



Proficient | Exemplar Essay

## Open Window

### How Character Traits Create the Lie



#### Clarity and Focus

The central idea is mostly clear, but combining the last two sentences of the introduction into one focused thesis statement would move this essay to a 4. The writing purpose and demands of the prompt are fulfilled.



#### Development

Well-chosen, relevant facts develop the central idea. Additional cited evidence is needed for Framton ("he is a gullible character and rarely asks questions") and the aunt ("Mrs. Sappleton is indirectly characterized as being talkative"). Further explanation of some points would clarify the writer's ideas ("Mrs. Sappleton and the three men share a similar perspective in the story").



#### Organization

Various transitions are used ("Throughout the story," "Though the reader learns," "Additionally," "Point of view is also...in the story") show the relationships between and among ideas. An organizational structure is used with a clear introduction and conclusion.



#### Language and Style

An established, formal style is maintained throughout. Precise language ("gullible," "categorize," "cluelessness") and domain-specific vocabulary ("perspective," "characterization," "theme") are used to explain the topic.



#### 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.

## Open Window



### How Character Traits Create the Lie

What makes a good lie? The short story, "The Open Window," by Saki (H. H. Munro), is a tale of deception. It is about an nervous young man named Framton Nuttel, who takes his sister's advice to reach out and meet new people when he arrives to the country. Once there he meets Vera and her aunt, Mrs. Sappleton. Vera tells Framton that Mrs. Sappleton's husband and brothers were killed during a hunting trip exactly three years ago and much to Framton's surprise, her husband and brothers then arrive back from that hunting trip a short while later, causing Mr. Nuttel run away in fear. Throughout the story, Saki develops the character's personalities that allows them to deceive Mr. Nuttel. Point of view is also used to develop the theme of deception because each character has a different perspective.

Saki states that Vera is "self-possessed", meaning that she is in control of her emotions, which helps her to lie. She tells Mr. Nuttel a believable lie about her aunt's brother, husband and dog all dying and since he doesn't know anyone, he doesn't know it's not true. She even makes sure her voice loses "its self-possessed note" and becomes "falteringly human" when pretending she's concerned for her aunt's well-being (Saki). When Mrs. Sappleton's husband and brothers come home from their hunting expedition, Vera, "was staring out through the open window with dazed horror in her eyes" (Saki). Though the reader learns that Vera was lying by the end of the story, she manages to deceive Mr. Nuttel throughout the story by keeping up her act. He is quick to believe the story Vera tells because he is a gullible character and rarely asks questions. Additionally, Mrs. Sappleton is indirectly characterized as being talkative. She is oblivious to his horror, so Vera uses Mrs.

Sappleton's cluelessness to help her story. Upon meeting Mr. Nuttel, Mrs. Sappleton says, "my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way" (Saki). Mrs. Sappleton clearly does not know of Vera's lies. Characterization is used to support the theme of deception in many ways.

Point of view is also a very important part of creating a theme of deception in the story. Vera knows everyone's perspective and is the puppet master who has the strings to her family and Mr. Nuttel. She knows how to manipulate the way that the other people think. Vera knows that he doesn't know the truth because Vera asked him, "Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?" (Saki) She predicted that he would be scared if the family returned after she had told him that they died three years before. She also knew that her family would think it was weird when they saw Mr. Nuttel run away for no reason. Mrs. Sappleton and the three men share a similar perspective in the story. They do not know that Vera has told Mr. Nuttel an absolutely crazy story, and so when they saw Mr. Nuttel suddenly run out the door, they thought that he had a mental problem. Vera also says that Mr. Nuttel has a fear of dogs, so these factors join together to make the family categorize him as a maniac.

People must view a situation from many different perspectives to make a conclusion. Each character's point of view was a major contributor to *The Open Window's* theme of deception. The characters have specific traits that play a part in a lie, then they add to how much someone would believe an untruth. Mr. Nuttel's nerves, Vera's ability to spin good lies and control her emotions, and Mrs. Sappleton's cluelessness all were an important part of the story, and all of these things helped Saki to write a tale that was full of interesting and believable deception.