

Model Cadet

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Course: ENGL 101

Instructor: Dr. Joan Faust

Essay Type: Personal Narrative

I moved to Slidell in the summer of 1998. It was a start of my tenth grade year at Northshore High School. I remember going to enroll the week before school started. I followed my mom into the school library like a lost puppy. There were new kids all over who were just as scared as I was. The room was filled with administrators sitting at tables asking millions of school-related questions to parents who were fumbling through papers to find a retort. Two people caught my attention in the room. They were a girl and a boy sharply dressed in pickle-green uniforms. Their chests were decorated with numerous shiny metals that reflected their accomplishments. The girl's dark brown hair was neatly tied in a bun off of her shoulders, and the boy's was shaven. Their black shoes were so shiny you could see your own reflection in them if you looked. They walked over to me and introduced themselves as Commanding Officer Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Wendy Arlington and her right hand man Cadet First Lieutenant Dwight Lewis. They were friendly. They shook my hand when they greeted me and told me about the JROTC program at Northshore High School. I told them I was nervous about a new school and was looking to meet people. They promised me I would make many friendships, and since I wanted to be just like them, I enrolled.

At first I joined JROTC to make friends and "fit in." In the course of the program, the desire grew in me to be more. I wanted to be an outstanding cadet. I wanted to give people the impression that I got from Wendy and Dwight. I wanted to be a leader.

One day two weeks into the school year, I was sitting in JROTC class at a desk in the back of the room and had no work to be done. The unarmed drill team leader. Cadet Captain Jerry St. Pierre, came in, pulled up a chair next to me, and told me about his team. They went to competitions, won trophies, and were a highly motivated team. I felt like this was my opportunity to be an outstanding cadet. The following afternoon I showed up to practice. I met the team and felt a certain kind of comfort that I belonged there. St. Pierre informed me that there was a competition in four days, and that he was expecting me to be ready. I felt completely unprepared. I did not know all of the answers to the knowledge questions they would ask me in the inspection, my uniform was far from being perfect, and I lacked the confidence in myself. Nonetheless, St. Pierre had confidence and motivated me.

That Saturday morning before the sun had risen, I showed up at Northshore High School in my uniform that I had spent all night polishing and tidying up. Every brass pin sparkled, every ribbon and rank was neatly aligned and straitened, and all dangling strings and lint were picked from my uniform. Every crease in my shirt and pants was well defined, and my black leather shoes shined like two mirrors. The team got on the bus and we headed for Hancock High School. We sang cadences to motivate ourselves and get pumped up. We echoed with great enthusiasm, "Rock, drill team, rock. OH YEAH, you've got to roll drill team, roll" and "Left, right o' left. Drill team get busy one time. Left, right o' left. Pump, Pump, Pump it up." When the team formed up on the competition field, I felt a high that I had never known. To my surprise I was thrilled more than I was scared. I knocked the socks off of the Sergeant that inspected me. I knew the answers to the knowledge questions he asked me. I only made one insignificant error that went unnoticed. The Sergeant told me "OOH RAH, good job cadet." Compliments are rare,

so this one made me feel like Superwoman. The team brought home a second place trophy on my first of many competitions. I had found my niche.

The following year the next drill team leader was to be picked. I knew I was ready for it. The Senior Army Instructor, Colonel Tommy Palmertree, held an awards ceremony. He kept the team leader as a surprise until the end. Of course, this kept me on the edge of my seat biting my nails in anticipation. Finally, Colonel Palmertree announced me as the following year's leader. He said I would hold the position as Cadet First Lieutenant. I knew that I had finally achieved my goal. I had become a great leader like Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Armington and Cadet First Lieutenant Dwight Lewis. I would lead others and influence them in the same way as they influenced me.

Jodie Esteve is studying basic curriculum. Dr. Joan Faust was her English professor.

Dr. Faust's Comments: *Ms Esteve's English 101 assignment was to write a personal narrative essay describing an event that dramatically affected her life. Her choice of narrating her rise in the ranks of JROTC is unique, interesting, and very appropriate for the assignment. She does a very nice job of using specific details to describe aspects of the experience as well as employing dialog to accent her account. The reader gets a clear sense of the impact this event had on her life. Combining and subordinating short, choppy sentences could give her paper a smoother flow and add to its readability, but the paper is a very nice first attempt at narrative.*