

Sample of an essay score 6

I don't have to look far to discover a new or uncomfortable environment. My semi-rural, suburban self got quite a shock when I arrived in downtown San Jose, home of San Jose State and a decaying inner city. Perhaps I am too rough on our campus, established in 1857. After all, I'm supposed to be a Spartan.

I had a tough introduction to our campus when I set my suitcases down on the pavement and got my first breath of life at college "on the ground." In this case, the ground was filthy with hardened specimens of unknown provenance, a homeless guy bumped past me and knocked over my matching imitation vinyl Gucci luggage, and the birds on the telephone wires did not sing but just sat there adding to the specimens on the sidewalk.

Police sirens screeched over the sound of cars roaring down 10th Street, music streamed out of dorm. windows, and a few students rolled by on skate boards. I had left my noise canceling headphones at home. I longed for a mooing cow or a turkey vulture making slow circles over road kill. A warm breeze through the grape vines would calm the soul; a stroll through a grassy path sounded divine; instead, I had to watch where I stepped lest crud get on those faux Gucci wheels.

Some folk singer my grandparents like sang about the "sounds of silence," but obviously he never had to live on 10th Street in a high rise dorm. But these environmental issues were just an introduction to my new home. I also had academic challenges ahead of me, my studies, the reason why I was here.

Back in Lodi J.C. I could show up for class with my homework I had done while watching Monday Night Football and usually pull at least a B. I would soon find out at SJSU you can't just be a "smell the roses" kind of person. Here you had to do things in a New York minute, which I understand is very fast.

I had four classes, which required reading, writing, studying, and more of the same. I studied 40 hours a week, not counting class time or lab time. I also worked ten hours a week in the library shelving books. That means I had to make a schedule and stick to it. Monday night football was a thing of the past, I could not keep up with the Kardashians, and idling in the mall were out of the question. However, I did immerse myself into university life, replacing TV shows with lectures, video games with study

groups, home cooked meals with dining commons gruel. To my great surprise, I found these new experiences stimulating, something to look forward to instead of an obligation. I studied in the library on the eighth floor where students respected the silence rule and I could survey the city panorama below me.

In the end, it was not all work and no play. I've heard Persian poetry and witnessed Martial arts; I've gone swimming with water polo players and signed the guest book for a Master's art student who hung paperclip sculptures from the ceiling; I've gotten lost in the engineering building and fallen half asleep during the lunch hour concert in the Music Hall. My circling vultures have been replaced with motorists circling for parking spaces, a much more lowly occupation than those neat birds provide. But I'm on my way to becoming a Renaissance person. And I like it.

Reader response

This writer shows a lively writing style that addresses the topic thoroughly. The paper provides specifics and in-depth analysis of the experience as well as a high level of sentence variety and a wide range of vocabulary. The paper is nearly error free and in general shows the control of language found in upper-third papers. This writer demonstrates superior competence in writing.