



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Open Window

An Unexpected Journey within “The Open Window”



Clarity and Focus

The writer orients the reader with sufficient context and narrows to a clear, focused, and well-crafted central idea in the introduction. The demands of the prompt are thoroughly met, fulfilling the writing purpose.



Development

An abundance of well-chosen, concrete examples are balanced with extended explanations. The writer thoroughly cites evidence to support each character's description and point of view, tying each example to the central idea of the essay.



Organization

The organizational structure creates a sense of cohesion throughout the essay. The writer clearly introduces the central idea, develops it throughout the body, and reflects upon it in the conclusion. Varied transitions (“By presenting Vera with such confidence,” “After discovering that,” “When she recalls the event,” “From the reader’s perspective,” “Furthermore,”) show the relationships between and among complex ideas.



Language and Style

A formal style and objective tone are well-established and maintained consistently throughout the essay. Precise language (“keen,” “depicted,” “conviction,” “apparent,” “capitalizing”) and domain-specific language (“third-person limited point of view,” “perspective,” “theme,” “characterization”) are used to explain and address the complexity of 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.

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An Unexpected Journey within “The Open Window”

Hector Hugh Munro, more commonly known as Saki, wrote “The Open Window,” a short story in which the reader is taken for an unexpected journey. It tells of a man named Framton Nuttel, who arrives to the countryside to cure his anxious nerves, but instead is met with an unpleasant trick. The shocking ending of this piece is achieved through the different points of view of each main character within the story. The author portrays each character a specific way using a third-person limited point of view. He uses the audience's limited knowledge of the other characters to completely change the audience's perception of them throughout the tale. Perception and deception both emerge as important themes in the story, where Saki reveals that, depending on point of view, the truth may not be what you expect.

At the beginning of the story, Saki introduces the reader to two of the three main characters: Framton Nuttel and Vera. Vera is described within the first paragraph as “a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen” (Saki). By presenting Vera with such confidence, the reader's perception is that she is a reliable source for information. On the other hand, Framton is depicted as a nervous man, who upon arriving to the country will supposedly “bury [himself] down there and not speak to a living soul” and have his nerves “worse than ever from moping” (Saki). After discovering that Framton knows nothing about her aunt, Vera begins to tell about the tragedy of Mrs. Sappleton, and how “three years ago to [the] day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day's shooting. They never came back.” When she recalls the event, her voice loses the self-possessed tone and she “broke off with little shudder,” displaying to the reader her sensitivity to the topic (Saki). Vera states that they keep the window

open because her "poor aunt always thinks that they will come back some day, and the little brown spaniel that was loose with them... her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm" (Saki). Vera uses a keen memory to extract the details of the foursome, so that when they return, Framton would instantly recognize them and be shocked by what he would assume to be ghosts. The characterization of Vera's "honesty" and "sensitivity," which is reality is clever trickery, mixed with the gullible nature of Framton, help set the stage for the audience for the rest of the story.

From the reader's perspective, Mrs. Sappleton is characterized by Vera as a lonely, somewhat crazy widow, sadly waiting every evening for the return of her lost loves. She was absent during Vera's telling of the "tragedy," so her point of view when she arrives to the scene is complete ignorance. Mrs. Sappleton states cheerily, "my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way" (Saki). The absolute conviction with which Mrs. Sappleton believes this statement is, to the deceived Nuttel, evidence of apparent and unfortunate insanity. Moments later, to Framton's frightful surprise, Mrs. Sappleton exclaims that the men are here at last. He turns to see three figures approaching, each with a gun, and possessing all the traits of the hunting group that Vera had previously described to him; Vera has an expression of horror while looking in the same direction. Terrified, Framton "grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall door, the gravel drive, and the front gate were dimly noted stages in his headlong retreat" (Saki). The men truly did return from their hunting trip, shocking both the reader and Mr. Nuttle. The reader understands how scared and confused Framton might be feeling, so his departure does not come as surprise. However, Mrs. Sappleton and the men are very confused by Frampton's exit. Mrs. Sappleton's perception is that Mr. Nuttel could "only talk about his illnesses" and then "dashed off without a word of good-by or apology when [the men] arrived" (Saki). Vera then says that poor Frampton "had a horror of dogs" to explain his quick departure (Saki). Frampton said no such thing, but since the

Sappleton family does not know anything about Frampton, they are easily deceived to believe false things about him, just as he was tricked into believing things about them.

The author, capitalizing on the reader's limited knowledge of Vera, had both Mr. Nuttel and the audience believing outrageous story of the open window. This is a perfect example of how the difference in point of view of not only the characters, but the audience as well, makes an impact within a story. Saki's most important technique in this short story is the use and development of point of view. The author uses the evolving points of view to create deception of the characters and constantly maximize the story's suspense and excitement. Furthermore, the theme that expectation is not always reality could not have been portrayed nearly as strongly as it was without the expert use of perception and deception, which can leave the readers still wondering what exactly happened by the time they've read it through.