



Proficient | Exemplar Essay

A Story About Laughter

The Healing Power of Laughter



Plot and Ideas

The storyline is engaging, and the exposition supports the plot (“Whenever I become blue ...it always helps me to put my trivial problems into perspective”). Purposeful description situates the conflict (“My mom had [never been to a funeral] for someone her own age”) as the narrative builds toward an effective resolution (“your problems and worries go away for that one moment and sometimes that’s enough”).



Development and Elaboration

The narrative maintains a clear setting. The writing uses meaningful description and dialogue to introduce and develop engaging characters who advance the story (“Heartbroken, my mom bought a gray skirt and traveled back to her former hometown for the funeral”) and reveal the central idea (“The shrill ring of the phone brought her the saddest news she’d ever heard on a bright, sunny day”).



Organization and Sequencing

The narrative utilizes a clear sequence of events and incorporates pacing to support the development of the story. There are effective transitions and other narrative techniques to signal shifts in time or setting (“Mom’s story begins with a phone call” and “traveled back”). The resolution offers closure to and reflects on the course of events (“All your problems and worries go away for that one moment”).



Language and Style

Descriptive words and figurative language vividly convey feelings (“Laughter is like a rubber band”). Writing is interesting and builds the voice of the narrator (“Mom always kind of lights up at this next part”). The point of view is consistently maintained. The language suggests a serious tone (“Laughter has the ability to brighten up a person’s day as long as they choose to be open to its healing powers”).



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait ‘looks like’ in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see “25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays” by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

A Story About Laughter



Notes

The Healing Power of Laughter

It's true that "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." Laughter is like a rubber band; no matter how far you may get from another person, laughter has the ability to snap you right back into place. Whenever I become blue, I remember my mom telling me about this one year in her high school life, and it always helps me to put my trivial problems into perspective. Mom was one of those lucky people who didn't always realize how lucky she had it, but the year she turned 16 was one of those years that she always told my siblings and I about her life and her lessons became ours.

Mom's story begins with a phone call from her old friend Sheila, one of a group of four people who my mom had known her entire school life. The shrill ring of the phone brought her the saddest news she'd ever heard on a bright, sunny day. When mom answered the phone, Sheila said, "I have the worst news." The way Sheila told it, one day their friend Dan had a cold and the next day he was in the Medical Center in a coma. Within two more days, he was dead, and this is why she was calling.

Heartbroken, my mom bought a gray skirt and traveled back to her former hometown for the funeral. My mom had been to funerals for her grandparents before, but never for someone her own age, so it was heartbreaking. Dan's mother greeted my mom and her friends tearfully, saying "Girls, I'm so glad you're here. I just can't believe what happened." She directed them to a special pew right behind the family where she wanted Sheila, mom, CarolAnn, and the rest of Dan's friends to sit together. Somehow they made it through the service. The eulogy was over and everyone who loved him had had a chance to speak. Dan was so much fun and it didn't seem possible that he was just gone. They were all sniffing and crying.

Mom always kind of lights up at this next part. It was the last hymn that did it.

You know how when you're not supposed to laugh, it makes you laugh harder? Well, the organ started droning on and this woman in front of my mom and her friends started singing. She always describes her voice as a high soprano, like an opera singer. Something about this made them all start laughing. Of course they couldn't laugh at a funeral so Mom and her friends really tried not to. They shook with the effort to not laugh out loud. Laughter is infectious so every time this woman hit a high note, they'd look at each other and laugh even harder. It must have looked as if Mom was sobbing at this point because a woman behind her put a hand on her shoulder and patted her comfortingly. It was too much for them! They were practically hysterical with laughter at this point. Tears were rolling down their cheeks.

Even though this was one of the saddest days of their lives, laughter brightened their day. This is a happy memory for them all and even now, Mom laughs uncontrollably when repeating this story. "No matter how hard you try to resist it, sometimes it can get to a point where you just can't keep it inside you any longer and you have to laugh," Mom always says. All your problems and worries go away for that one moment and sometimes that's enough. Laughter has the ability to brighten up a person's day as long as they choose to be open to its healing powers.