

Great Example Essays That Are NOT Based on Challenges (i.e. Montage Structure)

- Hiking
- Food (2019-26)

Hiking

When I was in elementary school, I came home from school every day in the fall and took a five-minute walk to a pond near my house. I remember watching the white egrets strut along the water's edge, peering in to look for sunfish, and counting the noses of snapping turtles resting at the water's surface. I'd take a short hike around the pond through the crisp autumn air before finally heading back home.

These walks inspired me to enter Cub Scouts, and ultimately to cross over into Boy Scouting. Despite several of my friends quitting Scouting to focus on athletics or other activities, I stayed. I loved everything from creating makeshift slings from neckerchiefs to constructing shelters in the middle of the woods. I aspired to follow the trail to Eagle to its peak and become an Eagle Scout. However, what always excited me most was exploring the outdoors through hiking.

As a history nerd, to the point where I would be that guy reading history textbooks for fun, hiking allowed me to immerse myself in historical settings. Through Boy Scouting, I was able to arrange and lead Historical Trail hikes, giving myself and my troop firsthand perspectives on a Valley Forge winter, or the actual walk up Breed's Hill along Boston's Freedom Trail. I became the troop storyteller along these hikes, adding my own tidbits of information such as pointing out Eisenhower's five-star general flag waving from his personal putting green in Gettysburg, or how Spuyten Duyvil was perhaps named following one of the first reported shark attacks in America in 1642. While I may not remember every detail of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, I can certainly remember the chill of standing outside Rebecca Nurse's house on a cold October day in Salem. And although I have read about Gouverneur Morris's shrewd political maneuverings during the Philadelphia Convention in William H. Riker's *The Art of Political Manipulation*, it is something else entirely to stand in Independence Hall's assembly room and picture dozens of diplomats scrambling to craft the framework of a nation fresh out of war.

Hiking also gave me the opportunity to teach younger Scouts about various Scouting skills, from orienteering (using a map and compass) to conservation principles like Leave-No-Trace. My troop engages in trail maintenance projects, and we actively monitor a trail we adopted from the NY/NJ Trail Conference. I especially relished the opportunity to apply what I had learned in AP Biology towards actually helping preserve the environment from the harmful effects of invasive species by identifying and removing harmful plants such as thorny multiflora rose. It is one thing to learn about pollution, global warming, and invasive species in a classroom; it is another thing entirely to see the biodiversity of an ecosystem quickly succumb to man-made pressures.

Just as my walks around the local pond were an escape from suburbia, hiking with the Boy Scouts has given me the chance to help others experience the beauty of the outdoors. On a recent

hike, I was walking with a new Scout, Louis, who had just crossed over from Cub Scouts. Louis confided in me how disconnected he felt away from his video games. To get his mind off of his electronics withdrawal, I stayed with Louis for the remainder of the hike and pointed out everything from milkweed stalks to coyote scat. After the hike, Louis was exhausted but had a glimmer of excitement towards the environment around him, and could even tell the difference between poison ivy and Virginia creeper. Louis is currently one of my troop's most active younger Scouts.

When I'm hiking, I'm not merely a hiker; I'm a historian, a conservationist, and a teacher all in one.