



'The challenges of life bring out the best in young people.' What are your views?

Write about a time when you felt this was true for you.

By Rebecca Yap



Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "A smooth sea never made a skilful sailor." In life, the seas we travel are never guaranteed to be smooth sailing. Storms, winds and ¹tumultuous waves are bound to emerge during our journeys. What is crucial is knowing how to seize each moment and utilise it as a lesson to grow from. I acknowledge that the challenges in life do bring out the best in young people, though learning to find one's footing may initially be tricky.

Through challenges such as failure and hardship, young people demonstrate their ²tenacity and ability to rise from setbacks. These characteristics that emerge from the depths of hardship would not have happened if their lives were comfortable and uneventful. Indeed, struggles and difficulties reveal an individual's true character. By having the opportunity to go through each unique ³tribulation, most

young people can testify to how the experience has made them better people. Moreover, some may even state that an event catalysed a radical change in their lives for the better. Certainly, those who came out of these battles do not regret having lived through them.

Looking back, who I have become is a result of the challenges I have encountered. While the process was ⁴excruciating and tiresome, with moments when I wanted to ⁵throw in the towel, these same challenges prompted me to hone my perseverance, patience and foresight as I continue my life's journey. A vivid memory I have where these qualities shone was when I had to repeat Secondary Three. Utterly lost and defeated, I had accepted my fate since there seemed to be no other options available then.

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METACOGNITIVE
checkPOINT

How do I feel about the failure experienced by the writer?



When news first broke, I knew that this supposed ‘failure’ was, in fact, an opportunity to evaluate how I should be living my life. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, I used the brief school vacation time to set concrete goals for the new year ahead. Despite waves of anxiety and regret, I refused to be thrown off track with the past and resolved to stay focused on the future. Undeniably, feeling lost and left behind as I saw my peers advance to Secondary Four was challenging. It was easy to spiral into a pool of doubt and feel defeated for not trying hard enough earlier. While it did not happen overnight, I learnt to accept the circumstances I was in and to anticipate the year ahead. To see the same tests, exams and school commitments in a new light was one of the most enlightening experiences I could ever have.

Furthermore, having gone through the longer route of repeating Secondary Three stirred in me a renewed conviction and confidence in myself. It brought out the best in me as I was able to empathise with fellow classmates who worried about their academic results, or those who were struggling to adjust in college. I learnt that experiencing what appeared to be a major setback had only ⁶propelled me to greater heights. Being a reliable peer, a hardworking student and a mature adult were the fruits borne from this extra year. Without it, who knows if I would have learnt the invaluable life lessons I hold close to me now?

I believe that challenges in life do bring out the best in young people, particularly when the individual responds well to his or her tribulations and uses them as stepping stones to improve. These lessons, values and skills do not appear overnight. However, learning to embrace what life has to offer is certainly a good mindset to have.

Word Bank:

- 1 tumultuous:**
very loud, or full of confusion, change or uncertainty
- 2 tenacity:**
the determination to continue what you are doing
- 3 tribulation:**
a problem or difficulty
- 4 excruciating:**
extremely painful or bad
- 5 throw in the towel:**
to admit that you have been defeated and stop trying
- 6 propelled:**
to force somebody to move in a particular direction or to get into a particular situation



METACOGNITIVE POINT:
REFLECTION

“What is the most useful takeaway from this essay?”



Combining the Expository and Personal Recount Genres

Let us look at the two parts to this question:

Part 1: 'The challenges of life bring out the best in young people.' **What are your views?**

Part 2: Write about a time when **you** felt this was true for **you**.

This is a hybrid essay (expository-personal recount). Part 1 requires you to adopt an expository writing style because the question words '**What are your views?**' indicate that you are to offer different perspectives about the statement by providing evidence to support your views. The second part requires a personal recount, as indicated by the second person pronoun **you**.

How does the writer organise the essay to include both text types? Let us examine the structure in this essay.

Exposition (Paragraphs 1-2):

Introduction:

Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "A smooth sea never made a skilful sailor." In life, the seas we travel are never guaranteed to be smooth sailing. Storms, winds and tumultuous waves are bound to emerge in our journeys. What is crucial is knowing how to seize each moment and utilise them as lessons to grow from. **I acknowledge that the challenges in life do bring out the best in young people, though learning to find one's footing may initially be tricky.**

Hook

Here, the writer uses a quotation by a famous person to introduce the topic.

Background/Definition

Giving the background or definition of the key ideas or words is one characteristic of expository writing. Here, the writer likens going through challenges in life to going through storms and the importance of learning lessons from life's challenges.

Position

The writer begins the essay by stating her view on the statement.



Paragraph 2:

Through challenges such as failure and hardship, young people demonstrate their tenacity and ability to rise from these setbacks.

These characteristics that emerge from the depths of hardship would not have happened if their lives were comfortable and uneventful. Indeed, struggles and difficulties reveal an individual's true character. By having the opportunity to go through each unique tribulation, most young people can testify to how the experience has made them better people. Moreover, some may even state that an event catalysed a radical change in their lives for the better. Certainly, those who came out of these battles do not regret having lived through them.

Topic Sentence

A typical body paragraph in expository writing begins with a topic sentence, stating a possible view on the topic.

Elaborate/Explain

Some elaboration or explanation on the position is required to establish the position. Sometimes, examples might be necessary to strengthen the viewpoint.

Personal Recount (Paragraphs 3-6):

The writer devoted the other four paragraphs to the personal recount. Below is an analysis of paragraph 3.

Looking back, who I have become is a result of the challenges I have encountered. While the process was excruciating and tiresome, with moments when I wanted to throw in the towel, these same challenges prompted me to hone my perseverance, patience and foresight as I embark on life's journey. A vivid memory I have where these qualities shone was when I had to repeat Secondary Three. Utterly lost and defeated, I had accepted my fate since there seemed to be no other options available then.

Transition

Note that for the first two lines of the paragraph, the writer did not immediately recount his personal experience but mentions the importance of challenges in his life. This, together with the use of the first-person pronoun, provides a smooth transition from the exposition genre to the personal recount.

Personal Recount

At this point, the writer begins to recount the challenges he faced as a student.