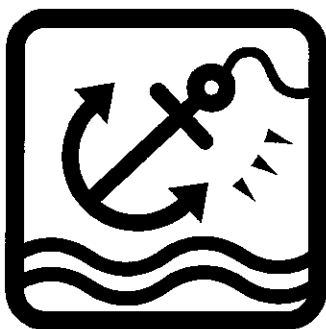


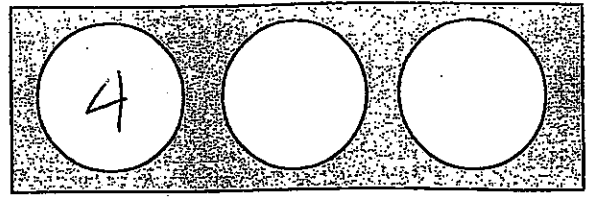
Oakland Unified School District Writing Proficiency Project



8th Grade Response to Literature Anchor Papers “The Dancer” Prompt

Note: Please do not use the anchor papers with students prior to the administration of the Process Writing Assessment

Writing Sample



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START ESSAY HERE Found

Embracing your culture or heritage can give you a sense of belonging. In the short story "The Dancer" by Vickie Sears, a foster child named Clarissa discovers dance and, through that, her real life.

The narrator — Clarissa's foster parent — tells us that he is the girl's third home in as many months, and that the foster agency described Clarissa as "sociopathic." She has terrifying dreams that leave her screaming awake, but instead of seeking comfort or sympathy, Clarissa keeps to herself. "Smiled at the right times. If you could get her to smile, that is. Didn't talk much, though."

In an attempt to socialize Clarissa, the narrator takes her to a powwow dance thrown in the neighborhood. As soon as Clarissa sees an old woman named Molly Graybull, though, she is fixated on the tribe dances. "Around-around until that child couldn't see nothing else." Later, Clarissa timidly asks for some music and she's soon requesting to dance.

By the time the next dance comes around, Clarissa is well practiced and dancing rather nicely. She can't dance once Molly Graybull comes up, but she's dressed up and socializing and making definite progress towards belonging somewhere. The narrator is happy to see this, as the Clarissa at the beginning of the story was a scared, antisocial mess.

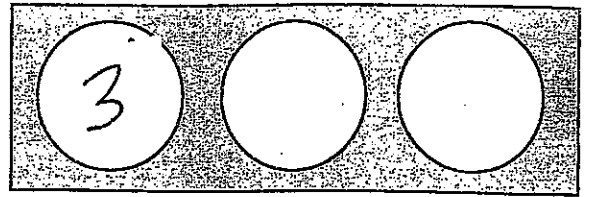
As a new year passes, and Clarissa becomes increasingly attached to her culture and Molly Graybull, the old woman dancer. "Clarissa's keeping herself busy at Molly Graybull's. Came home with Spider Woman stories and trickster tales... she says, loud and clear, 'I'm an Assinaboin.'" Then, as another dance arises, Clarissa literally becomes part of the culture: "That's when I saw that old Eagle woman come down and slide right inside of Clarissa, scooping up that child. There Clarissa was, full up with music. All full with that old, old spirit, letting herself dance through Clarissa's feet. Then Molly Graybull come dancing alongside Clarissa, and they was both the same age."

Once Clarissa lets the culture accept her, she lets her dancing make her an equal to Molly Graybull, her pseudo-hero. It's her sense of belonging that makes her happy, and she got that through embracing

her Native American heritage. Similarly, learning about my heritage makes me feel proud of myself. When my mother teaches me her Italian cooking or my father recounts to me the hippie adventures he and mom shared a hundred years ago in San Francisco, I feel happy to be a product of that. Someday I'll be cooking like a pro and having my own hippie adventures (although the latter seems less likely).

In conclusion, Clarissa wasn't happy when she was alone in the world with no ties to any specific family or culture. But when she discovered the dancing of the Assiniboins, she began embracing her heritage and enjoying life. She finally felt like she belonged, and that made her happy. As people in this world, we are constantly trying to find ourselves, to discover ourselves... and when we learn about our heritages and cultures, we feel that much more found.

Writing Sample



START ESSAY HERE

People can
Learn

Do not write in this box.

People can learn, can't they? Well in "Dance" by Vickie Sears, Clarissa does learn. Clarissa learns and shows us that Anything can happen if you try.

Clarissa used to be really shy and wierd. She had strange dreams, sometimes like an if she was seeing death. Vickie shows this because she writes, "She'd be screaming and crying with her little body wriggling on the bed...". Clarissa is shaking and crying because she has these dreams that make you want to stop living, and she screams because she is very frightened by the dreams.

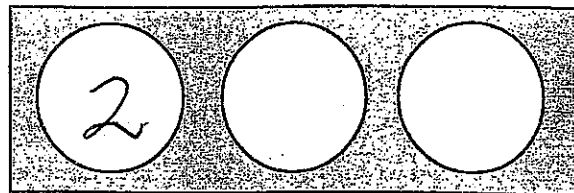
After a while, Clarissa learns to be more open-minded and gets an interest with music. The only thing is that she is amused when Molly her idly starts dancing. The Author writes "when Molly Graybull showed up beside her, Clarissa took to a seat and stared." Clarissa is amused by Molly's dancing because she has won many trophies and Molly is old and still dancing.

Later on, Molly starts getting courageous and masters how to dance with her idle. So, Clarissa practices, and practices until she masters her dancing trying to be just like Molly. The Author says, "That's when I saw the old Eagle woman come down and slide right inside of Clarissa, scooping that child." Clarissa is having so much fun after dancing that she feels as if she is equal to Molly by her spirit merging with the old Eagle woman and having a blast.

I know how good Clarissa feels to master something that can bring joy to many people. Because when I was starting middle school I did not really pay attention to school that much so the 1st marking period I got a low grade score. After that I knew I had to step my game up so I did. I did all my homework and did my best in my classes and from then on I kept on getting A's and B's.

Out of all this, we learn here
that Anything can happen if you try,
Clarissa experienced this, I experienced this
and I know many more people have
too.

Writing Sample



Do not write in this box.

START ESSAY HERE

In my opinion the theme of the story is you might be good at what you least expect to be good at. I think that's the lesson of the story because Chrissa did not know how to dance at first.

The first time she went dancing she felt "off" felt weird because she didn't know what to do. My evidence for this is "An hour, Chrissa was sitting there not all that interested in the dance or drum." This helps my thesis by her not really knowing how to dance.

Chrissa was feeling more confident at the end. She felt more confident because she wanted to dance with Molly Gray bull. My evidence

is "Just as were all getting out of the car, Clarissa whispered to me "I'm gonna dance with Molly Starbuck." This supports my thesis by her feeling more confident about herself and getting better

Clarissa at the end got better. She got better by being more confident about herself. My evidence by her getting better is "There Clarissa was full up with music. This supports my thesis by her getting better at the end.

My theme is you might be good at what you least expect too be good at. I showed that by Clarissa getting better at something she didn't know what to do. THE END

Name: _____
School: _____
Teacher: _____ Period: _____
Grade: _____ Date: _____

1

The story Dancer is about a girl who was five years old and she came to a foster home and all her stuff was in a paper bag and what was in it was a dress that was too short, a pair of pants that barely fit a croch, and a pair of underwear and a brand new nite gown. She was a very stressed little girl. She was sociopathic and she tried to kill the house cat. She got grounded for it. Some times during the nite she would wake up screaming saying that a man with a long knife was chasing her and no one could here her cry for help pretty scary dream

.They took her to her first dance her foster mom was thinking not to take because she killed the cat and she was grounded for it but she got to go any way. Some of the foster kids was mad at her but they showed her around any way then they set her on the bleachers and she was not interested in the music or the drums until Clarisa saw molly and she had won a fair share of dance competitions and there is no way a little could not get fixated on her she was well in her seventies.

8th Grade Response to Literature Anchor Papers: “Dancer” by Vickie Sears

Title	Score	Notes
Found	4	<p><i>An insightful analysis of the story that corresponds to a 4 Advanced in these ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction orients reader to the purpose and topic along with a title, which alludes to interpretation of story. • Thesis is compelling (<i>Through dance and discovery of heritage, Clarissa finds herself.</i>) • Well-selected, specific quotations are integrated seamlessly. • Lively and specific vocabulary, (<i>fixated, timidly, antisocial, belonging</i>) • Consistent use of academic English language conventions and sentence variety demonstrate craft of writer. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Anchor selection committee saw this paper as a high 4</i></p>
People Can Learn	3	<p><i>Solid writing that corresponds to a 3 Proficient in these ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation is convincing and thesis is focused (<i>Anything can happen if you try.</i>) • Writer connects personally to author’s idea and uses her example to support thesis. • Though slightly clumsy, effectively uses relevant examples from the text. • The essay’s introduction orients the reader and connects to topic, elaboration in body, and effective end that briefly summarizes and is call to action. • Language is clear. Some spelling errors (<i>wierd, idle</i>) but errors are first-draft in nature and do not interfere with meaning.
“In my opinion the theme of the story....”	2	<p><i>Writing that corresponds to a 2 Developing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation is clear and essay offers thesis. (<i>You might be good at what you least expect.</i>) • Introduction provides some connection to the topic, but does not orient the reader. • Writing is organized around one or more ideas to support the interpretation, but the evidence does not fully support thesis. • There are some spelling and language errors and word confusions (<i>wierd, too.</i>) • Sentences and language are mostly simple.
“The story Dancer is about a girl...”	1	<p><i>The writing corresponds to a 1 Emerging because:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no interpretation; it’s just a summary. • Lack of awareness about the important versus insignificant details to include in summary. • Writing is incomplete. There is no conclusion. • Organization is unclear. • Consistent spelling errors; contains runs-on sentences.