

11th Grade Personal Narrative: Treasure Hunting - Geocaching

Task Prompt: Your class has been discussing different types of adventurous activities: kayaking, surfing, hiking, and many other hobbies. You are given three resources about geocaching, a hobby described as involving hiking and treasure hunting.

Write a story about your own adventures of geocaching. In your story, tell what happens when you find something interesting during one of your treasure hunts. When writing your story, find ways to use information and details about geocaching from the sources to improve your story.

The Cache by the Old Water Tower

I had only been geocaching for a short time, mostly because a friend insisted it was “low-effort adventure.” I wasn’t expecting anything more than another small plastic box with a few random trinkets inside. Still, when a new cache called “Skyline Box” appeared near the old water tower, I decided to give it a try. The description said it was hidden “near a landmark that once guided the whole town,” which seemed like an obvious clue, but I didn’t mind. I wasn’t looking for anything complicated.

It was late afternoon, warm but breezy, and the GPS signal on my phone was strong. I typed in the coordinates and watched the arrow pull me toward the hill behind the library. The water tower stood at the top, tall and faded, with peeling paint that made it look like it hadn’t been touched in years. I’d passed it hundreds of times without paying attention to it.

At the bottom of the hill, my phone buzzed: “You are 35 meters away.” The area wasn’t very scenic. Dry grass, a chain-link fence, and a scatter of old concrete pieces made the place feel empty. A couple of kids played soccer nearby, so I tried to look casual, not like someone sneaking around a construction zone.

When I reached the fence line, the arrow dropped to 12 meters. I scanned the ground for anything that looked out of place. One of the articles I’d read said geocaches were often tucked under loose rocks or inside hollow objects. Near the base of the tower, a large chunk of concrete had a small opening under it—just big enough to hide something.

When I reached underneath, my fingers hit plastic. I slid out a small rectangular container wrapped in gray tape. It wasn’t impressive, but most caches aren’t. Inside were a logbook, a toy dinosaur, a penny, and a folded paper star. Nothing unusual. But the final entry in the logbook caught my eye: “Look up before you leave.”

I stepped back and looked up at the tower. Until then, I hadn't noticed anything besides the peeling paint, but halfway up one of the support beams, a small piece of cloth was tied around the metal. From the ground, it was hard to see. With my phone's camera zoomed in, I could make out a simple hand-drawn arrow pointing east.

I wasn't about to climb the tower, so I followed the direction of the arrow. A narrow path ran east toward a small patch of trees behind the school parking lot. I'd never walked through that area before. About twenty steps down the path, I noticed something wedged between two branches: a short plastic tube, the kind often used for micro-caches.

Inside was a rolled piece of paper that read: "Bonus cache. This spot was once where local kids watched the sunset over town. Thanks for finding it."

I signed the slip, returned it to the tube, and tucked it back between the branches. Then I stood still for a moment. I hadn't realized how far you could see from that small rise behind the school. From there, the town's rooftops lined up neatly, and the river shimmered faintly in the distance. It wasn't a dramatic view, but it was peaceful, and I understood why someone would want to hide a cache near it.

The whole adventure hadn't been especially difficult, and the clues weren't complicated, but discovering the bonus cache made the experience more interesting. I liked that the search led me to a place I'd never bothered to look at before, even though it had been there my whole life.

Walking home, I kept replaying the short message in my mind: "Look up before you leave." It made me wonder how many familiar places I'd walked past without noticing anything about them. Maybe that's why people enjoy geocaching so much—because it turns places you think you know into something slightly new.