

Appendix A

Example Essay

Student Essay

Punk- A Lifestyle

“Honey. Yassamin. YASSAMIN!” I looked up from my math homework to see my mom standing at the door with a surprised look on her face. I lifted the left side of my Beats headphones.

“Sorry Mom, you said something?”

“Maybe if you weren’t wasting your time with that mind-numbing jumble of screams you call music, you would have heard me the first ten times!”

My mom doesn’t understand my deep passion for rock music. She thinks it’s a silly phase that I’ll get over sooner or later. She’s wrong though. I’ve loved rock music for a huge portion of my life, and it’s a major force in my life. At times, I’ve been misjudged because of my passion for rock music.

Growing up, I was a very shy kid. I hated being around people I didn’t know. I would even act awkward at close family gatherings. When I turned seven years old, I got my first iPod. I didn’t really like music up until then. It was my parents’ idea to get me an iPod so I would have something to do while I was alone, not talking to others. I logged onto my father’s laptop and opened up iTunes where I would download the first songs I would ever have on my iPod. My parents expected me to get Disney music or something light and fun. I thought so too, until I saw three men staring back at me from the computer screen. The men looked, well, dark—dark hair, clothes, and eyes. I was a bit skeptical to do further research on them, but intrigued at the same time. I clicked on their photo. It directed me to a page labeled, “Green Day.” The page, like the three men, was dark. I scrolled down to the track listing and clicked the play button. Shooting out of the speakers was the loudest, craziest, and hardest to understand music I had ever heard. I loved it. It took me to a whole other world. Hearing all the excited, loud, screaming and shouting made me happy. It made me want to stand at the top of the world and scream out everything that was on my mind. Most importantly, it made me want to be my own person, free from all judgments. But it all ended abruptly when my mother stormed into the room.

“WHAT IS THIS!? THIS ISN’T MUSIC! I SHOULDN’T HAVE EVER TRUSTED YOU WITH CHOOSING YOUR OWN MUSIC!”

After that day, I only ever heard my beloved music when I secretly searched it when Mom wasn’t paying attention. It wasn’t until recently that my mother finally agreed to let me listen to the punk rock music I loved so dearly. She finally realized that I was old enough to

make my own decisions about what I want to listen to. The only reason my parents don't appreciate rock music is because of all the stereotypical judgments others make about it. People think that rock music is a bunch of random words stuck together in a loud, fast array of music.

They also judge people who listen to this music. These people are often tagged with the words “emo”, or “goth”. They are pictured as people wearing black clothes, having multiple piercings and tattoos, and wearing a ton of dark make up. I've always tried to convince my parents that this stereotype is not always true. I try to explain that just because I listen to this music, doesn't mean I'm a different person from what my parents think I am - I merely have different preferences.

Rock music brought me out of my shell. It taught me that I can be whoever I wanted to be. The only problem is that my parents don't want me to be that person. Standing up to my parents has been a big challenge for me. Nonetheless, I still do it to show them that I am serious about my choices. My parents think I am very mature, so they trust me with my views and understand where I'm coming from now, even though they don't feel the same way about music. Music is my drive in life. Without it, I wouldn't be the same person I am today. As the lead singer of Green Day, my favorite band, Billie Joe Armstrong, said, “Music to me is the air that I breathe. It is the blood that pumps through my veins that keeps me alive.” I couldn't have said it better myself.

Appendix B

Example Essay

Teacher Demonstration Essay

A Truthful Reading Lesson

The best times in my childhood happened at the North East Hollywood Library Branch in Portland, Oregon. It was in that building that I discovered the true meaning of escape. I would dive into different worlds of castles, skyscrapers and little houses on big prairies. I would stand beside characters that had lost their beloved pets, friends and parents. In that building, I met people who fought in the Civil War, and the Civil Rights movement. I met people who didn't fit in, and people who couldn't bear to stand out. I met mothers, fathers, kids, soldiers, kings, queens and regular folks. Unlike other people in my life, I always trusted that I would find my library friends, neatly tucked into the shelves, organized, alphabetized, and ready to hang out without judgment. All the lessons I had learned about life came from the words on those treasured pages. That was until the “Holiday Grandparent Share Night”, during the winter of third grade. On that night, in the cozy, kind walls of the Hollywood library, I learned a lesson about reading that didn't happen in the safe bounds of my books. It happened through my grandfather's stammer and blank eyes as he stared down at the cavernous, white pages. In that moment, I understood that my grandpa had never had the chance to get lost in the words of a book and read them aloud. It was also during that beautiful, yet terrifying book share, that I realized I never wanted anyone else to feel powerless with print. The teacher in me was born.

Ms. Jenkins, the soothing librarian with a voice like a hummingbird, read the first page of *Where the Wild Things Are*, her soft tenor sending a hum around the reading circle, packed with young kids and grandparents, smushed into overstuffed chairs and bean baggies, the glow of the lamp warming us like a campfire. Because of his arthritis, Grandpa Poppy sat tall in his chair, a beacon of wise strength in the middle of the ring. After the first page she stopped and pointed her heartfelt smile towards the grandparents. “Now it's your turn,” she said, her voice filled with comfort. “Kids, let's give your grandparents the opportunity to read to you tonight. Each grandparent can read a page and then pass it along.” As she handed the book to Grandpa Poppy, I saw his hand start to shake and his face go red. He looked like he was going to be sick.

I heard his stammer, before I heard the actual words. It was painful. Each word lasted longer than the next. It took him two minutes to finish the first sentence. The longest two minutes of my childhood. I could feel people shifting uncomfortably around me, the cottony rug suddenly become hard, like ice. I wanted to sink beneath it.

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With a flushed face, he shot me a desperate look of plea. “Emily,” his voice full of quiet panic, “You read the rest for me. I...I ...forgot my glasses.”

But you don’t wear glasses, Grandpa, I thought to myself, confused. Still, the tone in his voice told me this wasn’t the time to argue.

His eyes fixed themselves on me, screaming in terror for his eight year old granddaughter to save him from this moment of humiliation. Even though I didn’t yet understand the details, his eyes told me he couldn’t dive into the book in the same way I could. I nodded, and shakily read the next page.

When I finished, and passed the book to another grandparent, my grandfather and I exchanged a knowing look of understanding, respect, love and embarrassment. He mouthed the words, “Thank you,” then quickly looked away. However, something had already been ignited inside of me, and in that instant, I knew I would never want anyone else to feel the way my grandfather had felt when he was handed the pages of a book. In that second, a little eight year book worm, made the choice to make storytelling her life mission, in some small way.

Grandpa Poppy and I never spoke about that night. I never heard or saw him read again. In that moment, in the third grade, on the warm, fluffy library rug, a life lesson about reading became painfully clear, and I didn’t learn it in the pages of a book. I learned how privileged and lucky I was to have the skills to escape into fluency and read alouds, and I knew it would be my responsibility to help others who didn’t have that opportunity. Sometimes, when I work with a struggling student, I imagine that I’m teaching the younger version of my grandpa. I stand back, take a deep breath, and try to be the teacher that I wish had been for my grandfather.