



**O' Level
Foundation
Week 6**

The Write Tribe

PERSONAL RECOUNT



9. Write about a time when you learnt a precious life lesson on empathy.

He ambled down the corridor, briskly and awkwardly, with his earphone wire threading down his shirt. To satisfy his attention-seeking needs, he carried a heavily wrinkled book entitled Guide to Biology. Wherever he went, he would never fail to receive awkward stares from people, curious to understand what he was up to. This was Trevor Ng Wei Jie.

Since Secondary One, I had been in the same class as him. Noticing that his behaviour and actions could be extremely weird at times, I kept my distance from him. I was warned by a few of his previous classmates from primary school that he would deliberately create problems. I obediently heeded their words of caution. There were times I overheard him mumbling to himself about playing with methane fire under a block of flats. **Curiosity got the better of me** and I asked my fellow classmates if it was true. It then dawned upon me that he had a condition known as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). That helped me comprehend the reasons behind his bizarre actions at times.

At the end of Secondary Two, we were due to be streamed to different classes. **Deep in my heart, I earnestly prayed** that I would be streamed to a different class from Trevor. Unfortunately, I once again ended up in the same class as him.

"Trevor Ng Wei Jie" was written on the class attendance list as I eyed it on the teacher's table on the first day of school. **I was disappointed** to learn that I was assigned to the same class as him, and I sighed at the thought of spending another two years with him.

In the days to come, his attention-seeking nature started taking flight. His many desperate attempts to obtain our attention annoyed us significantly. He would flaunt his scientific knowledge and spoke loudly and arrogantly to garner the attention of everyone. His weird sense of fashion, with his mismatched uniform attire tucked in and out of his pants, would get on our nerves. However, what irked me the most about him was his need to pepper his conversations with **jargon and bombastic vocabulary that confounded** everyone, and for a time, gave him a reputation of being smarter than he actually was. Some of our new classmates who had never met Trevor before actually thought that he was an extremely smart kid initially, only to realise that he was merely looking to satisfy his attention-seeking nature. We were rather incensed that it was affecting our ability to pay attention in class, and naturally, due to our immaturity, we started mocking him openly.

Regardless of whether he was nearby, we would imitate his way of shouting and burst into laughter. This mockery might have been cruel, but we were young and reckless.

Everything changed one day though.

It was on that fateful day during Biology practical lesson when I discovered a side of Trevor that I had never known. He was from the Red Cross Youth Singapore Co-Curriculum Activity Group, and thus was a well-trained and earnest cadet. I was cutting potatoes during the practical assessment, and was in a rush to complete it as I was running short of time. A moment of folly saw me using my knife the other way around. When I pressed the knife down, I felt an extremely sharp pain on my palm and I realised that I had inflicted a deep cut in my palm. In a total shock, it was all I could do to not let out a loud scream.

Next to my bench, coincidentally, was Trevor. He saw the blood trailing down my forearm and dripping to the table, and immediately utilised his first aid skills. Tending to me in a brisk and calm fashion, he told me to breathe in a certain controlled manner, allowing me to be able to calm down while he made a frantic dash towards the First Aid Box to grab the necessary tools to dress up the wound. The controlled breathing manner worked as I could feel the pain easing off. This was when our Biology teacher came up and started to panic when she saw the crimson puddle of blood on the floor. She was a new teacher fresh out of the training school, which was probably why she reacted like that.

"All is good! Help is here!" Trevor rushed over enthusiastically with the First Aid Box to the scene that I had created while calming my teacher down. He had the whole situation under control. He carefully and rapidly cleaned my wound with a piece of gauze pad while going through the breathing cycles with me. Subsequently, he dressed my wound with a lot of patience and care. **Extremely touched and swollen with guilt**, I was speechless by the act of kindness that was shown to me. I was tearing, not because of pain, but because of how much attention to detail Trevor put into dressing me up.

I could not contain my guilt. **Bowing my head in shame**, I realised what a jerk I had been to someone who was so sincere in treating others. Even though I had made fun of him, he was willing to go beyond the call of duty to tend to my wound. As he finished dressing it, everyone in the lab gave him a standing ovation. I could see him blushing.

That day, I learnt a very precious life lesson about empathy, one that is more treasured to me than any academic knowledge I gained from my ten years in school.

Midway through Secondary Three, Trevor stopped coming to school. When we asked our teacher about him, she shared that he had been transferred to a different school, one that we term a "special needs" education institution.

Everyone in class eyed each other with guilt and quickly looked away.

On hindsight, we should not have made fun of him. Admittedly, I felt at times that we were going too far with our jokes about him. Nevertheless, I shoved the idea aside and continued having the time of my life with my friends, mainly due to peer pressure. At times, I could even see his confused and hopeless expression as we imitated his way of seeking attention.

If Trevor had not been there that day beside me, I might have passed out due to excessive blood loss as no one else would have known how to respond so quickly and efficiently.

Looking back, I am glad that the last few years had helped me gain greater insights and understanding about those who are experiencing special needs issues. Because of this episode, I could finally empathise with Trevor and what he was going through. We should have been more understanding. We should have been more sensitive with our actions. We should have been more inclusive and thoughtful of others.

Never had I once realised until this incident that we were a reckless and immature bunch. Fortunately, I could see the change in my friends as from then on they were more sensitive with what they said and did. All the jokes and imitations ceased once we learnt that he had transferred to another school. Had it not been for this ordeal, I would not have understood the difficulties faced by people struggling with special needs issues.

I made a solemn vow to myself that if I were to ever meet or be asked to work with a person with any forms of disabilities, I would treat them with genuine care and concern, just like how Trevor helped me mend my wound, without expecting anything in return.

Write about a time when you learnt about a precious life lesson on empathy.

WRITING ORGANIZER - Recount

Orientation: - *Introduction – Setting the scene.*

Events: - *What happened – in chronological order.*

Conclusion: - *Personal Comment (Optional)*

FORMAT YOUR ESSAY PROPERLY!



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