



Proficient | Exemplar Essay

Home: The Blueprints of our Lives

Warm Inside



Clarity and Focus

A clear thesis is presented in the introduction (“A heartwarming mood... uses the memoir to show that love is what truly makes a home”), and though some points stray from the central idea (“they struggled both personally and financially”), the demands of the prompt are met.



Development

While relevant examples are used to support the thesis, the essay relies heavily on quotations from the text. Focusing on well-chosen evidence to support and explain the central idea would move this essay to a 4.



Organization

The organizational structure is appropriate, as a clear introduction and concluding statement are present. Transitions throughout the essay help to connect evidence and ideas well; more clear transitions between paragraphs could be utilized.



Language and Style

Sentence structure is varied and increases in complexity throughout the essay. Word choices are appropriate (“heartwarming,” “love spread beyond,” “thrilled and thankful,” “gratitude”) and a formal style is employed.



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.

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A heartwarming mood is what Narciso Rodriguez creates in his sweet memoir, "Home." He uses this memoir to show that love is what truly makes a home. He says, "I will never forget how my parents turned this simple house into a home." What made his childhood house a home was the warmth and openness his family showed to everyone around them. Rodriguez writes, "My parents always kept their arms and their door open to the many people we considered family, knowing they would do the same for us." The reader then sees that love spread beyond Rodriguez's home and into the neighborhood. "In our neighborhood, despite customs elsewhere, all these cultures came together in great solidarity and friendship." He shared this strong feeling of acceptance because although the neighbors were all from different cultures and backgrounds, they all became one "family."

His parents created a cheerful and loving home even though they had to work so hard. Rodriguez admits that "they struggled both personally and financially," but even though they struggled, their joy and love gave Rodriguez a childhood he is grateful for. "They came selflessly, as many immigrants do, to give their children a better life, even though it meant leaving behind their families, friends, and careers in the country they loved." Looking back, the author understands the strength his parents needed to have in order to create such a special home. "I will always be grateful to my parents for their love and sacrifice," he says. "I've often told them that what they did was a much more courageous thing that I could have ever done." After Rodriguez's parents immigrated to the United States from Cuba, they chose to pass along their home culture to their children. Even though they left their country

behind, they brought their appreciation of it into their home. "My parents both shared a love of cooking duties and unwittingly passed on to me their rich culinary skills and a love of cooking that is still with me today (and for which I am eternally grateful). Passionate Cuban music (which I adore to this day) filled the air, mixing with the aromas of the kitchen." The descriptive language pulls the reader in. His tone is thrilled and thankful for his culture and shows how grateful Rodriguez is that his parents gave up their lives in Cuba to give him a better chance in America.

This thankfulness is important to this memoir, because he says, "in reality, there is no way to express my gratitude for the spirit of generosity impressed upon me... and the demonstration of how important family and friends are.... and these teachings have been the basis of my life." All the love that filled his house made it a home for him, and he learned it all from his parents. These are a few different examples throughout the memoir that show the mood that the author creates of love and gratitude.