

Text selected by student for assessment: Personal essay

Learning outcomes in focus

Students should be able to:

R2. Read for a variety of purposes: learning, pleasure, research, comparison

W1. Demonstrate their understanding that there is a clear purpose for all writing activities and be able to plan, draft, re-draft and edit their own writing as appropriate

W2. Discuss their own and other students' work constructively and with clear purpose.

Teaching and learning context

Students explored the ticketing controversy during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, using a newspaper article by Paul Kimmage and an interview with Olive Loughnane as a springboard for discussion. They then read the novel *Trash*, which also explores the issue of corruption in society. Once they had read the novel in class and for homework, key passages were revisited to explore the importance of setting in the creation of character and themes and to examine the writers' use of descriptive adjectives and lively verbs.

Students were then set the task of writing a personal essay which focused on characters in their own locality. They could focus on a character, a place or an issue which meant something to them personally. This student decided to focus on the issue of smoking. The student wrote a draft, received feedback and then revised the piece, which is below.

Task

Write a personal essay on an issue about which you feel strongly.

Features of Quality

Genre awareness and control/creativity

Writing competence and word choices

Awareness of and shaping for receiver/audience

An Issue I feel Strongly About

All my life I have seen poison being lit before my eyes and only this summer the effects of smoking have become a reality. My family smoke, my mam, my dad, my uncles, my aunts and my grandad. They all smoke. They have tried quitting. They just can't. Once you light the first one you just want more and more of that toxic sensation.

We all know someone who smokes and it is a sad fact that one in every two smokers will die due to a tobacco related disease. Try putting that into perspective, I know I can because my uncles smoke, my mam smokes, my dad smokes, my grandad smokes, most of my aunts smoke. At least four if not all of them will die due to smoking. All for what, trying to be cool. It's not worth it, destroying your appearance, wrinkled skin, discoloured teeth and fingertips, gum disease or even worse, cancer. It's just not worth it.

My aunt Michelle, she started smoking because of her grandmother. She was very sick and could not use the lighter. So Michelle was made light the cigarette. Eventually, being a normal curious fourteen year old, she took a puff which led to taking a puff or two every time she lit a fag for her nana.

My other aunt, Lauraine, was out at a disco when she was around the age of fifteen. She was with her friends and one of them smoked. So they went out the back so she could have a fag. Lauraine was offered a puff but said no but later said yes, just for the experience. She took a puff and nearly coughed herself to death. She swore she would never do it again, it tasted so bad. She could feel her mouth shrivel as she inhaled.

Three of the main reasons people smoke is to just look mature, this reason is most common with most teens as it makes them look more adult and risky by sneaking off to smoke one.

Another reason is, is their friends smoke, they feel they have to just to be accepted. This is the most basic yet complicated reason as we are always trying to change who we are always others, even if they don't care, it's just human nature to do it.

Reason three is the excitement of experiment with something that is forbidden. It is against the law for someone under eighteen to smoke. Therefore smoking becomes

very attractive. It's exciting and thrilling to rob a cigarette and sneak off to smoke it. Adults smoke for other reasons like stress or personal problems. They smoke to feel relaxed or give them energy when going through a hard time.

For all the years I've been alive, my grandad has smoked. He has always had chesty cough too, thanks to fags. He and my nana were going to the hospital for grandad to get a camera down his throat to see what was going on in his system. It was just a basic procedure. All was going well till he started coughing while still "in him". He was waking up from the. The nurses were telling to relax but he just couldn't stop coughing. He was coughing to the point where he was coughing up mucus and blood. Eventually he stopped coughing and they put him back on an anaesthetic, he went downhill. My nana was in the room with him and the rest of the family were outside the ward. All of a sudden his right arm and his leg go flying up into the air. Nana yelled, joyful as ever "he's waking up". When she turned back his body was shaking, his head was back, his eyes were to the back of his head. He was having a seizure. A doctor was just walking outside when he heard the events from the hall. He rushed through the door to give grandad an injection. Grandad stopped moving. He grabbed him, threw him into a wheelchair and rushed out the door. Nana thought he was a goner "I saw him go, God took him". The doctor said it was the quickest injection he had ever given someone. Grandad was put in an induced coma and was put in intensive care within 3 days he was out of the coma and talking. Not straight away, it took time. He's back now to the old Mr. Tom thank God. Grandad got a nickname in the hospital Lasurous, because he came back from the dead. He was on death's door thanks to smoking.

All I am asking is please don't smoke. All it is is one puff, one cigarette, one pack, one life.

Features of quality - teacher annotations and level of achievement

Teacher annotations:

FQ1. Genre awareness and control/creativity

The student initially shows good control with the dramatic opening line. This student's hatred of smoking is captured in strong language but as the piece goes on the anecdotes lose focus. It is not until the final two sentences that the essay regains a clear sense of purpose and control.

FQ2. Writing competence and word choices

The writing is generally competent although there are some lapses in grammar, syntax, punctuation and spelling. The student uses some emotive language ('poison' 'toxic' 'sensation') and lively adjectives in places.

FQ3. Awareness of and shaping for receiver/audience

The student has written for her own peer group. It is written in colloquial, student friendly language and has a good blend of facts with personal stories. However, reflective elements which would draw the reader in further are under-developed.

Level of achievement:

Best fit on balance judgement =



In line with expectations

This example represents one text from the student's Collection of Texts. The student selected this and one other text to submit for assessment. Looking at a number of examples, teachers will see a variety of different text types, in a variety of genres.

More examples will be added over time at curriculumonline.ie

Features of Quality:

Exceptional

The student's text shows creativity and command of the chosen genre.
The writing is highly competent, marked by original ideas, and imaginative word choices are perfectly suited to the purpose of the text.
The work is fully shaped for its intended receiver/audience.

Above expectations

The student's text shows very good control of the chosen genre.
The writing is consistently competent, and effective word choices are very well matched to the purpose of the text.
The work is clearly shaped with the receiver/audience in mind.

In line with expectations

The student's text shows good awareness of the chosen genre.
The writing is generally competent, and word choices match the purpose of the text well.
Content and development of ideas reveal consistent awareness of the receiver/audience.

Yet to meet expectations

The student's text shows little awareness of the chosen genre.
The writing lacks competence, and word choices may be inappropriate to the intended purpose of the text.
Content and development of ideas reveal little awareness of a receiver/audience.

The annotations capture observations by the student's teacher, using the features of quality, with a view to establishing the level of achievement this text reflects. The annotations and judgement were confirmed by the Quality Assurance group, consisting of practicing English teachers and representatives of the Inspectorate, the SEC and JCT.