



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

## Question Everything

### There's No Such Thing as a Stupid Question!



#### Plot and Ideas

The storyline skillfully establishes an engaging, plausible context in the exposition ("It was sophomore year. I was sitting in math class, listening to the teacher explain last night's homework"). The conflict (not understanding a math problem) builds purposefully toward an exciting climax ("[I] listened to him ask the very question that was causing me confusion"), followed by an extended, thoughtful resolution.



#### Development and Elaboration

The setting (sophomore year math class) is effectively maintained throughout the narrative. Secondary characters (Mrs. Garcia and the other students) help to reveal the narrator's thoughts and feelings in a meaningful way. Significant external ("Excuse me, Mrs. Garcia...") and internal dialogue ("No, I thought, that difficult, mind boggling problem was no such thing as simple") engage the reader and advance the story.



#### Organization and Sequencing

The narrative builds a clear beginning (sophomore year math class), middle (why questions are important), and end (reflections on a lesson learned). Effective transition words ("First," "Nevertheless") help to connect ideas and signal shifts in time. The resolution not only offers closure but also reflects on the narrative ("I came to understand that there is no such thing as a stupid question").



#### Language and Style

Descriptive words and figurative language convey the narrator's feelings in a creative way ("Of course, luck had abandoned me in my time of need"). First person point of view is well-established and maintained. Specific language throughout the narrative creates a thoughtful, yet playful tone for the reader ("the humiliation of asking a stupid question was more scary than the thought of hitchhiking home").



#### 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.

## Question Everything

### There's No Such Thing as a Stupid Question!



#### Notes

---

It was sophomore year. I was sitting in math class, listening to the teacher explain last night's homework when I felt a question forming in my mind. I moved forward in my seat, hoping she would review the problem and make the confusion swirling in my mind go back to clear understanding. Of course, luck had abandoned me in my time of need. The teacher breezed right over the problem, emphatically saying how it was "one of the easiest questions we will see." No, I thought, that difficult, mind boggling problem was no such thing as simple. At that point I had two options. First, I could drop out of school right then and there. I could go to the bathroom, grab my coat, and never return. My second option was to raise my hand and ask the question. All I had to do was one simple action, but the thought of that action and the humiliation of asking a stupid question was more scary than the thought of hitchhiking home. Consequently, the thought of voicing my question made my heart beat faster, my palms sweat, and my face pale. Although I was confused, very confused, the confusion over one math homework worksheet was not a big deal. It wasn't worth embarrassing myself in front of the class. Besides, I was a lowly sophomore in a junior class, and I definitely didn't want to draw attention to myself. Suddenly, a brilliant idea hit me! I could quietly ask a friend. A friend would be willing to explain the problem without laughing at my stupidity. I was just starting to figure out how to get my friend's attention across the room when just then, a boy sitting in the front of the class raised his hand. "Excuse me, Mrs. Garcia, but could you review the second problem?" I stopped my internal debate and listened to him ask the very question that was causing me confusion. I froze. What happened next was a complete surprise: neither the teacher nor the

other students laughed at him. "Sure," she said, "Let's take a second look." The teacher calmly revisited the problem in question, and I felt my confusion dissipate and my spirit soar. "Thank you!" the boy said, at the same time that I said it inside my own head. As a result, the bewilderment was gone and I was not humiliated. Not only had I received information without embarrassing myself, I had also witnessed a peer putting himself out there and asking a simple question. Had he not asked it, maybe I would have failed the next test, gotten a lower grade on the homework, or worse yet, actually left school and attempted to hitchhike home. It was a moment I will never forget.

Throughout my educational career, teachers have burned the idea into my mind that there is "no such thing as a stupid question". They stress it repeatedly to students because they want to create a comfortable atmosphere for anyone to ask questions and get proper clarification. Nevertheless, plenty of students, including myself, who have an anxiety issue regarding public speaking, feel that even the simple act of asking a question can seem absolutely terrifying. They also overthink everything and contemplate whether the question they want to ask will cause them to be perceived as foolish, inattentive, or even rude. In this situation, the fear may be caused by the way certain teachers presents themselves as scary or intimidating, which leads to withheld questions that are left unanswered. In order to be comfortable asking questions in or outside of class, students must be comfortable with themselves. They must realize that the discomfort they feel asking a question is far less than the discomfort of never knowing the answer to their wondering. Without a doubt, while questions build our knowledge of the world around us, they also help us to know ourselves.

After my experience sophomore year, I came to understand that there is no such thing as a stupid question. Granted, I did not immediately get over my fear of revealing my vulnerabilities in front of my peers, but I slowly started to realize how important all questions are to our understanding, no matter how simple or complex. Questions help us to understand how to make the world a better place. Every question is valuable,



therefore no question should be turned down because it is too stupid. What's more, is that it is our job help guide the newer generations by making them feel comfortable to ask questions. For this reason, "How can I help others to understand better?" is a question to ask every day. Questions should be treated equally and no one should be punished for asking for clarification of something that someone may already know the answer to. As I have said, I have had questions throughout my school career that I was hesitant to ask, but when really thinking over my past, my curiosities were not stupid at all. They would have helped me to complete assignments with absolute success if I had a little more courage to ask them. Indeed, no matter what I thought, I needed to just ask because without a doubt, there is "no such thing as a stupid question."