

Looking up to Ms. 8: A Sample Assignment Response for ENGL 062 at DeVry University

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I have been fortunate enough to have met and worked with a number of extraordinary people as a student, as a teacher, and in my life outside the classroom. I have been even more fortunate in that several of those people have been members of my family. One of them is my beloved daughter, whom I refer to in my public writings as Ms. 8 out of a desire to protect her future privacy. Ms. 8 inspires because she is as young as she is and as untouched by sorrow; her present purity pushes me to be the kind of person who does not sully it.

My daughter was born in 2014 in Stillwater, Oklahoma, while I was working at Oklahoma State University as a visiting assistant professor. The job was not as good for me as the title and institution might suggest; I did not fit in well there, partly because I was obstinate about things I ought not to have been. When Ms. 8 joined us, though, I found myself obliged to change due to the added responsibility. I was aware from years of teaching that the best thing I can do in the classroom is model behavior I want to see; I was aware from the years of study that preceded my teaching that the same is true, and to a much greater extent, for children in the home. My teaching schedule had me in the home with Ms. 8 far more than most fathers get to be; I was in the classroom three days a week, leaving me as the primary caregiver for two and joint caregiver on the other two. I knew at the time that, because I was around my daughter more than most fathers are around their children, the burden of acting the right way around her and for her fell upon me more heavily than on most other fathers. Even now, when I am not around her as much, I am still aware of it, perhaps more than is common. Consequently, I work harder than many do to show my daughter through my own actions not only the way she should act, but also the way others should act toward her. Most fathers who are engaged in their children's lives try to be better people for their children; I, because I had the greater early experience with her, and

because I am in a position that offers me fewer challenges than many others face, have to try harder yet.

In effect, Ms. 8 inspires from her youth and happiness. That she has not the problems that many others have drives me to be the kind of person who does not introduce them to her, or her to them. I know that problems will present themselves to her as she continues to grow and to learn; the nature of the world is such that they can hardly not. But that does not mean I have to add to them, and I can hope that, in working to be the kind of person who does not make things worse for her, I can help her to come into the strength of character that will allow her to face her challenges and conquer them.