itself in some way – in lavas that spew out of volcanoes, in folds that deform the Earth's crust, in faults that cut different rock formations. As a geologist, I get to devote my life to writing, and in many cases, rewriting Earth's history.

My experience at the University of Texas at Austin Jackson School of Geosciences has been profound. I have developed a passion for geology intense enough to cause a desire to become a research professor. Now, I would never space out during a geology-centric conversation with my father. In fact, I look forward to them whenever I visit home. I would do anything for the chance to go back to Scotland and hike the highlands.