

Above-average Writing Model

Writing Process in Action: Personal Writing (Unit 1, pages 36–39)

Assignment: For the school yearbook, write a two-page essay in which a photograph of yourself is the basis for exploring and sharing an aspect of your personality.

The Playground Swing

I hate having my picture taken. Usually, I freeze up, my eyes look panicked, and my mouth twists into some gruesome expression that’s supposed to be a smile.

However, in this photo, I’m swinging at the playground of the elementary school by my house, and I actually look relaxed. In fact, I even have a huge smile on my face. My friend Kristin sat on the ground in front of me and snapped the picture as I flew through the air towards her. Of course, I didn’t know that a few seconds after she took the shot, I would slip off the swing and break my leg. My fall quickly put an end to our fun that day. Kristen ran to get help while I lay on the grass wincing in agony.

Having a broken leg wasn’t easy. During the first week or so, my leg hurt so badly that I was often cranky. I couldn’t drive at all, and it was difficult to climb onto the bus while I was using crutches, so my mom had to drive me to school. For a while, even walking from class to class tired me out.

On the other hand, breaking my leg taught me some things I hadn’t known about myself. I was in a cast for eight weeks. But after three weeks, I got a new walking cast and could ditch my crutches. Kristin covered my walking cast with a colorful drawing of vines and sunflowers, and strangers started coming up to me to compliment my cast and to ask what had happened. I’m usually shy around strangers, but eventually talking to new people grew much easier. Not only did I not want to be rude to people who asked about my leg, sometimes I needed to ask them for help.

I like this picture of me because it captures both the reward and the danger of my learning to take a risk. I’m not usually a risk taker—I’m scared of change and sometimes too worried about what other people think of me. I’m going away to college in the fall, and I’m nervous about fitting in and making friends. Sometimes I just want to stay here among people I know. But another part of me thinks that going far away to school is the best thing I could do. At college, I’ll have the freedom to try new things without the burden of other people’s (and my own) preconceived ideas about what I can and can’t do.

In the photograph, I’m not worried about what might happen in the future. This shot reminds me that even if an unexpected problem occurs, it’s not the end of the world, and I might learn something unexpected about myself in the process. I’m trying to remember that the best thing I can do is to not worry so much about the future; it’s better just to be myself and enjoy the present. Maybe the next time someone wants to take my photograph, I’ll even relax and say “cheese.”

Opening uses compelling statements and description to engage readers’ interest.

Uses vivid word choices and maintains an appropriate tone

General statements and feelings are supported by specific examples.

Effective transitions connect the writer’s ideas to photograph.

Conclusion reinforces the writer’s insights.

Summary: *This essay includes vivid details, a clear order, and relevant insights.*

This piece might receive a 4 if evaluated by the holistic scoring method. It might receive a 100 if evaluated by the analytic scoring method—35 points for Focus/Organization, 35 points for Elaboration/Support/Style, and 30 points for Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics.