



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

America Singing

Hearing All of America Singing



Claim and Focus

This essay makes a very clear, arguable claim about the two texts ("The things that Langston Hughes wrote in his poem built on what Whitman wrote in order to show..."), and then continues to work throughout the essay to prove that claim. The essay also clearly addresses all demands of the prompt.



Analysis and Evidence

This essay cites evidence that is relevant and meaningful to the writer's claim, and fully explains how the evidence proves the claim after each piece of quoted material ("Analyzing these examples shows..." and "Those things point out...").



Organization

The essay sets up a logical organization, beginning with an introduction that introduces both poems and then sets up the claim, a body paragraph that focuses on Whitman's poem, a body paragraph that focuses on Hughes' poem, and then a conclusion that attempts to tie it all together. Transitions are also attempted within and between paragraphs to form connections between ideas ("In Whitman's poem," "Through this though," "In Hughes' poem," "By pointing this out,").



Language and Style

The essay demonstrates a formal style and objective tone throughout the essay, and includes very few errors in grammar or sentence structure. The writer includes domain-specific words ("theme" and "word choice"), which help maintain focus on the topic and prompt demands.



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.

America Singing



Hearing All of America Singing

Walt Whitman's famous poem "I Hear America Singing" is a very patriotic poem about the beautiful songs that American workers make as they put their heart and soul into the job that they do. This is not really a literal song that they sing out loud, but it's more a song made out of the noises that they create when they work, like hammering things, cutting wood, or sewing. All of those noises by themselves make a particular song, but all together they make an even larger song about what it means to be a hardworking American. Langston Hughes also addresses this topic when he wrote his poem "I, Too, Sing America". He wrote this poem as a response to what Walter Whitman wrote. Langston Hughes's poem focused only on one person though, "the darker brother", rather than all of the workers of America. The things that Langston Hughes wrote in his poem built on what Whitman wrote in order to show that there might even be more people in America working hard that Whitman didn't recognize in his poem.

In Whitman's poem, he lists various occupations and the song of each of those workers. For example, he says "The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam, The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work". Analyzing these examples shows that each person is singing his own song about his own job. He emphasizes each person "singing what belongs to him or her and to none else", so each person has their own song for the job that they do. All of those songs come together eventually, but each person has their own individual song that is specific to the job that they do. Through this though, he shows that Americans are hard working people who will work all day and all night, but sometimes the work during those times is slightly different. Still, this

shows that Americans are hardworking people, and Whitman is showing this in his poem through the various sounds that they make while working.

In Hughes's poem, we can see a similar theme of people working, but instead of focusing on a lot of different people, it focuses only on one person. This person considers himself "the darker brother" and references being sent to the kitchen and not being able to eat in the dining room. Those things point out that Langston Hughes is talking about a black slave who is working as a servant in a house for white people. Hughes's poem is building off of what Whitman wrote, because he is still talking about the job that this person is doing, but calling attention to the fact that there are other people in America, like African Americans, who are also working really hard but that Whitman didn't mention in his poem. By pointing this out, Hughes is bringing attention to the racism in this country, and showing that not just white Americans are working hard, but people of all races are working just as hard. He really proves this when he says "I, too, am America." Through his words, he is proving that America is not just the people that Whitman wrote about, but also a lot of other people who are often not mentioned. Langston Hughes also uses very strong word choice to further prove this point, using strong words and phrases like, "But I laugh, and eat well, and grow strong" and "They'll see how beautiful I am and be ashamed". These words really show that this person is strong and perseveres and should still be included as a hard worker, even if Whitman didn't include him in his poem.

These examples help to illustrate that Langston Hughes wrote his poem in direct response to Walt Whitman's poem, "I Hear America Singing". Whitman shows that America is made of hard workers, and Hughes's poem builds on that by adding to the list and showing that it's not just the people that Whitman mentions, but all people of all races and jobs. Without all of the people in America working so hard in every job, America would stop working as a country. Nothing would get done, and as a country, we need to be sure to recognize all of the jobs and all of the people like Hughes says, and not just the few that Whitman wrote about in his poem.