

Sample Paper: Profiling a person (Williford)

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Grandpa

I don't have a lot of fantastic memories of childhood. There were no spectacular family adventures, no unique family projects that taught some sort of moral lesson, no out-of-the-ordinary holidays. We ate family meals together, but most of the time the children and adults lived in different worlds. The kids went to school, did homework, and played; the adults worked. I was lucky, though. When I wanted a little of both worlds, I could always turn to Grandpa.

I remember vividly the weekends at his house. Sitting on his lap, going to wrestling matches, walking down the street or through a park--these were things I did with Grandpa. I wasn't just a kid to him: I was his granddaughter, and I was special. He was special too.

Thomas D. Williford was a giant of a man. He stood six feet two inches and weighed over 250 pounds. He moved with purpose and carried himself with respect. Tom was a proud man, a good man, and all who knew him said so. Even if you didn't know him, you would notice his inner strength, his patience, his self-esteem.

Grandpa wasn't a scholar. In fact, he didn't even make it through grade school. He was born at the turn of the century, and educating black men wasn't a necessity then. He went to work

Title is centered.

Thesis, at end of introduction, announces focus of the paper.

The paper is based on memories.

Physical details help readers visualize the subject.

when he was sixteen, and for the next forty years he worked in a coal factory. Then he worked in a steel mill for another twenty years. He stopped working only because the steel mill closed and he was too old to find another job.

When I was with Grandpa, I could be a child and yet see things through grown-up eyes. "You see that tree, Cookie," he would say. "That tree was here before those houses. God put that tree there; man put the houses. Which is more beautiful?" If I climbed a tree, he didn't say, "Get down." He said, "Climb it right so you won't fall."

"You appreciate what you work for," he used to say. He taught that lesson well. He never let me win any game; he taught me to win by learning to lose. If he couldn't answer a question, he was honest about it, but he would also say, "Why don't you find out and let me know too." He listened to me and he heard my feelings, not just my words.

There was a tougher side to Grandpa, and I suppose this, too, made him special. There was the black man who fled with his near-white wife and children from North Carolina to avoid harassment and threats from the Ku Klux Klan. There was the quiet man whose home was robbed three times by the same drunk, who reported it three times to the police with no results, and who finally waited for the man to do it a fourth time--and shot him dead as he climbed through the bedroom window in the middle of the night. And there was the man who fractured his leg at work, never reported it because he couldn't afford not to work, and years later still endures the pain of the ill-mended fracture.

Dialogue helps develop the character.

Background information adds to readers' understanding of the character.

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Grandpa is almost ninety-five and now resides in a nursing home in Windsor, North Carolina. The leg he fractured forty years ago is too weak to carry his weight. His eyes are going bad. But to me he's still the big, strong man who used to take his grandchild in his arms and rock her, the man who taught a small child to see all the things around her with open eyes, the man who taught a child to try until she wins and becomes the best. He's still special and, thanks to him, so am I.

Paper ends by summing up the tribute to the character.