

5.7 MODEL EXPECTATIONS WITH AN EXEMPLAR

WHAT AND WHY?

An exemplar is an example of the work product you expect. For example, a written sentence, paragraph, or essay is a written exemplar. A video of a conversation could be an exemplar of conversation moves you want students to use. An exemplar may be student created, teacher created, or a published work (aka mentor text or model text). Use exemplars to make your goals and success criteria visible for students.

HOW TO MODEL WITH AN EXEMPLAR

PREPARE: Choose an exemplar that demonstrates your success criteria for your literacy goals. For example, a seventh-grade teacher chose the following exemplar by her student Aerial Woodson to model her success criteria for a single-paragraph response to the question, “What is the theme of the poem?”

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- Make a logical inference about theme.
- Write a thesis statement that communicates the inference and names the text.
- Cite relevant text evidence to support the claim.
- Explain how text evidence supports the claim.

EXEMPLAR

Rhina P. Espaillat’s message in “Bilingual/Bilingüe” is that being bilingual strengthens her instead of weakening her. The narrator shows her father’s fear in the second stanza “that words might cut in two his daughter’s heart (el corazón) and lock the alien part.” This means her father believes Spanish and English are two different cultures and your heart should only belong to one. The narrator then teaches herself Spanish at night without her father’s consent. When she writes, “And still the heart was one,” she is telling her father that being bilingual didn’t break her, but made her stronger.

STEPS FOR INSTRUCTION

1. Distribute a copy of the success criteria and exemplar for each student and project your copy on a screen.
2. Use highlighting and text-marking strategies to guide students in actively finding the success criteria in the exemplar. For example, have students

- HIGHLIGHT **logical inference** and the **thesis statement** in green
- UNDERLINE **relevant text evidence** that supports the claim
- WRITE A CHECK ✓ next to each sentence that explains how text evidence supports the claim

EXEMPLAR WITH MARKED SUCCESS CRITERIA

Rhina P. Espaillat’s message in “Bilingual/Bilingüe” is that being bilingual strengthens her instead of weakening her. The narrator shows her father’s fear in the second stanza “that words might cut in two his daughter’s heart (el corazón) and lock the alien part.” ✓ This means her father believes Spanish and English are two different cultures and your heart should only belong to one. The narrator then teaches herself Spanish at night without her father’s consent. When she writes, “And still the heart was one,” ✓ she is telling her father that being bilingual didn’t break her, but made her stronger.

TIPS TO BE STRATEGIC

USE EXEMPLARS FROM A DIFFERENT, SIMILAR TASK: When modeling expectations before students write, don’t use an example of the exact task they will do—as that will kill the motivation to write it. Instead model a similar task with a different topic.

BUILD FROM TEACHER-DIRECTED TO STUDENT-DIRECTED: The first time you use this strategy, use direct instruction to guide the process by explaining each connection and modeling how to mark the text. Once students know this routine, have them collaborate to find and mark success criteria with each new exemplar.

FOCUS YOUR ANALYSIS: Every exemplar is rich with opportunities for teaching literacy and language learning goals. Be selective. When introducing a new genre, emphasize the essential features. To address a need you see in students’ writing (e.g., explaining text evidence), emphasize only that aspect of the exemplar in your analysis. To teach language choices, prioritize word choice, a grammatical structure, or the organization of the text as the sole focus of your analysis lesson.

COLLECT EXEMPLARS EVERY YEAR: Every task is an opportunity to collect student exemplars that demonstrate your expectations and/or common challenges you want to help students address. Save exemplars from prior years to use anonymously with new students. Create a common permission form all parents and students can sign to give permission to use their writing beyond the classroom, and give them the option to include or exclude the author’s name with the exemplar (some young authors want credit!). When you are securing permission, collaborate with other teachers in your district to collect and share exemplars.