

Description

This is a client sample. It is a time-period piece that displays Mae's ability to research historical, cultural, and geographical information and use them to create a compelling, accurate story. This project is targeted towards the client's friends and family.

Context

Six-year-old Joyce and her nine-year-old brother, Leroy, live on a farm in the New Mexican mountains. On a whim, Leroy convinces Joyce that it's a good idea to skip school and go for a swim at the nearby lake. When they get to the lake, they find it fenced off, so instead, the two climb down the hill to swim in the pond that feeds the creek below the dam.

1600 Word Sample

Leroy and I scrambled down the scrubby hill, half running, half sliding on our bottoms. At last, the beautiful blue pond came into view, the water clear and glittering. Without even bothering to take off my clothes, I ran and jumped in, laughing at the shock of cold water. Leroy was right behind me, cannonballing in off a big ledge with a huge splash. The cool water felt like a taste of spring again. This was way better than being cooped up in some old classroom!

I swam to the middle of the pond, where Leroy climbed up on a big, bare floating tree. Most of its branches were gone - they'd probably fallen off before the tree died and made its way here. I watched him walk along it like a balance beam and wondered if I could do that too.

"Hey Joyce, check this out!" He jumped off, curling into a ball right before he hit the water in front of me with a gigantic splash.

I laughed and rubbed the water out of my eyes. "My turn!"

I swam to the tree and scrambled up, wobbling a little to get my balance as it wadded in the water. I stood up straight and noticed some dark clouds gathering on the horizon. I didn't think anything of it. The sky was always changing around here.

I took a deep breath and lept off the log, spreading my arms and legs wide like a starfish. "Cannonball!" The cool water slapped me in the belly, stinging as it swallowed me up, bubbles streaming all around me.

When I surfaced, my face was immediately bombarded with an onslaught of sprinkling water that Leroy splashed at me. I covered my mouth to keep water out of my mouth before returning the attack. I giggled between breaths and I was attempting to dunk my brother when a crack of lightning in the distance made both of us look up.

"Uh oh," I said looking at the grey clouds partially obscured by the dam. "We better get out of here. That storm's comin' in!"

Leroy shielded his eyes from the sun and looked towards the clouds. "Aw man, I think you're right. Maybe a few more..." he glared intensely at the dam. His face turned to horror "Joyce!" he pointed.

I paddled in the water as I looked at the dam just in time to see a swell of muddy brown water pour over the top of the dam, crashing down the spillway towards us.

"Flood!" Leroy yelled and swam towards the tree where we had just been jumping. "Swim to the tree!"

I froze where I was, entranced by how the flow of water seemed to keep growing. Daddy had told me about flash floods the last time I'd gone to the field with him. He said how the dry riverbeds could turn into raging torrents in an instant when the summer storms hit. He said if we ever saw that we had to get to high ground fast.

I looked around frantically realizing that the shore was too far. The muddy water already ripped into the pond, heading straight for us.

"Joyce! Grab on!" Leroy yelled at me from where he was perched on the deadwood. A wave of murky water grew visibly behind him.

My arms churned through the water as I made a break for it. I hoped I hadn't wasted too much time looking around - why hadn't I started swimming from the get-go? I lunged for the slippery trunk as the force of the water slammed into me, tearing me from my handhold. I gagged as water forced its way into my mouth. I just managed to keep my head up as another of the tree's branches was pushed

towards me by the wave. I grabbed hold and wrapped my arms around it stronger than anything I'd ever held anything before.

My cheek scraped against gritty and slimy bark as the log spun in the churning current. My sodden overalls clung tightly around my legs, weighing me down. I kicked hard, trying to find purchase on the tree with my bare feet but there was only the pull of the dark water.

"Hold on Joyce!" Leroy yelled over the roar.

He gripped his branch one hand white-knuckled and the other reaching to find a purchase closer to me. He had managed to get atop the log, using a foothold on another branch to keep himself balanced. I tightened my grip as the flood carried us downstream, the banks racing past in a muddy blur. Thunder cracked overhead and stinging rain pelted my face. He trudged further forward when lightning split the swollen clouds just over us, momentarily blinding me.

I felt a warm hand on my forearm. "I'm going to pull you up!" Leroy yelled over the roar of the water and debris.

He tugged at me strongly, so I tried again to lift my feet to the side of the log, finally succeeding after numerous attempts. My breath felt ragged as pulled myself all the way up, balancing opposite of him. I labored to calm myself. Leroy was hugging the log with both his arms and legs, just like me.

Tears pooled down my face, the only hot water on my now cold and clammy skin. I shoulda paid more attention to those clouds when I saw them. Daddy said the rains come on fast.

Leroy rubbed my forearm and I looked into his brown eyes just as I started to sob.

"It's gonna be okay, Joyce. It wouldn't be an adventure if it all went right." He smiled at me. I couldn't tell if he was just trying to make me feel better.

“Well, next time,” I shouted as the rain fell heavier and louder around us, “I don’t want this much adventure!”

Leroy laughed briefly before another gush of water propelled us even faster down the creek, bumping our tree against a rock. We both buckled down, renewed strength going into our tree-hugging.

After what seemed like hours, the sky cleared. My arms ached from holding on so tight and my sodden clothes clung to me uncomfortably as they crusted in the sunlight.

I spotted a horse grazing under a tree on the opposite bank. I pinched Lee gently to get his attention. "Horse," I croaked.

Leroy looked behind himself and quickly shuffled his body towards the bank. "Joyce, this is our chance!" The water was still moving fast, it was no longer a raging torrent. "We gotta swim for that bank while the water's calmed down some. Ready?"

I felt like I had just started to warm up and getting back in the water was the last thing I wanted to do. I took a deep breath and nodded. Lee’d always looked after me and I trusted him. A second wind coursed through my tired limbs.

“Okay,” Leroy made sure I paid attention to him as he pointed upstream. “When you’re swimming, aim for that cluster of trees there. Ready?”

It was the only cluster, so I nodded.

“Now!”

We slid off the log into the murky water. I swam with whatever strength I had left, kicking hard against the current as Leroy sprinted ahead of me. My waterlogged overalls threatened to pull me under,

so I swung my arms even harder. The grove of trees was coming up fast, I had to keep swimming to the side or else I'd miss them.

My muscles burned as I passed the first tree. I was so close, but the water was too fast! I reached for a protruding root grabbing ahold. I breathed a sigh of relief as I spotted Leroy climbing up the side of the creek. I tried to pull myself up the side of mine, but it was too steep.

"Leroy! Help!"

He looked at me. "Hold tight, Joyce - I'm comin' "

He disappeared as he hurried through the thicket of trees above. His head popped over the edge of the creek just over me.

"I'm here. " Seeing there were no other things for me to grab onto down the stream if this spot didn't work out. "You really know how to pick a spot, Joyce." He grinned at me before wrapping his arm around a large root protruding from the exposed, rocky ground.

He extended his arm towards me. "Grab ahold, Joyce, I'll pull you up."

I put more of my weight on the weak branch to reach and it held, so I reached just a little more. Snap! Oh no - I was going to drown!

Before I fell much, Leroy grabbed my forearm and slowly hauled me onto the muddy bank. I slid across the ground, relieved once my legs finally cleared the small cliff.

Exhausted, I collapsed in a soggy heap, gasping and out of breath. Leroy flopped down beside me, chest heaving just as hard.

Soaked and exhausted, I blankly stared up at the few grey clouds still spotting the sky. My throat knotted. Going to school would've been a much better choice.

I looked over at Leroy's muddy, grinning face.

"How can you be smilin' right now?" Did he think this was funny?

He started quietly laughing uncontrollably and flopped onto his side. It looked like he was laughing so hard he was crying - but maybe it was the water.

I scolded him, which only made him laugh harder. I was too tired to laugh, but before I knew it a smile began to creep up my face. It was a very ridiculous situation. Who would have guessed that a storm would have hit the one day we decided to skip and go for a swim? My grin turned into a high-pitched roar of laughter as I held my stomach, breathlessly roaring alongside him.

Eventually, Leroy calmed down and drew himself up. He looked up the creek towards the horse we'd passed. "Come on, Joyce. Gettin' back home'll go much faster on horseback."