



Proficient | Exemplar Essay

You've Got a Friend in Me

What is a True Friend?



Plot and Ideas

The narrator introduces a setting (“First, it all started when this tall girl named Taylor started to harass me here at school”), as well as the characters. The overall topic is developed throughout, but the writer does not include strong enough details to engage readers in the introduction.



Development and Elaboration

The writer includes some description (“She started cornering me in the bathrooms at school”), but other techniques could further develop the narrative. Dialogue is included to show the experiences of the narrator and characters, and it is beginning to convey the unique voice of the narrator (“I was kind of ashamed that I couldn’t take care of myself. So I lied. ‘No, this way is quicker...’”).



Organization and Sequencing

The story starts to develop sequence with its use of transitions (“First,” “Over the next few days,” “However,” and “Just then”). The overall narrative establishes a beginning, middle, and end, as well as adequate dialogue.



Language and Style

The narrative contains clear sentences and is starting to show variety in how the sentences begin. The language conveys the setting and characters but could be enhanced to more vividly develop the characters’ emotions.



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.

You've Got a Friend in Me



What is a True Friend?

Have you ever met someone who changed your life forever? Well, I have. Her name is Tara. Tara and I met in 3rd grade when she moved here from Cincinnati. I was one of the first to befriend her, and we have been inseparable ever since. Tara proved herself to be even a greater friend this year.

First, it all started when this tall girl named Taylor started to harass me here at school.

It started small with her saying things like "hey ugly girl, why don't you look in the mirror sometime?"

The words hurt me, but I tried to brush it off. It only got worse though. She started cornering me in the bathrooms at school. She was kind of a bully to most people, so the other girls in the bathroom wouldn't say a word to anyone. I started taking an alternative hallway to class.

"Molly, why are you coming from that way now? Wouldn't it be easier to take the back hallway?" she would ask.

I didn't want to tell her what was going on. I was kind of ashamed that I couldn't take care of myself. So I lied. "No, this way is quicker," I said back.

Over the next few days the bullying got worse. Taylor started texting me rude things and threatening to beat me up. I even pretended to be sick one day to stay home! Thankfully my mom bought it. But the next day at school Tara caught me again in the bathroom.

"Oh I see you are back, ugly girl," she yelled at me.

I was terrified.

“Just let me leave,” I said back nervously.

However, she didn’t listen and continued to threaten me.

I was for sure she was going to beat me up so bad. I tried to think of ways to get out, but she was so much bigger than me.

Just then, Tara walked into the bathroom and saw Taylor and me. She ran over to me.

She told Taylor off and said “if you ever do something like this again you will be sorry!”

Taylor yelled “Whatever,” and left the bathroom.

Finally, Tara convinced me to go to the office to talk to the principal. I felt better and knew that I could count on Tara for anything. She helped me stand up to a bully. She is a true friend and is always there when I need her.

Since then, Taylor has not bothered me anymore, although I do get dirty looks sometimes in the hallway.