“Dealing w/ Adversity” Essay

Language Arts 7—Kaye

For our first major writing assignment—which will serve as your 7th grade baseline writing sample—you will incorporate much of what we’ve been exploring in the professional sample essays we’ve been reading, reflecting upon, and discussing in class.

Your first objective is to identify a subject you care deeply about—and for this particular assignment you should personally know the subject of your essay. As we’ve discussed in class, you are writing a human-interest profile story that incorporates theme(s) designed to resonate in your audience.

Look back at your responses to the essays we’ve read and discussed—all the way back to “Worth the Wait” and “It’s a Beautiful Life Story” up through “When Your Dreams Dies”. Your objective here is to:

1. profile a person you know, respect, and admire
2. vividly depict a scenario that makes your subject come alive for the reader, providing valuable insight
3. incorporate theme(s) into the mix.

Basically, you need to introduce your audience to someone they don’t know, get them to care about this person, and provide universal messages/lessons about life for your reader to consider.

When we set out to write, we must first identify three things: what is our purpose, who is our audience, and which are the best strategies to reach/impact our readers?

For this essay, you are writing to inform, entertain, and manipulate. Not persuading to sell, of course, but a manipulation of emotion. To review, the following are some themes we’ve encountered (in published essays) and discussed, thus far:

* overcoming obstacles
* perseverance/no quit/never give up
* be determined to finish what you start
* don’t be afraid of failure; take risks & push toward new boundaries
* what defines toughness/the toughest person I’ve ever met
* take nothing (nobody) for granted
* appreciate the people that impact my life
* sacrificing to empower others
* building a legacy
* don’t sweat the small stuff
* striving to obtain dreams/goals
* excessive expectations and pressure can be unrealistic/unhealthy
* the way we talk and behave impacts others
* richness of life: defined by money or relationships?

Notes about theme:

When establishing your theme(s), try not to make them explicit; this means, don’t state them word-for-word. You don’t want to come across as being preachy. Attempt to write in a way where your reader actively interprets the messages/lessons. The joy for the reader is when they make connections and understand the gravity of the situation.

Reading should be an act of discovery and confirmation; well-developed character sketches/descriptions and concise scenarios that actively demonstrate challenges they’ve faced provide rich stories for your audience to consider. Your readers will remember real people facing real obstacles. As an artist using language as your mode of communication, your words will convey imagery and meaning.

Your audience craves immersion and participation when they read. They need to care and you want them involved. If you clearly convey characters (people) and their circumstances and conflicts that have tested their resolve, your audience will more likely be engaged and interested in the profile you depict.

Getting started:

You need a great subject (person) who will serve as a vehicle for you to deliver an amazing story that will impact/interest your readers. As you consider your options, begin to think about themes you could develop and incorporate into your profile.

For me, I have 3 options I’m considering:

1. my aunt Cynthia:

* born premature (with crippled legs), surviving twin
* regulated to full-leg braces & crutches her entire life
* dependent upon her parents (lived with them)
* grew up in an era prior to ADA (American Disabilities Act)
* gun-shy after car accident (in specially equipped car)
* studied to be a doctor/*extremely* intelligent/Jeopardy enthusiast

1. Clint (camper with CP @ EGTP, where I was a counselor)

* loved competition & sports
* his smile & walk
* others’ awkwardness around him

1. Noelle (football player on Steelers Jr. Freshmen)

* 7 years old
* weight limit for age group is 110 lbs.
* reported first week at 167 lbs.
* couldn’t run, do exercises, consistently out-of-breath
* parents are overweight (consideration: culture @ home)
* our challenge: motivate him, promote self-esteem, develop team unity & pride, improve health/fitness

For this human-interest profile essay, we will:

1. go through the writing process together (pre-writing all the way through peer feedback and the revision of a publishable final draft)
2. incorporate strategies learned/discussed during mini-lessons
3. have check points, where you need to come to class prepared to share and discuss your progress, your successes, and your struggles
4. demonstrate pride and continuously make changes (revise) to make our writing the best it can be

Tentative schedule:

overview of essay

HW: select 3 profile subjects/determine story angles

and themes

share profile subject/story angle/theme ideas

HW: free write for 1 page on one of your topics

actively describing our character (subject)

selecting scenarios/settings to make our story pop

developing figurative language

strategies to incorporate theme

leads

paragraph development

transitions

conclusions that resonate

You are expected to bring all of your writing/drafts with you every day to class. Assignments need to be completed on time, but feel free to make changes to your drafts as needed. While you’ll be going through a process, it’s important to note that not everyone goes through the process the same way. One thing we’ll all have in common: preparedness and evidence of writing and revision.

We will have opportunities in class to peer edit, offer/receive constructive criticism, and discuss strategies to improve ideas through editing and revision.

**The final draft essay is due on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It should be approximately 750 words, typed (using standard font), and double-spaced.** You’ll receive my example tomorrow in class; use this as a model for what to do (and how to do it).