Student Exemplars Type: **Expository Writing**

***Notes**: Five paragraphs in the body of this essay—one for each of the senses—provide a clear organization pattern that is easy for the reader to understand. Note that each of the five paragraphs begins with a sentence that repeats the same, simple pattern. This repetition of a sentence pattern provides unity. The use of an extended metaphor—comparing friendship to the making and baking of bread—works quite well and shows that Nate, the sixth grade writer of this essay, is willing to take creative risks.*

***Source**: https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/studentmodels/friendship*

Friendship

A dictionary contains a definition of friendship somewhere in the F's between the words "fear" and "Friday." An encyclopedia supplies interesting facts on friendship. But all the definitions and facts do not convey what friendship is really all about. It cannot be understood through words or exaggerations. The only way to understand friendship is through experience. It is an experience that involves all the senses.

Friendship can be seen. It is seen in an old couple sitting in the park holding hands. It is the way they touch, a touch as light as a leaf floating in the autumn air, a touch so strong that years of living could not pull them apart. Friendship is seen in a child freely sharing the last cookie. It is the small arm over the shoulder of another as they walk on the playground. Seeing friendship is not casual. It is watching for subtlety, but friendship is there for eyes that can see.

Friendship can be heard. It is heard in the words of two friends who squeezed in lunch together on an extremely busy day. It is the way they talk to each other, not the words. Their tone is unique. Friendship can be heard by those willing to listen.

Friendship is felt in a touch. It is a pat on the back from a teammate, a high five between classes, the slimy, wet kiss from the family dog. It's a touch that reassures that someone is there, someone who cares. The touch communicates more than words or gestures. It is instantly understood and speaks volumes beyond the point of contact, to the heart.

Friendship has a taste. It tastes like homemade bread, the ingredients all measured and planned, then carefully mixed and kneaded, then the quiet waiting as the dough rises. Hot from the oven, the bread tastes more than the sum of its ingredients. There is something else there, perhaps the thoughts of the baker as her hands knead the dough, or her patience as she waits for the dough to rise. Unseen and unmeasured, this is the ingredient that makes the difference. Warm, fresh from the oven with a little butter, the difference you taste is friendship.

Friendship has a smell. It smells like the slightly burnt cookies your brother made especially for you. It smells like your home when stepping into it after being away for a long time. It smells like a sandbox or a sweaty gym. Friendship has a variety of smells. Taken for granted at the moment, they define the memory of friendship.

Finally, more than the other senses, friendship is an experience of the heart. It is the language of the heart—a language without words, vowels, or consonants; a language that, whether seen, felt, heard, or tasted, is understood by the heart. Like air fills the lungs, friendship fills the heart, allowing us to experience the best life has to offer: a friend.

Student Exemplars Type: **Expository Writing**

***Notes**: In this feature article, eighth grader Irené informs the reader about spina bifida as she highlights the achievements of a classmate who has the condition. Quotations from the classmate add a personal side to the writing.*

***Source**: https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/studentmodels/what-really-matters*

What Really Matters

Margaret L. is like any other teenage girl today: she talks on the phone, deals with the stress of schoolwork, and has a boyfriend. Unlike many of her peers, however, Margaret takes medication as part of her morning routine; and the time she spends in the school bathroom is not devoted to fixing her hair.

Margaret has spina bifida, a condition in which one or more of her vertebrae did not form properly, leaving her spinal cord—the most vital component of the central nervous system—unprotected. She has had eight operations and wears braces on her legs to keep them in the proper positions. Throughout all of these ordeals, she has retained her outgoing personality and positive view of life.

The 14-year-old attends high school and is not in any special classes. She is allowed extra time to get to class when she needs it. She says, "I get it [teased] a lot, but I do have a small group of friends who are great about everything."

Margaret has had the support of her parents as well: "I think that, growing up with a disability, the best thing that I have had is supportive parents; without them I don't know where I would be. They both have always said that I could do something if I really wanted to."

After school on most days, Margaret works at Able-Disabled Advocacy (A-DA), an organization that helps the disabled, alongside her mother, Cindy. On other days she

plays wheelchair basketball and tennis, even though she is not wheelchair-bound herself. Her evenings are spent at A-DA and doing schoolwork, such as the recent project on a genetic medical condition for which she selected spina bifida as her topic.

Margaret met her first serious boyfriend, Juan, when they played against each other during a wheelchair basketball tournament. "We were complete enemies on the court," she says. They met again at a Spina Bifida Association conference. They danced together twice. Later she realized the special connection they shared, both having a disability.

Margaret feels that, far from having limited her, her disability has allowed her to do things she might not have been able to do otherwise. She says that she would not have been involved in sports at all if it was not for wheelchair sports, and she would not have some of her current friendships or her boyfriend. Rock climbing, cycling, and downhill racing (a kind of cycling) are some of the other activities she is able to participate in. Margaret also volunteers in an inclusion program at a Jewish community center, helping other kids with disabilities.

The prognosis, or outlook, for most people with spina bifida is excellent, and Margaret is thinking about the future. "I want to be a doctor of some kind," she says, "though I'm not sure what kind yet."