

Writing Work Sample Exemplar: Personal Narrative

Task Prompt: “Tell a true story about a time you were either well prepared or not well prepared.”

SCORES AND COMMENTARY

(Phrases in bold are taken from the **Official** Writing Scoring Guide):

Ideas: 6

The writing is exceptionally clear, focused and interesting. The writing makes connections and shares insights to larger issues: (“As I paced the length of the hallway my used sneakers squeaked against the orange and crème tiled floor beneath me in a fashion reminiscent of my own anxiety.”). **The topic is thoroughly developed to present real or imagined experiences or events.** Readers see the depth of the writer’s feelings for Quinn, the anticipation of seeing him in class, and the devastation the author experiences at Quinn’s death.

Organization: 6

The order and structure are compelling and move the reader through the text easily. This writer is in the driver’s seat as he takes us on a journey beginning with his **inviting beginning**: (“I never told anybody, but I always thought that the back of Quinn Andersen’s head was beautiful.”). **Paragraph breaks** are effective, **and transitions are smooth, effective and varied.** The conclusion simply and brilliantly allows readers to share the writer’s grief and lingers after the paper is over: (“Who was I but an insignificant 17 year old boy tangled in the soul of another? My unreciprocated love doomed to failure before it could even begin, Quinn Andersen was dead.”).

Voice: 6

The writer demonstrates deep commitment to the topic, and there is an exceptional sense of “writing to be read.” Readers easily understand the depth of the writer’s feelings for Quinn, the uncertainty he feels, and are touched by the loss of Quinn. This is an honest and personal paper, written with a strong personal voice. **The writing is expressive, engaging, and sincere.**

Word Choice: 6

The writer employs a rich, broad range of words which have been carefully and thoughtfully placed for impact: (“On the fifth of March, I awoke from a deep slumber amidst my wrinkled blankets and warm pillows”). **Words evoke clear images:** (“As I nibbled on my morning waffle, syrup pooling over the edges, I fantasized about a future we would never have.”). This writer skillfully uses strong verbs and specific nouns in the piece.

Sentence Fluency: 6

The writing has an effective flow and rhythm. Sentences show a high degree of craftsmanship with consistently strong and varied structure: (“If I wasn’t ready now, I never would be. I quickly entered the biology classroom and I was unable to stop my eyes from scanning the occupants of each of the desks. Only . . . something was wrong; Quinn wasn’t there.”). A flaw in the sentence fluency of this paper is the frequent use of the personal pronoun, but the other strengths in this trait justify a score of 6.

Conventions: 5

The writing demonstrates strong control of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar and usage. The writer spells more difficult words correctly: (*individual, instincts, fantasized, suffocating*). **The writing is characterized by skill in using a wide range of conventions** (semi-colons, quotations, ellipses) **in a sufficiently long and complex piece.** Some problems do exist in conventions; internal commas are sometimes missing, but there is enough strength to justify a score of 5.