



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Expect the Unexpected

People Will Surprise You



Plot and Ideas

The storyline effectively establishes an engaging, plausible context and is built on an exposition that supports the plot ("First, let's begin with the setting of my unexpected friendship"). The storyline naturally builds toward a climax ("I was totally shocked in every way") and resolution. The demands of the task are fully met, clearly telling a story about a time when an unexpected result was produced.



Development and Elaboration

The narrative establishes and maintains a clear setting ("It all started in 5th period Social Studies class"). Interesting, engaging characters are developed and advance the story. Meaningful dialogue is well-written throughout the narrative ("Cindy, this is great. I can't believe you took the time to do this by yourself," she said excitedly").



Organization and Sequencing

The narrative has a definite sequence of events and establishes a beginning, middle, and end. Effective transitions are used throughout ("for some reason," "suddenly," "in the end") that enhance the narrative. The resolution offers closure to and reflects on the events of the story ("Some people do change over time, and it is important for us to give them a chance").



Language and Style

The narrative uses descriptive words, sensory language, and figurative language to create imagery ("icy glares and venomous words"). The writer has a unique style, and the sentence structure is varied throughout ("See, I am a very studious student. I like to succeed, and I love getting A's"). Point of view is established and maintained.



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.

Expect the Unexpected



People Will Surprise You

Middle school to say the very least, has been very unexpected. My rival, Joanna, became my strongest ally, someone that I never thought I would like. A lot changed a lot for me, including breaking down the wall I had built around myself, a shell of icy glares and venomous words. Since the beginning of school, I have always kept a barrier around myself as to not get hurt by others. I'm not quite sure why this is, but it has become a part of my personality. That is until I was partnered with my rival Joanna for my Social Studies project.

First, let's begin with the setting of my unexpected friendship. It all started in 5th period Social Studies class. My Social Studies teacher, Mrs. Key, an older lady with a kind face and slightly graying hair welcomed us to class. "Today you receive your project instructions," she said loudly. I waited with anticipation. See, I am a very studious student. I like to succeed and I love getting A's. "Your project will be on a president of your choice. You and a partner will have 4 weeks to complete every part of the project." Just then my face turned white. A partner? I liked to work alone and I really did not trust partners with my grade. "Now, I have chosen your partners for this project," Mrs. Key stated. She went through the list of students and their partners. As each name was called, my heart sunk more. The few people I knew in the class had been assigned to someone else. It was coming down to the wire. "And Cindy..." she said as I breathed in anxiously. "You will be working with Joanna on this project," she continued. I tried to look as happy as I could to Mrs. Key, but deep inside I was raging. I disliked Joanna since elementary school when she used to get everyone to make fun of me. As I got

older, I learned to ignore her, but I still thought she was a nasty mean girl.

I breathed out and did what any normal person who wanted an A would do, and I went to Joanna to see if she wanted to plan out of project. "So, who do you want to choose for our project?" she asked me. "Well, I was thinking..." and before I could even answer she blurted out, "Let's choose Abraham Lincoln. How easy would that be?" she added. I was super annoyed at her response, but for some reason, I was able to keep my cool. Normally I shut down and close others off when I'm frustrated, but instead I replied, "Well, I was thinking of someone that everyone will not choose for this project. Let's be a little different," I added. "How about Zachary Taylor?"

She sighed and said, "Fine Cindy, you always want to be a little teacher's pet and go above and beyond. Let's do whatever you want." She flipped her hair and walked away. In spite of this, I held my tongue and celebrated that I kind of won the first battle. It was unexpected that she would agree to let me choose the president, but I was just happy to be able to do so.

The next few days were very difficult. Finding time to work with Joanna was hard since she claimed she was so busy, so I decided to start working on my own. Three days later, I came to class with an outline of our assignment. I was afraid that I would get a mean girl response again, but I really wanted an A, so I showed Joanna my notes during homeroom. She ultimately surprised me when I showed her some cool facts I had already found about Zachary Taylor. "Wow, did he really die from eating cherries and milk? How crazy!" she said. "Cindy, this is great. I can't believe you took the time to do this by yourself!" she said excitedly.

"It's no problem," I said. "I just wanted to get started early, so we don't have to do it all at the end," I replied. Then she really surprised me. "I'm sorry that I've been a little hard to get in touch with. I didn't actually want to work with you at first because you sometimes make me feel dumb with everything you know. And

you normally don't really act friendly towards me." I was totally shocked in every way. I was not expecting Joanna to be this kind to me and I didn't realize that I made her feel that way. I told her that I was still sad about when she made fun of me in elementary school. "Oh, my gosh! I'm so sorry about all that! I forgot about that," she said. "I'm sorry I didn't mean to make you feel dumb," I said back and we both smiled. What I expected to happen totally surprised me, and suddenly I was really excited to work with her.

We decided to work on the project that weekend at my house. When the time arrived, every detail went smoothly. In the end, I realized that often people will surprise you. I learned that some people do change over time, and it is important for us to give them a chance. The day I got assigned to work with Joanna was an unexpected time because all in all, Joanna and I became really good friends. As a result, I am thankful that Mrs. Key assigned us to work together that fateful day in Social Studies.