



Developing | Exemplar Essay

Mistakes Were Made

Making Mistakes



Plot and Ideas

The narrative establishes a plausible context (“My parents always say ‘you can go anywhere and do anything as long as you have your chores and homework finished’”). Some description is incorporated to establish the conflict (“So I told my mom that I had to go to Ernesto’s to finish this project but it was really so I could go see this girl”). The ideas attempt to fulfill the purpose and meet the demands of the prompt.



Development and Elaboration

The narrative makes little attempt to establish a setting (“It was a couple hours because the party was lit and Ernesto doesn’t live all that close to me so it took me a while to get home”). Characters are briefly introduced but are not fully developed to advance the story (“My mom believed me because I don’t usually lie to her”). Dialogue and description are minimal.



Organization and Sequencing

An uneven sequence of events works to signal a beginning, middle, and end. Some pacing to support development is attempted. The narrative does not clearly signal shifts in time (“I was late” and “It was a couple hours”). The narrative includes some attempt at a resolution (“It took them a long time to trust me again”), but it’s unclear how this is accomplished.



Language and Style

The narrative uses some descriptive words (“because the party was lit”), but overall language choices are simplistic and informal (“lit” and “Dude”). The writing attempts to engage readers and build a voice for the narrator (“Do you know how embarrassing it is...”), but the attempt is inconsistent. The narrative does not appear to successfully establish a tone or mood.



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.

Mistakes Were Made



Making Mistakes

It is easy to get in trouble before you even realize you are on a wrong path. I don't like making mistakes, but sometimes they are necessary to grow and learn. Lying is a very bad habit to get into and you almost always get caught.

When I was little, I lied all the time. It was never anything important either. Sometimes I got caught and sometimes I did not, but the story I want to tell today is about a time I lied last year and I learned never to do that again.

My parents always say "you can go anywhere and do anything as long as you have your chores and homework finished." Most of the time I'm ok with this because I don't have a lot of homework usually. But this one time, I had a project that I'd forgotten about and my best friend Ernesto was having a party. Like many teenagers, I didn't think about long term consequences. I knew I wanted to get to this party because this girl I like was going to be there. So I told my mom that I had to go to Ernesto's to finish this project but it was really so I could go see this girl. My mom believed me because I don't usually lie to her. I would have been ok except my ride left early and I had to walk home and I was late. Not a little late like 15 minutes either. It was a couple hours because the party was lit and Ernesto doesn't live all that close to me so it took me a while to get home. My mom and dad were so mad at me.

It took them a long time to trust me again. Do you know how embarrassing it is when your in high school and your parents call your friends parents to check up on you?? I will never lie like this again.