



Sample Literary Essay #1 With a Lens on Character

In Ruby the Copycat by Peggy Rathman, Ruby is a new student at school who wants to fit in so badly that she tries to make friends with a classmate named Angela by copying everything Angela does. Miss Hart is Ruby's teacher. From the very beginning Miss Hart notices Ruby needs help fitting in and starts giving her support. As a character Miss Hart is very important to me because of the support she shows Ruby.

One place in this book when Miss Hart proves she is supportive of Ruby is after Ruby recites a poem that is just like Angela's poem. Angela reads her poem from her paper first and Ruby goes next. The text says, "What a coincidence," murmured Miss Hart." The illustration shows Miss Hart simply putting her head in her hand. In my opinion this proves that Miss Hart is supportive because she could have embarrassed Ruby in front of the rest of the class by asking to see the poem on her paper. Instead Miss Hart doesn't ask for the poem, knowing that Ruby doesn't have it, so that the rest of the class will not make fun of her.

Another piece of evidence that supports the idea that Miss Hart is supportive of Ruby is later when Ruby is upset after Angela writes her a note telling her she hates her. Miss Hart dismisses the class and keeps Ruby behind to talk to her. In the text Miss Hart closes the schoolroom door and gently says, "Ruby, dear, you don't need to copy everything Angela does. You can be anything you want to be, but be Ruby first. I like Ruby." In my opinion this proves that Miss Hart is supportive of Ruby because she takes the time to talk to Ruby in private so she won't be embarrassed in front of the rest of the class. Miss Hart is also very supportive in what she says to Ruby. Instead of making Ruby feel bad, she tells her how great she is and how she likes her.

An additional place in the book when Miss Hart proves she is supportive of Ruby is toward the end of story when Ruby shows everyone what a good hopper she is. The text says, "Miss Hart turned on the tape player and said, 'Follow the leader! Do the Ruby Hop!'" So Ruby led the class around the room while everyone copied her. In my opinion Miss Hart once again is acting very supportive of Ruby by encouraging the entire class to follow Ruby's lead. This small action allows Ruby to see that the things she does on her own are worthwhile.

The character of Miss Hart is very important to me because she makes me think about how real people should behave toward each other in the world. Miss Hart teaches the readers of this book to be supportive, patient, and encouraging of all people. Without Miss Hart's support, Ruby would never learn to be happy with who she is. In the end it is Miss Hart's *heart* that saves Ruby from being a copycat.

Adapted by Katherine Casey



Structure for Literary Essay Focused on Character

- Introductory Paragraph:** **Short retelling** – In Ruby the Copycat by Peggy Rathman, Ruby is a new student who wants to fit in so badly that she tries to make friends with a classmate by copying everything Angela does.
Audience needs to know where this essay is going – From the very beginning Miss Hart notices Ruby needs help fitting in and starts giving her support.
Statement or opinion about a character (or a big idea derived from looking at a character) – As a character, Miss Hart is very important to me because of the support she shows Ruby.
- 2nd Paragraph: (body)** **First piece of text evidence that supports the statement**– One place in this book when Miss Hart proves she is supportive of Ruby is after Ruby recites a poem that is just like Angela’s poem.
Quote the relevant text that supports your statement (can include transitional phrases) – The text says, “ ‘What a coincidence,’ murmured Miss Hart.”
Explain how the relevant text supports your statement - In my opinion this proves that Miss Hart is supportive because she could have embarrassed Ruby in front of the rest of the class by asking...
- 3rd Paragraph: (body)** **Second piece of text evidence that supports the statement (can include transitional phrases)** – Another piece of evidence that supports the idea that Miss Hart is supportive of Ruby is later when Ruby is upset after Angela writes her a note telling her she hates her.
Quote the relevant text that supports your statement - In the text Miss Hart says, “Ruby, dear,” (she said gently,) “you don’t need to copy everything Angela does. You can be anything you want to be, but be Ruby first. I like Ruby.”
Explain how the relevant text supports your statement - Miss Hart is also very supportive when she talks to Ruby. Instead of making Ruby feel bad, she tells her how great she is and how she likes her.
- 4th Paragraph: (body)** **Third piece of text evidence that supports the statement (can include transitional phrases)** – An additional place in the book when Miss Hart proves she is supportive of Ruby is toward the end of story when Ruby shows everyone what a good hopper she is.
Quote the relevant text that supports your statement - The text says, “Miss Hart turned on the tape player and said, ‘Follow the leader! Do the Ruby Hop!’ ”
Explain how the relevant text supports your statement - In my opinion Miss Hart once again is acting very supportive of Ruby by encouraging the entire class to follow Ruby’s lead.
- Final Paragraph:** **Restate the statement, connecting it to how this character helps us understand people in real life** -- The character of Miss Hart is very important to me because she makes me think about how real people should behave toward each other in the world. Miss Hart teaches the readers of this book to be supportive, patient, and encouraging of all people. Without Miss Hart’s support, Ruby would never learn to be happy with who she is. In the end it is Miss Hart’s *heart* that saves Ruby from being a copycat.

Adapted by Katherine Casey



Sample Literary Essay #2 With a Lens on Character

Sometimes we let our failures get us down and lose confidence in ourselves, which can make us turn away from challenges. Lupe, the main character in The Marble Champ, by Gary Soto, is not naturally good at sports but is amazing at things involving her mind. Even though she is a straight A student with lots of awards, she is angry at herself for not being good at sports. Lupe proves to herself that she is a champion in all areas of her life, brains and athletics. Lupe is an important character to me because she shows that instead of letting your weaknesses stand in your way, with hard work and determination, you can overcome your weaknesses and achieve your dreams.

One example that shows Lupe is determined to not let lack of athletic skill stand in her way is learning to ride a bike. The narrator says, “It wasn’t until last year, when she was eleven years old, that she learned how to ride a bike. And even then she had to use training wheels.” Plus, Lupe only went roller skating “when her father held her hand.” It had to be embarrassing to be that old using training wheels, but Lupe used those training wheels and held her father’s hand to because that is what she needed in order to learn. This example of asking for help instead of giving up, even when it may look embarrassing, proves that Lupe doesn’t let her weaknesses stand in her way.

Later on in the story Lupe decides that she is going to become a marble champion because it is a sport she hopes she is able to master. When she first tries to shoot the marble, “she had to admit her thumb was weaker than the neck of a newborn chick.” Instead of getting frustrated, Lupe does thumb exercises and practices for hours and hours and her thumb even gets swollen from all the work. In my opinion this proves that Lupe is a character who sees hard work as a way to accomplish her dreams.

An additional place in the story when Lupe does not lose her determination is in the final match when she misses a shot and then wind blows dust in her eyes, letting her opponent earn points. She could have become nervous or frustrated, especially since her eyes felt scratchy when she blinked. Instead, Lupe “relied on instinct and thumb muscle to score the tying point” and ended up winning that match. She even went on to beat the winner of the boy’s division! I believe this proves that because Lupe believed in herself and had practiced so much, she became a winner in all areas of her life.

The character of Lupe is important to me because she reminds me that I am responsible for how I feel about myself. Instead of letting failure get me down, or getting embarrassed about asking for help, I can be more like Lupe. I can practice, I can keep trying even when things get hard, and I can be a winner, too.

Written by Katherine Casey



Sample Literary Essay #3 With a Lens on Character from a Mystery Series

When I am reading the Cam Jansen mystery series, I wish the main character, Cam, would come to life. Cam, in Cam Jansen: The Mystery of the Television Dog, by David Adler, is not always able to solve mysteries by herself but is amazingly resourceful as a sleuth. Cam proves to herself time and time again that no matter what the crime, who the suspect is and how difficult the clues are to uncover – she is the detective for the job. Cam Jansen is a resourceful detective when it comes to solving mysteries. She sacrifices her time and shares her special gift of a photographic memory to help people when a crime occurs – in this case helping to return a famous television dog, Poochie, to his trainer at the bookstore. Cam shows that instead of letting obstacles stand in your way, with resourcefulness, determination, and selflessness, anything is possible.

One example that shows Cam is a resourceful detective is when she draws upon her gift of a photographic memory. When Cam realizes that the dog in the bookstore was not Poochie she says, “That’s what I thought. That’s why I said, ‘Click.’ I looked at the picture I have of Poochie in my mind and I looked at the dog in the bookstore. They’re not the same.” Soon after, Cam, her sidekick Eric and his twin sisters followed the imposter dog to his house. Cam was able to use her photographic memory again to uncover that the criminal was right under their nose! “Cam closed her eyes and said, ‘Click.’ She thought for a short while. Then she said, ‘I’m looking at the picture I have in my mind of the man we saw in the bookstore. He looks like the man we just saw. Only the hair is different.’” These examples highlight how Cam is resourceful in using her talent to help her make sense of clues.

Throughout the Cam Jansen mystery series, Cam relies on her sidekick, Eric, to help her find clues and crack open mysteries. Later on in the story, Eric is with Cam when he pets the imposter dog, Cloudy’s, back. “He looked at his hand. There were streaks on it, too. ‘It’s these spots,’ Eric said. They were put on by shoe polish or something. I’ll bet Cloudy is really all white like a cloud. These spots were probably put on so the man with the red hair could switch the two dogs.” As Cam’s loyal friend, Eric often connects the trail of clues (and helps Cam to abandon red herrings). Instead of getting frustrated, Cam knows to rely on Eric when it seems like the trail of clues has dried up. In my opinion, this proves that Cam is a character who sees that two minds are always smarter than one when trying to solve a mystery.

An additional place in the story when Cam is selfless and resourceful is when she takes a risk to rescue Poochie and convinces Eric’s twin sisters, Donna and Diane to help her carry out her plan. Cam said, “We have to get the man away from his desk. If we do that, we can switch the dogs.” “If Donna taps on one of the closed windows, the man will run over to see who’s there. Before he can open the window, Diane can tap on another window. The man will run to the other window. If you two take turns tapping on windows, the man will be busy running from one window to the other. And while he’s running, I’ll switch the dogs.” She had to be so brave to go into the suspect’s house to save Poochie from demise if the ransom was not paid. I believe this proves that because Cam believed in herself, was brave and selfless, she carried out the plan with the help of Eric’s twin sisters.

The character of Cam is important to me because she reminds me that if a goal seems impossible to accomplish, I have to be resourceful and creative to reach it. Instead of letting obstacles get in my way, or getting embarrassed about asking for help, I can be more like Cam. I can use my special talents to help others solve their problems.

Written by Olivia Wahl