

Young Adult Manuscript Sample

This story has a very familiar style and pace for its genre. The characters are introduced quickly, the narrative is first-person, the protagonist's conflicts are brought forward quickly and excitingly, and the setting is familiar—an American high school. Even though the POV is from a teenager who speaks somewhat informally, the description and dialogue are stylized for effect.

My shirt gets some strange looks, but I'm unsure how many students even know who The Ramones are. I didn't think it was a dumb shirt when I walked out of the house, but now I have serious second thoughts. Whatever. I can deal with it. At least my fly isn't open, and my face is reasonably pimple-free today.

As I stroll into art class, I quickly scan the room. I pick out a workstation near the back. I only recognize George Newman, a fellow sophomore, so I sit beside him.

"Hi, George."

"Johnny, welcome back to the salt mines," he replies with a noticeable change in his voice. It must have dropped nearly an octave over the summer break. I can't help but give a lighthearted chuckle.

It's a typical elective class. You have your freshmen, with their bad hairdos, mismatched clothes, and deer-caught-in-the-headlights expressions. Next are the sophomores, who are now a little more comfortable in their skin. And finally, the juniors and seniors, the self-proclaimed 'leaders' of the school. The seniors make up most of the class, always congregating together, lost in their superior world, having long forgotten what it was like to be an underclassman.

Then I noticed her: Jenny Smith. It doesn't get any better than Jenny. She has long dark hair and big brown eyes—cliched in all the right ways. She has one of those

rare personality types that can get along with almost anyone, and even though she's a cheerleader, she is down to earth and has a hippy vibe hippy-vibe going.

Mr. Gallagher stands in the center of the room while he takes roll call. The desks are arranged in a circle so we can all face each other. My eyes keep wandering to Jenny, but I must be careful she doesn't catch me staring. My sister is always telling me that it's creepy when guys stare. Jenny seems very consumed by whatever she is working on. I will ask my sister about Jenny; a little reconnaissance work never hurts.

Jenny is Mr. Gallagher's assistant this year and will be helping his students throughout the semester. Mr. Gallagher introduces her to the class. As she addresses us, I close my eyes and focus on her voice—it perfectly matches the rest of her.

So far, even though it's only the first day, school is starting better than last year. I must improve my art skills since Jenny is the teacher's assistant. Abstract shapes or simple yellow sunsets aren't going to impress her—time to take this crap seriously.

Class ends, and we all scurry out. I hear a voice behind me as I enter the hallways: "I like your shirt."

I whip around; it's a freshman girl named Sherry, or Cheryl, or something like that.

"Uh, thanks," is all I could come up with. I want to kick myself for my weak-ass reply. But to be fair, I was rather taken aback by her mouthful of braces and uneven bob cut. You don't see many teenagers with metal braces anymore. Still, I could have said something to extend the conversation, but I came up empty. Jenny was still on my mind. 0-for-1.

Second period is American History with Mr. Bowers. My sister told me he smells like booze at times. I guess even teachers have to do their thing to get by. Alcohol can't be as bad as Mr. Gallagher's stinky Patchouli oil, or can it? When I get a whiff of that stuff, I want to barf while I sneeze.

I grab a seat in the second row, which isn't normal for me. I am more of a back-row kind of guy, but all the seats are taken. Just as I sit down, in walks Jennifer McFadden. I knew her in elementary school, but she moved away when I started junior high. I never got a chance to tell her about my massive crush. She was interested in Sean, my good friend at the time. But he didn't give her the time of day, which only made her more interested in him. She sits in front of me, turns around, and smiles.

"Hi," she exclaims in a friendly tone.

I retort with the same word. But did she recognize me? I know it's been four years, but I look the same—I think. She's definitely gotten prettier over the years.

Mr. Bowers gets things rolling. He doesn't look drunk. Maybe he's an afternoon drunk, which would make more sense. Getting drunk in the morning is only for a dedicated pro who can hide it well. Jennifer isn't turning around again; she seems to be actually paying attention. The class ends, and we walk out.

Jennifer strolls down the halls by herself. This is the perfect chance for me to strike up a conversation. But I chicken out. 0 for 2. I got no game.

Third period is PE. So far, my schedule looks pretty tolerable. I make the long trek across campus to the gym, where Mr. Stewart will give us the long-winded scoop on what to expect from the class (because there's so much to explain about PE). We should be getting a free pass on the first day: some minor workouts, maybe a brief

overview of the syllabus—but definitely no homework. There should never be homework in PE.