



Developing | Exemplar Essay

America Singing

One American vs. Many Americans



Claim and Focus

This essay attempts a claim (“Langston’s poem is about Walt’s poem but about different people”), but it is neither specific nor exceptionally arguable. While there is some evidence of focus, it is not entirely effective in fully addressing the demands of the prompt.



Analysis and Evidence

While there is some evidence of analysis, it is mostly surface level (discussion of people, “I know this because...”). The response relies primarily on summary and any evidence that is provided is minimal and followed by very little explanation.



Organization

The response includes an attempt at an introduction and conclusion, but these do not fully support the writer’s claim. While the related topics of the poems are presented, a lack of transitions and organizational structure makes the writer’s ideas difficult to follow.



Language and Style

A formal style is not maintained throughout the essay. While some precise language is included, this language does not effectively address the complexity of the topic consistently.



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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Langston's poem is about Walt's poem but about different people. Walt's poem is about all of America's people who work really hard. For example, he talks about "mechanics, carpenter, mason, boatman, deckhand, shoemaker, hatter, wood-cutter, ploughboy, mother, young wife, and girl sewing and washing" (Whitman). Those are all the different kinds of jobs that people in America can have plus their are obviously a lot more they could have too. Langston's poem is only about one person though, so that makes it a little different, and that one person is is an African American. I know this because it says "I am the darker brother" (Hughes) so that means he has darker skin which makes him an African American. This person isn't allowed to be around when company comes over but he wants to be so he is going to be at the kitchen table tomorrow and not leave. No one will tell him to eat in the kitchen instead. So one poem is building more people off of just the one person.

Walt's poem seemed nicer though because everyone is partying at the end, but at the end of Langston's poem the one guy can't really party by himself. Walt says "at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly, singing with open mouths their strong melodious song" and Langston's poem is different. He just seems like he's kind of angry and he says "I, too, am America" (Hughes). So Langston's poem is about one person and America but Walt's poem is about lots of people and America so that's how they are built off of each other.