

Grade 7 Sample Compositions

We wanted to share with you some samples of Grade 7 compositions that received 4s during last spring's TAKS administration. As you will see, the names and other identifying information in the compositions have been changed to protect the identity of the student writers. We hope that these papers will help deepen your understanding of the rubric and of the variety of approaches that students can take when responding to a TAKS prompt. Remember that these compositions were based on the 2003 TAKS prompt, which can be found at the beginning of the Grade 7 Scoring Guide.

Have you ever been in a situation where you thought one thing was going to happen, but something else occurred instead? I have been in several situations where unexpected things happened, and I found out that unexpected things do happen, and that they can be good or bad depending on the situation that you happen to be in at the time.

When I was in 4th grade, my dad took me to go see an orchestra concert. I went into the theater, and my attention was captured near the violin section. I watched them the whole time I was there, watching their fingers dance on the strings, and the stick that they held in their hands go this way and that over the strings. (I later found out that the "stick" was called a bow.) I was mesmerized by it. When I got back in the car, I told my dad that I wanted to play the violin. He was surprised because what I said was very unexpected. My dad talked to my mom, and they decided that I would play the violin in 5th grade. Wanting to play the violin was sudden and not anticipated, but it was an event that changed my life. Playing an instrument made^{me} more sure of myself, and I felt as though I had accomplished something great. I am still continuing to play, and I am improving each day. The unexpected statement I made in the car was good, but little did I know that unexpected things could be bad as well as good.

My great-uncle Carlos passed away unexpectedly shortly after I had learned to play the violin. His sudden death

caused great sadness amongst my family. we had no opportunity to prepare ourselves for his death, so it was a really harsh blow to all of us - especially my mom. She was really close to him, and when she heard that my great-uncle had died, she moped around the house for days. We had just recently gone to visit him in his home a couple of months before he had passed away, so we thought he was doing fine. We later learned that his heart was weak, and that was why he died. Until this point in my life, I had thought that nothing bad could ever happen to me. Boy was I wrong. My great-uncle's death helped me to mature mentally. My life was affected by death at an early age, so I am not taking things for granted any more. There was some good that came out of the bad.

Even though unexpected things that are good or bad happen, I am sure that they are all for a reason. Through all of the situations I was in, I started seeing my world in a whole different light. Instead of the perfect world I used to see, I see the world as it really is - imperfect with good and bad things all mixed up together in it.

Score Point: 4

Every other year I travel with my father and sister to India. India is where my father was born and grew up. My father loves to take us there because he says that it is good to learn where we came from. As soon as our plane lands, I am surrounded by my father's big family and a different culture from the one I know in Texas. All my trips there have been memorable, but I remember one particular year when something unexpected happened.

It was the summer after fifth grade. This was the year my cousin Sarika was getting married. Sarika was 21 years old and, "quite dazzling!" is what others would call her. The groom's name was Manu, and he was extremely handsome and well-mannered. It was a ^{very} good match and was expected to be a grand and fabulous wedding.

Weddings in India, you must know, are very important and spectacular. This wedding would be no exception. There are many traditions that have to be upheld in India though. The groom would have to fast for one whole day. I remember Manu being stuffed with food before the fasting began, to leave him as full as possible before he stopped eating for 24 hours.

When the wedding day finally came, everyone was anxious, especially my aunt and uncle. Everybody dressed well, but Sarika was adorned in fineries of great elegance. The actual ceremony would go on for three days.

This plus the heat was enough to make any eleven-year-old girl exhausted. But I wasn't any eleven-year-old girl, and I was fascinated. This was the first wedding I had ever been to in India. And then something very surprising and unexpected happened. All of the sudden, the bride and groom were lifted into the air above our heads, and paraded around the room! It was a most mesmerizing sight and one that I will not soon forget. It was such great fun and a memory I can keep with me always.

Now that I am thirteen, I will be traveling this summer to India again. I can't wait to go. Just thinking of the exciting things that will happen this time is enough to send chills up my spine. Sarika is expecting a child soon. Perhaps I may even meet my nephew or niece when I am there. And all the wonderful places I will go, and new things I'll see...

Score Point: 4

Shelly listened as the minister's words broke the silence that surrounded and concealed her from the rest of the world. She heard him, but she wasn't really listening. Instead, she focused on the cool, light mist that seemed to cleanse the cemetery. The October sky was grey and overcast and made the grass look even greener. The crisp air refreshed even the most worn out soul and promised that winter would come early.

As much as she wanted to, Shelly could not wake up because she wasn't dreaming. She was at her mother's funeral. Oh how the thought hurt. Her mother, her wonderful mother, was dead. And all because of that truck driver. He was drunk and driving an 18-wheeler.

Shelly absolutely loathed that driver. If he hadn't been drunk, then her mother would be alive and well. If he hadn't been drunk, then Shelly wouldn't be at her mother's funeral.

Even though Shelly couldn't forgive the driver, she couldn't forgive herself either. She remembered all of it perfectly. She wanted to go to a party, but since she was grounded, her mother wouldn't let her. She stomped off to her room, and her mother rushed out the door because she was late for a meeting. And then the police officers at the door brought the bad news. "There has been an accident," one of them said. That was all Shelly needed to hear to know what happened.

Her father didn't take it well either. He cried a lot, overwhelmed by the shock of what happened. It was so unexpected. He could hardly eat or sleep and by the time the funeral started,

he looked horrible. Not only was he pale and thin, but he was dismal. His usual lively eyes were now nothing but empty pools of woe. Everyone grieved for Shelly's mother. Throughout the service, they embraced each other and cried, but Shelly sat and stared at the casket. Nothing could console her. There was not a single person in the world who could make her feel better. Her mother was gone and had taken Shelly's world with her. The minister spoke his final words before the casket was lowered and buried. Everyone made their way to the grave and lay their roses and carnations down on the ground. Shelly's house was within walking distance of the cemetery and people slowly started wandering towards it. Shelly just sat until everyone left. Then she walked up to the grave and set her bouquet of lilies down; her mother's favorite flower was a lily. No words were spoken because none were needed. Finally, like the others, she walked away.

Score Point: 4

I never thought that I would become a tiger. I should have paid more attention to the signs, and gone to a doctor. It's too late now, though. I mean really, who would let a tiger into their office?

It probably started when I was ten. I went to the zoo with my parents one day, and I wandered off, chasing a squirrel that had run across my path. After a few minutes, I realized that I was in a part of the zoo I had never seen before. I was about to leave, but then I saw something that seemed to draw me towards it.

In front of me was a small knob, almost completely covered by vines and flowers. Slowly, I reached out to the knob. The knob felt extremely cold, as if it had been forgotten by the rest of the world, and was still living in winter.

Behind the door that the knob had opened, I found a small chest. Thinking back to all those happy little tales with chests of gold, I eagerly opened the chest.

Out of the chest came a shining blaze of light, that seemed to seep into my skin. I slammed the chest shut, and left the room.

A year after I had found the chest, things started happening to me. I noticed that my hair was becoming lighter in some places, and that sense of hearing and smelling were becoming superb.

My hair and nails grew too fast for me. My nails would grow a centimeter every week, and my hair would grow an inch.

This morning I woke up and found that I was a tiger. I felt the change as soon as I woke up. I immediately knew what I had to do.

Stumbling out of bed, I ^{scrambled} toward my desk and found a pencil. Then I wrote this story that you are reading right now. (You have no idea how hard it was to hold this pencil). I have decided to run away from here, and live in Africa, if I can find a way...

Score Point: 4

I had to get David Smith. Just last week during lunch, I was coming inside the lunchroom to eat, when he threw a moldy peanut butter and jelly sandwich at me and hit me right in the face. Everyone laughed at me and I was so humiliated that I ate lunch in the boys bathroom alone.

I had the perfect plan to get him back. It made me feel like some mad scientist that made some freaky Frankenstein. I told my two best friends, Cody and Greg about Operation 411, and they thought it was genius.

My first stop was the school kitchen. After school, I snuck into the kitchen to get some of the mush and glop the lunch lady's made. 1st I found some watered down beans. They were so watery, you could've mistaken them as a bowl of chunky chocolate milk. Then I found some cooked hamburger patties. These things were so rubbery that I dropped one on the floor and it bounced back up to me. Finally I found some mash potatoes that were so old, I saw pieces of mold all in it. I took a quarter of a gallon of the beans and mash potatoes, and 5 hamburger patties and put them in the bucket I brought.

I took all of the neuseating smelly stuff and brought it to the big blender in the back of the kitchen. I poured in all of it then turned on the blender to make it all nice and chunky. I turned it off and poured the liquidy substance back in my bucket. To add a little spice to it, I added in 10 drops of green dye. I quickly left the kitchen before the head lunch lady or Big Mama as I like to call her, caught me in there. I hid the bucket in the boys bathroom so no one could find it. Tomorrow's gonna be so funny!

I got to school 10 minutes early so I could get operation 411 in position. I got the bucket of green glue and waited around the corner for David. I had been watching him in the morning for the past 5 days. He is always the 1st person through the doors and up the stairs when the first bell rings. I knew that when I heard those 1st foot steps coming down the hall they would be David's. I waited behind the corner of the hall with the bucket in my hands.

The bell rang. I heard those 1st foot steps coming down the hall. I jumped out and threw out all the stuff from in my bucket on David. The only thing was, it wasn't David who I threw it on.

It was Mrs. Jones! Her hair and face was covered in the green slime. It dripped off her and made a big puddle in front of her. There came David running threw the door, not watching where he was going, and fell face first into the big puddle. Everyone came in from behind Mrs. Jones and started craching up. People were laughing so hard they held their stomach and gasped for air. It was pretty hilarious. Mrs. Jones took off her glasses and grumbled, "Come with me young man."

I ended up getting a week of detention, but it was so worth it. People came up to me and said, "Man you are so brave. I could've never made such a perfect trap." All I would say was, "It was all part of the plan."

Score Point: 4