

Literary Essay: Grade 5

Writing Unit 2

A Literary Essay
Based on the Short Story
"Eleven" from *Woman Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros

Life isn't always fair. One day, everything seems to be rolling along smoothly. Nothing bad happens. Everything is going your way. Other days, everything seems to be rolling over bumps and into potholes. Everything bad happens. Nothing is going right. In the short story, "Eleven," from the book *Woman Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros, Rachel has one of those days. It is her birthday, and everything in her world is falling apart for her at school. She is having a hard time standing up for herself, and she lets things get out of control. She can't pull herself together. I think that Sandra Cisneros wrote this story to remind us how important it is to stand up for ourselves because we have the power to make our lives better.

Early in the story, Rachel finds that she cannot stand up for herself. When her teacher, Mrs. Price, insists that the ugly red sweater that is all "raggedy and old" belongs to her, Rachel responds in such a weak voice that her teacher ignores her. Rachel thinks that, since Mrs. Price is the teacher, she has no say in the matter. By not standing up for herself, Rachel makes herself miserable. She can think of nothing else but the horrible way that she feels on this special day. It is clear that Rachel has the power to make her special day a good one, but she cannot stand up for herself.

Later in the story, Rachel faces more humiliation, and she cannot stand up for herself. Mrs. Price insists that Rachel put on the sweater that she has shoved to the "tippy-tip corner of her desk." Rachel cannot get the words out of her mouth to say that the sweater is not hers. She feels like she has no choice but to put her arms through the sleeves of this sweater that feels all itchy and is not hers. She cannot hold it in any longer, and the tears come like rain, falling on her birthday. She sobs in front of everyone and falls apart with her head on her desk, until there are no more tears. This shows that Rachel has the power all along to keep herself together, but because she cannot stand up for herself, she loses all control.

I believe that Sandra Cisneros wrote the short story "Eleven" to remind us that we all have the power to stand up for ourselves. When Rachel cannot express herself or stand up to Mrs. Price, she loses all control of herself. In my life, I realize that it is important to stand up for myself. If I am in a situation in which my voice is not being heard, I know that I have the power to speak up. I can stand up for myself and take control of myself, so I don't feel powerless. I hope that everyone who reads this short story realizes that we all have the power to stand up for ourselves and be in control. We might all still have bad days from time to time, but we can have more good days if we don't let others take our power away!



Strategies for Writing a Literary Essay

- Determine a theme from a piece of literature that has significance.
- Locate evidence to support the theme using examples from the text.