

Original Composition

Scale Point: 6

Comment

This paper was awarded a "6" because it is a clear illustration of sophistication of wit and writing style. Paper uses juxtaposition to create an engaging and imaginative piece.

My father has never had a job in my life. His last job was a door-to-door book salesman in 1983, two years before my birth. I do not know why he has remained a "house-husband"; maybe it is because my mom is a doctor and makes enough money to support our family, or maybe there are other reasons. Whatever the cause of his situation, it always filled me with embarrassment. People never ask, "What does your mom do?", and I was sick of providing the same response, "My dad is an author," (which is a lie, anyway), "... but my mom is a doctor!"

The time came, when I was in grade 7, when I was completely frustrated with lying for my dad. The opportunity to inform him of this came when I was attempting to quit piano lessons.

"Dad, I don't like playing the piano," I stated passively.

"There're lots of things we don't like, but we have to do them," he responded.

"I want to quit," I retorted quickly.

"No," he responded firmly. I refused to become intimidated.

"Yes, dad. It's my choice. I don't like doing it so I can quit."

"No! You're not quitting! You'll learn that we all do things that we don't enjoy, but we do them because we have to, and because we learn from them."

I saw my opportunity to let him know how I felt, and I took it.

"Well, dad," I stated, with a superficial importance, "I know a lot of my friends' dad's don't like working, but they still do it! It's not an option. But you stay at home programming computers for fun and watching TV and you don't look for a job because you don't like it. You don't want to!"

That was the end of that conversation. He did not mutter another word. He stared at me for a few seconds and averted his eyes back to the road. His breathing was heavy. I knew I had made my point.

I felt proud – it was the first time I had been able to silence my dad in an argument, and I was allowed to quite piano! During the next few weeks, we hardly acknowledged each other.

5 years later, I am in grade 12. I am taking Literature 12, but I want to drop it and only take English 12.

"Son, you can't do that," my dad said, less aggressively this time.

"Dad, why? I want to."

"You can't. You'll learn a lot from this class. There're things we do that we don't always want to, we just have to."

My previous response came to my head, but I felt wrong for even thinking it.

"Actually," I started, "you're right. I probably should. It'll help my writing and reading comprehension."

Why did I not repeat my first response? I think it may be a sign of my developing maturity. My dad may have made some mistakes in his life, and it should never be someone's goal to end up without a job, but it's his role – as a dad – to try to prevent his son from making the same mistakes as he did. Whenever I hear Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata", I wish I could play it myself. I may one day take up the piano again. I am proud to say, though, that in several years I will look at my father on his deathbed with love and pride, and be able to quote "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night" by rote.

Narrative Example -

The girl's dress was too small, and it itched. She hated dark colours, anyway. She sat, wedged between her mother and a fat third cousin who smelled like wet wool, in the third row of the funeral parlor. She smacked her gum loudly, and looked with twelve-year-old scorn at the assembled mourners. Her mother pinched her arm, and several old ladies rustled about in the broken silence to seek out the source of the disruptive and inappropriate chewing.

The girl grimaced at her mother, then stared determinedly ahead at the box that held what has once been her Grandmother McPhee. The girl had not liked her Grandmother McPhee particularly well, she had taken pleasure in scoffing at the old woman's failing memory, failing body, and pathetic offers of friendship. She had looked with dread on the obligatory semi-monthly visits to the nursing home where her grandmother was slowly languishing away. She had shrugged indifferently when she learned of her grandmother's death. She had put on a show of uncaring for her mother, who had looked at her with sympathy and put away the box of tissues. But inside, the girl was filled with a kind of horror.

When the time had come to leave for the funeral, the girl had announced first that she did not want to go, and second that she wanted to wear her jeans. Her mother, grim and determined, had manoevered her into an old, dark green dress that the late Grandmother McPhee had sent for the girl's birthday. The girl resented the intimacy of being encased in the relic.

After the moment of silence in the funeral parlor, an old lady the girl didn't know slowly hobbled her way up to the podium to speak. At the podium, the old woman asked for the lights to be lowered, and explained that she had prepared a slide show of photographs she had kept of Agnes McPhee over their 75 year friendship.

The first slide was in black and white (and yellow with age), and depicted two girls, about twelve, standing in the snow grinning, with their arms around each other. The girl on the left was wearing a green dress, and was obviously proud of it.

The old woman at the podium met the eyes of the girl in the third row wearing the same dress. The girl's eyes filled with tears of regret, and of just understood loss. The old woman smiled kindly, with understanding, as if to say "she understood." For the first time, the girl understood, too. She squeezed against her mother, and was quiet.

Expository Example

In any person's life, something marks the beginning of their rise into maturity. Some people, weathered by the hardships in their life, experience this early. Others, who may lead more sheltered lives develop maturity slower, having to get the harsh realities of life given to them before they can truly mature. For me it was different; it was a girl.

I do not pretend to say that I am truly mature, or that other people view me as a mature person, but I can feel the beginnings of it inside of me. Some people think that people cannot change other people, that what a person becomes lies solely in one's self. Perhaps that is true, but I found an influence so strong that I had no choice but to change. As with my story, it is easier perceived if started at the beginning.

I used to be, well, not that great of a person. I had no concerns, I was carefree, and I was desperate to have any kind of fun, trying anything for a thrill. I may not have been a daredevil, but I certainly tried my hardest. Unfortunately I ran into the wrong sort of people. I began doing all sorts of crazy things with them, from bare-handed drunken boxing, to taking eight foot leaps of faith... in a jeep. I guess it may sound fun to the thrill-seeker but it all led to the usage of drugs.

I started smoking marijuana and drinking, and it was amazing to me. A whole new world to explore was just waiting to be trod in. Out of nowhere, I developed what could only be described as a bad temper. I started getting angry at very stupid things; surprisingly enough I only got into one fight. All of these things, I know, accounted for me being, as I said before, "not that great of a person."

I hated it. I hated myself for what I'd become, I hated that I had no motivation to change. I started getting depressed a lot, and I always sought escape. The only things that came to mind were more drugs.

All of this changed in a summer not too long ago. I met this girl, and a friend of mine suggested that I go out with her, just to give it a try. I did. Why not? I thought. What have I got to lose? I started going out with her, expecting nothing from the relationship. Surprisingly enough I got more than I bargained for. Within a month, I knew she was different and I had this feeling in my heart. I'd been with other girls before, better looking or as one might put "easy", but nothing even compared to what I was feeling. I had never felt it before, and that's when it started. I began to change.

I started cleaning up all of my bad habits.... well most of them. I stopped doing drugs or drinking; I won't even touch them anymore. I stopped being so ignorant of other people's feelings. My grades started improving drastically; in one semester I went from a C+

average to getting straight A's, with a couple of B's. I got a part time job, and now I have my own car. I did all of this out of a drastic need to keep this girl, to have her feel about me as I did about her. I knew I had started to mature.

All of these things happened because of her. I feel good about myself and I'm always trying to be better. I know I'm a better person because of it and that my life will never be the same, in a good way.

We've been together for over a year now. As I'm writing this provincial and starting my next semester I realize that high school is almost over. College is on the way. Through all that I have gained and accomplished, I can feel the stirring of maturity deep within my bones.