



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

A Story About Laughter

Don't Take Life Too Seriously!



Plot and Ideas

The storyline skillfully establishes an engaging context. The exposition supports the establishment of the plot (“I was determined to deliver the speech without fear or anxiety”). Purposeful description appropriately situates the conflict and builds smoothly toward an exciting climax (“At that moment, I realized how ridiculous this all was, and I started to chuckle too”).



Development and Elaboration

The narrative develops interesting, engaging characters (“I began strategically preparing for battle, like any general facing a particularly feared enemy”) who advance the story. The central idea is revealed through meaningful description (“Night after night, I practiced tirelessly in front of mirrors”) and reflection (“I’ll always recommend laughter as a way to not take yourself so seriously”).



Organization and Sequencing

The narrative establishes a sequence of events with a clear beginning, middle, and end and effectively incorporates pacing to enhance the development of the story. Explicit transitions signal shifts in time (“Over the next weeks,” “At that moment,”). The resolution offers closure to and reflects on the course of events (“I continued to laugh until all the tension and fear simply disappeared”).



Language and Style

The writer uses vivid description (“ink had blurred from my sweaty hands fidgeting”) and figurative language to convey the narrator’s feelings (“My laughter bubbled up like lava...”). Purposeful, interesting vocabulary helps to build the narrator’s unique voice and support a humorous tone (“I went home and began to research the heck out of Kepler’s Laws of Motion”). The point of view is consistently 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.

A Story About Laughter



Don't Take Life Too Seriously!

My story begins on a distant day in middle school, when I could have used more laughter. The old saying that "Laughter is the best medicine" is truer than most people know. Laughing won't cure cancer, but it can cure a multitude of ills by removing tension and fear. Let me tell you a story that will hopefully show you best how laughter can help a person move from debilitating fear to triumph.

People always say that to overcome a fear, you must face it. At my middle school in the tiny little town of Sutlersville, my teachers must have been trying to make me face my fear of public speaking regularly. Oral reports and presenting powerpoints seem to be their favored method of torture. Or maybe the teachers at Central Middle School are a bunch of sadists. Sitting in class one day in the fall, I wasn't exactly surprised when Mr. Fowler, my 5th period astronomy teacher, made an announcement. "Class," he stated. "For our next unit, we are all going to research and present information from our next unit." Now, not being surprised doesn't mean I was happy about it. I was filled with dread. In the past, I always feared forgetting my speech and causing the class to laugh at me. This time I was determined to deliver the speech without fear or anxiety.

Later that night, I began strategically preparing for battle, like any general facing a particularly feared enemy. I went home and began to research the heck out of Kepler's Laws of Motion. Over the next weeks, I consulted multiple sources and cited them all carefully. Late into the nights, I spent hours putting all my notes into a presentation format that would blow away Mr. Kepler himself if he were listening. Night after night, I practiced tirelessly in front of mirrors and with my best friend Marquesa, probably the one person in the world who knew just how nervous presenting to the class made me.

Time flew by and it was finally the morning of the astronomy presentation.

The day dawned clear and cold. I confidently stepped onto the school bus and sat down next to Marquesa. "This time will be different," I told her.

Throughout the day, my fear and anxiety only grew as the day flew by. Soon enough, I was walking into 5th period in what seemed like 5 minutes, not 5 hours. When it was my turn, I walked slowly towards the front of the room. Finally, I turned to face the class. As I looked around the room, I knew that my face was shaped into a grimace, and even Marquesa wouldn't meet my eyes. She just looked at her lap and fiddled with something. Feeling all alone, I tried to smooth out my carefully prepared notes. The ink had blurred from my sweaty hands fidgeting with the cards while I waited my turn.

"Ahem." I cleared my throat and began. "K-k-kepler's L-l-l ...," I stuttered. The class filled with nervous giggles, and even the teacher was throwing sympathetic glances my way. And then, suddenly, it happened. "PhrrrrreeEEEEEP!" The loudest fart I'd ever heard ripped through the room! At first my classmates were silent, looking around the room. Then came the vehement denials. All around the room, echoes of "Not me!" sliced through the silence of the room. I was so flustered that I could barely speak, until I noticed everyone was now starting at me. In shock, I blurted out, "Well it wasn't ME!" My words hung in the air for a moment, and then a wave of laughter cascaded over my peers. It was as if I was a stand-up comedian and I just told the funniest joke they had ever heard.

At that moment, I realized how ridiculous this all was, and I started to chuckle too. My laughter bubbled up like lava from a volcano and was about as unstoppable. I continued to laugh until all the tension and fear simply disappeared. When I wiped the tears from my eyes, I saw Marquesa slipping something into her backpack. It was an old-fashioned, pink whoopee cushion! She gave me a sly wink and a clever smile, and sat back confidently in her chair. After all that, I was able to give my presentation with complete ease, and even earned a B+ on it.



Laughter--and Marquesa--saved me from sure humiliation that day. Certainly it strengthened the bonds of friendship between me and my best friend, but laughter also helped me to face my worst fear and overcome it. I wouldn't recommend the whoopee cushion method to everyone, but I'll always recommend laughter as a way to not take yourself so seriously.