

Grade 2 Exemplar

Prompt: Describe how an octopus protects itself.

An octopus protects itself. An octopus can squirt black ink. This darkens the water so it can hide behind the ink. Next, they can also move through small holes in coral reef structures. Bigger creatures cannot catch them because they would get stuck in these holes. Mimic octopuses can change colors and into terrifying shapes. This makes them look fierce so others will not go near to them. This is how an octopus protects itself.

Grade 3 Exemplars

Task: Ants are busy insects that live together in groups called colonies. Describe the different jobs that ants do to help the colony survive. (Survive means to live.) Use details from the passage to support your answer.

Exemplar A:

Ants do many jobs to help the colony survive. First, worker ants dig nests with their jaws and use saliva to make solid walls. This makes a strong home where they can be safe. Next, scout ants make a scent trail when they locate food so others can find the food. This way others can help carry the food back to the nest to store it since they will need food later. Finally, soldiers have enormous heads. These ants protect the nest because they block the entrance and tunnels. They fight predators who try to enter. These are the important jobs that these tiny insects do.

Exemplar B:

Ants do many jobs to help the colony survive. First, worker ants dig nests with their jaws, use saliva to make the walls solid, and put the extra dirt outside so they will have a safe, strong home. Next, scout ants make a scent trail when they locate food so others can find the food. This way others can help carry it back to the nest and everyone will have food to eat. Finally, soldier ants can protect the nest because they can block the way and fight predators that might enter it. Invaders could eat the ants without the help of these fighters. These are the important jobs that these tiny insects do.

Grade 4 Exemplars

Task: Describe how George Washington Carver overcame challenges and made a difference toward improving the lives of others. Cite evidence from the text.

Exemplar A:

George Washington Carver faced challenges and made a difference toward improving the lives of others. An early challenge George encountered was being born a slave, then his mom being captured and stolen. While still young, he attended college but had to work on a farm all along. Instead of blocking his goals, these obstacles may have helped strengthen his resolve. When he was older, this dedicated worker then tried to help others by teaching farmers how to rotate crops and use the extra peanuts they grew in over 300 ways. He finally donated his income to Tuskegee University to help others. George used his inner strength and resources to help others with farming throughout his entire life and by donating his money at the end of his life. Everyone faces challenges and we can all use these to become stronger.

Exemplar B:

George Washington Carver, a famous scientist, overcame challenges, then worked to make changes in America in smart ways. During his early years, George's first challenge was that when he was a baby, his mother was kidnapped. He then went to school, but had to do "full-time farm work" all through. He also had difficulty getting admitted to college because he was African-American, but found he could be accepted if he studied art, then he switched to science. This shows that after disturbing events, he worked hard and found clever solutions to problems. George then helped farmers who "relied on cotton to support themselves.", but had challenges with growing crops. Planting only cotton depleted the soil of nutrients. His suggestion was to recommend they alternate planting peanuts too, which adds rich nutrients back into the soil. He knew enough about soil to help. However, farmers now had the problem of too many peanuts. This inventor taught farmers to use the extra peanuts to make "peanut milk, paper, and soap." George kept coming up on his own with good ideas that worked as solutions. George shows that being smart and not giving up can make the world better. He spent his life using his good talents to make others' lives better, even though his own start in life had been so hard.

Grade 5 Exemplars

Task: Describe the effects of the spill on the penguins and the rescue efforts that followed. Support your piece with information from all three sources.

Exemplar A:

A few years ago near South Africa, the **effects** of an oil spill and the rescue effort that followed threatened thousands of endangered penguins. A first **effect** was that just moving their bodies through the water became difficult because the penguins would wobble and roll in the dense oil. This must have threatened their ability to catch the food they need in the water. By the time the humans came to **rescue them**, the penguins were so frightened that they scratched, bit and attacked the people. This shows that the oil must have frightened them too, which made the rescue efforts even more difficult because they were so scared. Finally, the **rescue work** of cleaning and feeding them, the repulsive smell in the warehouse from penguin droppings, dead fish, and sweat must have made people want to give up. No one did. Maybe no one gave up because of how much they cared about the threatened penguins. **Overall, this story** shows the huge effects of the oil spill and the difficulties in the rescue. It also shows how much everyone cared.

Grade 6-8 Exemplars

Exemplars for Speeches on How to Achieve Success

Steve Jobs gave a speech to Stanford University graduates and President Obama to public school students in Washington DC. Identify the key theme in each of the speeches. Then explain how the theme of Obama's speech was more appropriate for a Kindergarten-Grade 12 student audience and how the theme of Jobs' speech was more well suited for already successful students graduating from a competitive university. Be sure to use specific evidence from each of the speeches to support your response.

Exemplar A:

Two speeches given to DC public school students and Stanford University graduates, aimed to shape their futures, yet gave different messages. Barak Obama's, former USA president, and Steve Jobs', former Apple CEO, speeches share related themes of overcoming failure. However, Obama stressed hard work which is more appropriate for children who have not yet proven themselves, while Jobs emphasized loving what you do which is more appropriate for competitive college graduates who already had to work hard to get in and through this college.

A theme in Obama's speech is that students should work hard and not give up. The USA is not a story about quitters, explained Obama. At the end, he urged them, "Do not let yourself down." A likely reason Obama may have pressed this advice is that he may have failed but then overcame this himself with hard work. If Obama is correct in drawing this advice from his own experience, then impressionable young students may believe you can get through life without working hard, jeopardizing the security of their futures, and the chance to make a difference in the world, even to change history. Obama is appropriate to encourage this audience to realize the importance of hard work.

In contrast, Jobs emphasized doing what you love and not settling. This was so important to him that he said, "Don't settle" twice in a short speech. He explained that the "only way to do great work is to love what you do." His life example shows that he lived this when he continued to work at what he loved even when the world turned against him. Jobs' claim that you should do what you love and never settle, overlooks and almost disregards the importance of hard work in success. People will not always love their work every day, but they must work hard every day to succeed no matter what. Even more, Jobs says the "only" way to do great work is to love what you do. Yet, good work can still be achieved if people work hard enough, even if they don't love what they do. Therefore, this advice, even though given to students who are likely already hard working, may cause them to fail nevertheless if they stop working hard.

Two speeches with one goal – to shape futures. While Jobs' speech directed successful graduates to follow their dreams, Obama's guided students, who have not yet proven themselves, to work hard. Both offer valuable advice. However, hard work is a safer bet to lead to long term happiness for everyone, even if it may not feel joyful at the time. Doing what you love may make us feel happy in the moment, but the probability of finding success may be substantially lower, if people don't keep up hard work too. Ideally, people should pursue a harmony of both because neither hard work nor doing what you love guarantee to true success. If people must choose, they are more likely to achieve happiness through hard work than the other way around. Do you want to dread your life -- Because you only get one.

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Exemplar B:

While two accomplished men, Steve Jobs and President Obama, both emphasized the importance of bouncing back from failure in their speeches to students at Stanford and the DC public schools, the importance they gave to giving best effort versus finding what you love show that students may need different guidance as they succeed and grow older.

Both speakers agree on the importance of bouncing back after adversity. When Jobs got fired, he felt terrible but then realized this freed him “to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.” In the same way, our former president shared that failures don’t need to define you, but they should “teach you.” However, Barack Obama asked students to reflect on what contribution they will make, and how they can put in their “best effort” to make that. On the other hand, Jobs’ story was about finding “what you love”.

All through school, there will always be times when students fail, and will always need to be resilient. However, when students are younger, they need to put in great effort before they find what they love. They need to be open minded to learning about different areas, and give each area their best before they can decide which area they love best. If they make a choice too soon, such as to become a rapper or basketball player, Obama worries they may not end up succeeding at what they love and may miss many other important opportunities. On the other hand, once students are grown and ready to go get specialized jobs and they have already worked hard enough to graduate from a competitive college, only then should they start thinking about they love.

People need different advice at different times in their life. Racing to choose one menu item before looking at all the choices and give them all a fair chance, might cause one to miss out on something better. It is important to make the best contribution we can in life. We may not know what that is until we have given our best in different areas. Obama recommends we do that. However, after working hard, we must also find happiness. Jobs’ speech sets on the next step in this journey toward finding this.