



Proficient | Exemplar Essay

A Proclamation About Rosa Parks

Putting Beliefs into Actions



Clarity and Focus

The introduction provides relevant context to orient the reader to the topic and presents a clear central idea (“President Obama’s speech for Rosa Parks was meant to... inspire us all to stand up against injustice in our own lives”). The essay is focused on developing and reflecting upon this idea, fulfilling the writing purpose.



Development

The central idea is supported with relevant facts (“When she was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a bus”) and evidence from the text (“Her courageous act of civil disobedience sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott- 381 days of peaceful protest”) that address the audience’s understanding of the topic.



Organization

A clear organizational structure is evident for the introduction, body, and conclusion. Transitional phrases show the relationship between paragraphs (“Even though the fight for equal rights had been going on for years,”) and help the reader follow the ideas presented.



Language and Style

An established formal style is maintained throughout, and the essay uses mostly correct, varied sentence structure. Precise language (“injustice,” “movement,” “prejudiced,” “defy,” “emphasized”) is consistently used to communicate ideas and effectively address the complexity of the topic.



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 Proclamation About Rosa Parks



Notes

Putting Beliefs into Actions

Our nation was changed because of people like Rosa Parks, who showed us that if equality is wanted, we must apply the law to everyone, not just some people. In the 1950's, everyone was supposed to be treated equally, but that was not the case. African-Americans were separated from whites and didn't have the same rights. On the 100th anniversary of Rosa Park's birthday, President Obama gave a speech about how we must work for equality, just like Rosa Parks. "We remind ourselves that although the principle of equality has always been self-evident, it has never been self-executing." This powerful quote means that while we know that treating each other as equals is the right thing to do, but for some reason, not everyone is ready or willing to do something about it. President Obama's speech for Rosa Parks was meant to celebrate her for being one of the many who put their beliefs into action, and inspire us all to stand up against injustice in our own lives.

Even though the fight for equal rights had been going on for a while, Parks's simple action on December 1st, 1955 brought a lot of attention around the world to the cause. When she was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a bus, Parks started a movement that would lead to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The people involved with this movement peacefully resisted, just as Rosa Parks had. "Her courageous act of civil disobedience sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott- 381 days of peaceful protest when ordinary men, women, and children sent the extraordinary message that second-class citizenship was unacceptable." The men, women, and children of the boycott understood that if they fought back with violence, there would be no turning point in their story. Realizing that

if they continued to believe in equality, but not act to make it happen, they would be stuck in a prejudiced, unequal world forever. They would have to calmly and repeatedly protest inequality to defy their reputation as a lesser race. "Hate cannot drive out hate," stated Martin Luther King, Jr., "only love can do that."

In his speech, President Obama said, "It has taken acts of courage from generations of fearless and hopeful Americans to make our country more just." He emphasized what a leader Rosa Parks was, and explained how she was a part of the reason why the country we live in today is so great. She did not simply take a stand on the bus for her own desires, she stood to make a difference and change the way all people were treated. Rosa Parks was a great hero of American history who helped shape our country into the nation it is today. She proved that freedom isn't really free, and that we have to work for equality, not just assume it is something we get for free.