

Students do the following model essay analysis activity early in their CUNY Start semester. Before analyzing the model essay, students would have read and discussed the CATW (CUNY Assessment Test of Writing) directions, and read and discussed the article “What Are Friends For?” by Tara Parker-Pope.

The teacher would then ask students to read the model essay and fill out the essay analysis sheet.

Model Essay - CATW #1

We can all agree that friends make our lives better. They encourage us when we're feeling down, make us laugh, and laugh at our jokes. Friends make us feel good, almost anyone would agree. But the article by Tara Parker-Pope, “What Are Friends For?” goes beyond this simple point. The article presents ample evidence that having friends not only makes us happier, it also makes us healthier, both mentally and physically. According to Parker-Pope, our friendships can affect our weight, stress levels, and even our lifespan. One of the most significant ideas presented in the article is that having friends can give us the mental strength to overcome the obstacles we face.

Of course, facing a difficult challenge with friends is easier than facing it alone. Friends can help us by giving advice and support. But it's not only that. Having friends can also make us believe we are capable of succeeding. Proving this point, Parker-Pope discusses an Australian study in which students had to climb a steep hill. Before they began, the students were asked to guess how steep the hill was. According to the article, "the students who stood with friends gave lower estimates of the steepness of the hill" compared to those who stood alone. That is to say, those who had the support of their friends felt more capable of succeeding. I can certainly identify with the students in the this study. I'm currently facing the challenge of going to college. Before I came to the CUNY Start program, I felt isolated and worried. I used to lie awake at night wondering how I would ever manage to read thick textbooks and write research papers, on top of working and

taking care of my two-year-old son. In this program I've made friends who are also planning to go to college, and we're facing this challenge together. This means we can share information, study together, and give each other emotional support. The tasks seem much more manageable now. In other words, the backpack is still heavy, but the hill doesn't seem as steep.

Furthermore, having friends to support us is helpful, but having old friends, those who have known us since childhood, can be even more powerful. As the Australian study suggests, "the longer friends had known each other, the less steep the hill appeared." In other words, having old friends can give us an even bigger boost when it comes to facing life's most difficult challenges. This idea is supported by the book, *What Is the What* by Dave Eggers. In this book, Eggers tells the story of how Achak Deng became one of the Lost Boys, a group of young refugees who fled massacres in Darfur, Sudan and came to the U.S. Throughout his ordeal, Deng lost contact with his family and almost everyone he knew. He witnessed horrible atrocities and escaped death many times as he made his way to safety. As a young man going through all this, Deng felt miserable and alone. But every so often, he would encounter a friend, someone he knew from his old village, someone who recognized his face. These encounters with friends are what got him through his ordeal. Just as Parker-Pope's article points out, his childhood friends helped Deng feel that he could get through the extraordinary challenges he faced.

In conclusion, the article by Parker-Pope points out that friends are an important factor in our mental and physical health. It is both an obvious point and one that deserves more attention. We tend to treat illness and depression with medicine, when in some cases, emotional isolation may be the root cause. Of course, medical treatments are sometimes necessary, but we should remember that our friends are our lifeline in many ways. In my experience as in the story of Achak Deng, it is clear that having someone who knows you

and understands you can make a huge difference in your chances of leading a happy, healthy life.

Model Essay - CATW #1 - ANALYSIS SHEET

Analyzing this Model Essay will help you to understand the format of the CATW essay more clearly. Carefully follow the instructions below. Some questions are answered by writing on the Model Essay itself, while other questions require you to write a response on this sheet.

1. Label each paragraph on the essay itself:
 - Intro Paragraph
 - Body paragraph 1
 - Body paragraph 2
 - Conclusion Paragraph

2. In the Intro Paragraph, underline and label the following:
 - a brief summary of the article's main idea
 - a mention of the author and title of the article
 - the student's Significant Idea (Thesis)

3. In each of the body paragraphs, label:
 - the topic sentence (TS)
 - the quotation from the article (Q)
 - the paraphrase of the quotation (P)
 - the student's example (Ex)
 - the connecting sentence that connects the example back to the significant idea (CS)

4. Which body paragraph gives a story about the student's personal experience for an example?

5. Which body paragraph explains a reference to a text (like a book, an article, a movie that the student has read or seen) for an example?

6. In your own words, what point does the essay writer make in her conclusion?