

STUDENT WORK EXAMPLES: PERSONAL ARGUMENTS AND IDENTITY ESSAYS

Here are additional student essays and printable sticky notes of lenses for mentor study.

Santiago is my brother. We may come from different families, but we embrace the differences in our skin color, family background and nationality.

Every weekend we go to our favorite tapas bar off *Diagonal*, talking for hours about life and politics over simple meals that our meager allowances can afford. Santiago leads the largest pro-Spain youth group in Barcelona, often going on the radio to debate the consequences of independence. Our love for politics, views on current affairs and shared values connect us deeply. We trust each other with our lives.

Needless to say, due to my environment and exposure, I've always stood against Catalan secession. However, last week, when I heard about the protest for Catalan Independence, my friend Adrian and I felt compelled to see both sides of this struggle over self-determination.

Santiago refused to join us. "Why would I watch something that disgusts me?" Adrian and I disagreed. We were not about to miss history being made.

On Friday, I arrived at the protests with support for Spain in my heart. We walked down *Rambla Catalunya*, while thousands chanted *Els-carrers-seran- sempre-nostres*. There were some protesters in masks, with sticks and rocks in-hand. Some were setting large dumpsters on fire. But most looked just like me and Adrian, unmasked, unarmed, walking and chanting peacefully.

It's hard to describe what happened next, because it was so fast, and so awful. In an instant, hundreds went from marching peacefully to panicked, heart-pounding running. Sprinting. People knocked over, trampled upon. The police had begun their assault.

Baton-swinging-shield-carrying-rubber-bullet-shooting-Spain-supporting-riot-police.

Police indiscriminately beating peaceful protesters with metal batons. Firing tear gas. People shot in the face with golf-ball sized rubber bullets. One whistled past my ear.

There was fear and chaos everywhere. Adrian and I found ourselves caught between the raging fires, billowing black smoke and the barricades. Six riot-police vans drove down the road towards us, causing yet another panicked scramble. In the mayhem, I lost Adrian. I lost him. I always look out for Adrian. Whether it's Adrian's heartache over a girl, or him getting picked on because he's quirky, I've always looked out for him. I felt bereft and desperate. Another van accelerated ahead, stopping at the end of the block. We were trapped. Pincered in a narrow street. Again, chaos. The new police got out yelling, batons and rubber-bullet-guns in hand. A baton missed my head by an inch. I heard the screams from the bludgeons and the bullets. The batons kept swinging. And I couldn't find my friend.

I got away by dodging another policeman and the next police van. There was Adrian, crouched in an alleyway, out of breath, panicking. We looked at each other, and realized we didn't know our city, or this struggle, after all. How could I, someone who holds the liberal values of self-determination and freedom from oppression, be on the side of this disproportionate violence?

I later heard that more than 200 people, including journalists, were hospitalized. All in the name of Spanish sovereignty. I've never been so angry, so appalled. If this is the pro-Spanish movement, did I really support it? I was pro law-enforcement. Now I'm uncertain. My feelings are so conflicted. My loyalty to Santiago and to the cause he is willing to give his life for is suddenly blurred by my personal experience. I wondered how to stand with my brother while reconciling the events of October 18th. Would our friendship survive if I changed my stance? What is this brotherly bond worth?

The terror I experienced changed my thinking about why people want liberty, and how hard, dangerous, and personal that fight can be. I experienced first-hand what people are willing to go through for a cause they believe in, on both sides of the barricade. To believe so passionately in something that the other party just cannot comprehend—maybe this is why politics is so divisive after all. ●

have four moms.

This fact warrants shock, almost every time I share it. I am then met with distance, sometimes disgust, and finally, and always, confusion. I subsequently give my well-rehearsed monologue for the millionth time, explaining how I was born to two women, who then separated, and then both got remarried.

But there really is more to the story. My family has been shaped and reshaped, and people have come in and out of my life. At age 2, I experienced separation for the first time. I met my moms' new girlfriends and then wives, new cats and dogs, and lived in a plethora of new homes. At age 16, I experienced separation once again. During those 14 years in between, I grew to love my step-mothers, step-sister, and even my step-cat, as I watched them become part of my family. But at 16, when my mom Amy left my step-mother Oona and my step-sister Lucia, it wasn't just a marriage ending. I thought my family had ended too. All the bonds that I had woven around me were being broken and I didn't have any say in the matter.

Last week, I got a call from Oona that Lucia, despite putting on a brave face, was nervous beyond belief for her first day of school. She needed me.

I opened the door to her blue eyes inches away from my face. Her long eyelashes danced around the corners of her eyes, preventing me from looking away. Fear. She was breathing heavily, and I could practically hear her heart beating, trying to jump out of her chest. I wrapped her in an embrace in attempts to console her, and her small body relaxed. She dragged me to her cluttered bedroom filled with stuffed animals and duct tape art. I could tell she had to ask me something, but she was afraid, embarrassed maybe. Finally, she spit it out.

“I need an outfit Liv. For the first day”

And with that, a small tear rolled down her face. I had never seen her like this before. The confident, poised eleven year old I know was hidden under the folds of an anxious sixth grader.

Something as simple as what to wear on the first day had grown to include every woe she had faced in the past few months. This first day of school solidified our family separation. It meant, for Lucia, that she was an only child once again.

She reached into her dresser and pulled out a shirt and shorts, and my chest instantly filled with warmth. In her hands she held my first day of school outfit from freshman year.

I looked at her, and there was an unspoken longing, almost pleading, for me to be with her. And in that moment, I knew that I would never leave the life of this awkward, beautiful, kind girl. I love Lucia, and no matter what it might say on paper, she is my sister. It is my job to be her role model, to be her rock, and to help her pick out an outfit on the first day of school.

I have never had a rock. Every time I move, I have to figure out how to support myself, my mothers, and the rest of my family. In my most recent change, I've learned how difficult it is to be independent, but how rewarding it is all the same. I do my own laundry, cook for myself, get myself to school and to my job. And I get myself to where I need to be to care for the people I love.

Lucia is learning the same. Though in different homes, we are learning together to strengthen ourselves and figure out what is most important to us. For me, the most important thing is my relationship with Lucia. And no matter what, she is my sister. ●

pull my phone out my pocket, check the messages, put it back in my pocket. Five seconds of watching my breath billow like steam in the frozen air. Then I do it again. Each time I take off two pairs of gloves, one leather, one silk. I unzip the inner pocket of the down sweater that is layered under a soft waterproof shell. I dig the phone out of its waterproof wrapping. I read, reply, then rewrap the phone, slip it back into the zippered pocket, ease fingers into two layers of gloves. A few seconds later, again. None of these messages are significant.

These are ritual acts, in a place where these rituals no longer make sense. The backcountry snow of the Colorado Rockies stretches out for fathoms around me. There is something about the empty silence that makes me want to break it, even in the most mundane way, by reaching for a phone that can only connect me to people a thousand miles away, in a different place entirely.

I settle in, lean back on my heels, and think back to the day we were here last. He and I. Collin, ski patrol guide, my mentor here in these woods. Collin is showing me the snow hole he wants me to crawl into. It is about as big as my body and goes directly into the face of the ice cliff.

I look at the hole, then at Collin. I see his worn leather gloves, his red patrol jacket that has faded from the high altitude sunlight, the battered radio, the pulsing avalanche beacon. His steady gaze. I climb in, head first. Inside, it is dark and cold and I sense the weight of the mountain pushing down on me. Collin closes the hole. First he puts chunks of ice over the opening. Then he puts snow, then he puts a scree of rocks. Then I hear a groaning sound. It's the ice and snow moving around me. I can't hear Collin, but I know he's climbing up, to release the dog from the top of the mountain. It's black inside the hole. Then I hear the music. It is a music that emerges from the noise of the ice. A symphony that right now, in the whole world, only I can hear. I like thinking about who else has heard this music before me. Only those who seek the snow and the ice. I think that I'll have to ask Collin about the music. Did he hear it, when he lay in these ice pits?

I can't hear Collin release the dog. What I hear is music, and darkness. Then a scabbling that shatters the serenity that was there before, and the music is gone. I miss it, and then I don't think about it again, as a black snout pops through the ice wall. I can't move yet. There's a moment of worry. Then there's Collin's ice shovel, right next to my goggled eyes. He's clearing an airway.

Collin pulls me out, looks at me, and nods. We pack up the ice equipment. Later, I realize I forgot to ask him about the music.

Today, I've come to this spot alone. I feel myself, now, reach for my phone again, and know that it's just a ritual to stop being lonely. I didn't ask Collin about the music. I forgot to ask him. And I wasn't there the next day, on the high ridge, when he dug another snow pit, along with his patrol group. They all approved the snow conditions. They chose lots for who would get first tracks. Collin won. He dropped in. Three turns in – the mountain came down on him. I wish I had been there with him, I wish he hadn't been alone under the snow, I wish I knew if he heard music at the end. ●

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.

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 tutoring a struggling reader, 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.

Emily S-C ●

An Easy Guide to Printing on Sticky Notes

1. Print the Blank sticky note page.
2. On the Blank page, place a sticky note directly on each of the empty rectangles, positioning the sticky edge of the sticky note at the top edge of each rectangle.
3. Place this page with the sticky notes back into your printer, positioning the paper so that the printed side (with the sticky notes attached to it) will be printed on again.
4. Print the *Looking at Mentors: Lenses to Strengthen Revision Sticky Notes* or *Mentor Study – Essay Parts*, one page at a time. The items on the page will now be printed onto the sticky notes and ready for use.

Sticky Note: 1.5" X 2"

Mentor Study — Essay Parts
Sticky Notes: 1.5" X 2"

<i>Anecdote/Vignette</i> from Personal Experience	<i>Anecdote/Vignette</i> from Media	<i>Anecdote/Vignette</i> from Literature
	<i>Context</i>	
<i>Theory</i>	<i>Thesis</i>	<i>Hypothesis</i>
<i>Question</i>	<i>Claim</i>	<i>Plea For Change</i>

Looking at Mentors: Lenses to Strengthen Revision
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Flashbacks

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Lenses for Studying Mentors
Printable Lenses for card stock

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Symbolism	Repetition
Playful Grammar	Direct Audience Address