

2010 Released TCAP Items

Session 4

Reading

Directions

Read this story about a boy's conflict. Then do Numbers 27 through 33. You may look back at the story as often as you like.

A Mountain of Green Beans

by Leslie Hall

Another manila envelope in the mail. There's my name, Alexander Spencer, typed on the front, with the return address in fancy script next to the state seal and a motto in Latin. Just looking at it gives me that feeling you get on the roller coaster, that right-at-the-very-top-just-about-to-drop feeling. I toss it under the bed. The stack is growing.

At dinner my mom asks how school was and I say fine. Why make her worry? I worry enough for both of us.

I go to bed at night, and I think I hear the stack growling at me from under the bed like the monsters I was afraid of when I was five years old. When I told my dad I couldn't sleep because of the monsters, he gave me a little black flashlight. That first night, the flashlight was on and off, on and off, on and off, all night long. Every time I felt scared, I would hang my head down so I could shine the light under the bed and roust out the monsters that were gathering to plot my kidnapping. Even though I hardly ever used the flashlight after that first night, I slept with it under my pillow for years. But no flashlight would help me now. The monster under the bed is my future, and believe me, it's a lot scarier than the monsters that scurried away at the first gleam from a pocket flashlight.

The envelopes are applications I'm supposed to be filling out, applications to all the colleges I'm supposed to want to attend; pages and pages of applications, each application requiring an essay or a "statement of purpose." How can I write a statement of purpose when I don't even know what

my purpose is? I don't think "Dear College Admissions Officer, I want to go to your school, but I don't know why. I just do. Sincerely" is going to tip the scales in my favor.

I did open the first envelope. Then I saw the application, all those blank spaces I'm supposed to fill with my own writing, spaces for my name and birth date and social security number and grade point average and . . . statement of purpose. I looked at all those blank spaces for a long time. I could write for hours and not fill all those spaces. So I put the application back in the envelope, along with the shiny university brochure that showed a picture of smiling students on the cover. I would fill out the application the next day, when I had time. Another envelope arrived in the mail; I was tired, so I decided I'd work on the applications the next day, which was Saturday, so I would have all day.

But then I slept in, and Rob came over, and we went to the park to shoot some hoops. Then



I helped my dad clean out the rain gutters, and afterward we all went out for pizza. So the weekend was over before I knew it, and when Monday rolled around, there was yet another envelope lurking in the mailbox. The stack begins.

The stack haunts me—it really is a monster. I can hear the stack muttering at me, no matter where I am in the house. I feel worse and worse. My mom gives me some money and tells me to see a movie; my dad gives me his car keys before I even ask. All the while, I feel the weight of a million manila envelopes raining down on my head.

My grandmother calls me and wants to know how I am.

“Overwhelmed,” I say, but I don’t tell her about the stack.

“Honey, you just slow down,” she says in her drawling voice. Slow down? If I slowed down any more, I’d be in a coma. That was the problem.

“You just take it bit by bit,” she goes on. She reminds me about the green beans.

When I was a little kid, I hated green beans. My mom wanted me to eat them, but I just pushed them around on my plate, stuck a couple

in my napkin to throw away, and even tried to give them to the dog, but he just spit them out. Finally, my mom said I couldn’t leave the table until I ate ten green beans.

Ten green beans! She might as well have said a thousand. All alone at the table, I stared at the green beans for what seemed like hours. It was a ton of green beans, a mountain of green beans. I couldn’t do it.

My grandma came into the room and sat next to me. She asked if I could eat one green bean.

“But, Grandma, I have to eat ten!”

She said all I had to do was eat one green bean. One tiny little green bean. So I ate one. It was bad, but not as bad as I’d thought it would be. Then she asked me again if I could eat one green bean. So I ate one green bean nine more times and that was that.

My grandma doesn’t know about the stack, but she tells me anyone can do one thing every day.

Back in my room, I stretch out on the bed. Just like I used to do when I was a little kid, I hang my head down to look at the monster. There it is. But instead of a muttering, growling, monstrous stack, I see a pile of green beans. Who’s afraid of green beans?

10 Reading

Item 31

3 POINT ANCHOR

Response provides an explanation (do one thing a day, things will get done) and two details (green beans) and (applications).

Anchor
3 pts
PS
4/11/07

31

Read this sentence from the story.

My grandma doesn't know about the stack, but she tells me anyone can do one thing every day.

Tell how this statement relates to the main idea of the story. Use two details from the story to support your response.

The grandma said this and it relates because if you can do one thing a day, things will get done. The the green beans; he ate them one by one and they finally got done. And the applications, if he does one once a day they will all eventually get done.

10 Reading

Item 33

3 POINT

ANCHOR

Response provides an explanation ("the applications for colleges scare him...") with two details (the monsters from his bed that he chased away with a flashlight) and (not filling the forms out).

Anchor

3 pts

920

4/11/07

33

Write an explanation to tell what Alexander means by the statement "The monster under the bed is my future." Use two details from the story to support your response.

He says that when he was young, he was scared of monsters under his bed, so he used a flashlight to check under his bed. Then he says that what is under his bed now seems like a monster, but he cannot chase it away with a flashlight. The applications for colleges scare him, with so many blank spaces and so many forms to fill out. He is afraid of this pile under his bed, but not filling the forms out would mean not going to college, which is his future.

CSAP Grade 10

Writing

1

Some people believe that students should not hold jobs while they are in school because jobs take time and energy away from studying. Others contend that although there should be a limit on the number of hours worked, having jobs is a good way for students to learn responsibility and gain experience in the real world.

What do you think? Write an essay that presents your opinion on this issue. You want to persuade the reader to favor your opinion, so you should offer a clear and forceful argument.

