

## Reading and Writing Workshop

The following passage from Julia Alvarez's nonfiction anthology *Something to Declare* (1998) describes her dreams as a young girl and her family's unenthusiastic response to these goals. As you read the passage, consider situations from your own life in which you faced resistance to pursuing your goals, and then respond to the task that follows.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" my grandfather asked, chuckling. Behind me the younger cousins were lined up, waiting for their moment of future at our grandfather's knee. This grandfather, my mother's Papi, was such a handsome gentleman, so slim, with such elegant long hands, such a fair complexion. He loved to recite bits of poetry, what he could remember. He also had excellent manners. He took good care of his family. Of course, we wanted to impress him.

"A bullfighter," I announced when it was my turn. I had never seen a bullfight, but on the coffee table at my grandfather's house lay a book on bullfighting. I had fallen in love with the trim men in their tight black pants and ruffy shirts, frozen in beautiful dance poses.

Those pictures set me dreaming of the future.

"Bullfighter?!" my grandfather lifted his eyebrows and chuckled again. "I don't think there are any *girl* bullfighters," he noted, not exactly discouraging me but letting me know the odds.

I walked away from our brief interview and headed for the coffee table. I paged through the bullfighting book much as I would later page through my anthologies looking for someone else with a Spanish-sounding name, someone else who had come to English when she was ten, someone else to prove that I could become what I dreamed of becoming. I learned early to turn to books, movies, music, paintings, rather than to the family to find out what was possible. But maybe grandfather was right. You couldn't be a female, you couldn't be an Alvarez girl and enter the ring and take on the dangerous future.

When I had my next chance to proclaim my future, I told my grandfather I wanted to be a cowboy. I suppose this was an Americanization of my bullfighting dream.

"You mean a cowgirl," my grandfather said.

The cowboys, the wonderful, blond, and deeply tanned cowboys . . . my chest tightened.

"I want to be a cowboy," I repeated to my grandfather when he corrected me.

"Well, well," he said, chuckling, the way grown-ups always did when what they meant to say was, "You are going to get over this."

Adapted from Julia Alvarez, *Something to Declare*. © 1998 by Julia Alvarez.

In a well-developed essay, you should describe an experience in which you were nervous or experienced strong emotion (i.e., anxiety). In your narrative, be sure to explain your feelings during this experience and the lasting impression the experience has left on you.

Like the passage, your narrative should include sensory details, dialogue, and/or figurative language to re-create the experience you describe. You may include references to the passage or to other relevant texts.

Total: 12 points

|          | <b>Content</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Organization</b>                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Language</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4</b> | The response shows a clear understanding of the task. The response identifies and thoroughly describes the student's chosen characteristic or experience, providing thoughtful self-reflection. Development of ideas is ample, specific, and sensible.                   | Organization of response is clear; ideas are effectively grouped and logically sequenced. The response possesses clear unified paragraphs.                                           | The language of the response is clear and effectively conveys ideas. Sentences are varied, and word choice is varied and precise. Although there may be a few minor errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, meaning is clear throughout the response.           |
| <b>3</b> | The response shows an understanding of the task. The response adequately describes a related characteristic or experience, offering some self-reflection. Development of ideas is adequate, with some specific examples and details.                                     | Organization of the response is generally clear, with sound grouping of ideas throughout. The response possesses generally coherent and unified paragraphs.                          | The language of the response is mostly clear and adequately conveys ideas. The response has some sentence variety and appropriate word choice. There may be some distracting errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, but meaning is usually clear.              |
| <b>2</b> | The response shows some understanding of the task. The response identifies but only minimally describes a related characteristic or experience and may not offer any self-reflection. Development of ideas is limited.                                                   | Organization of the response is simple, with only some ideas logically grouped. The response possesses only some basically coherent and unified paragraphs.                          | The language of the response is sometimes clear, but some ideas are difficult to comprehend. The response shows simple sentence construction and word choice. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may be distracting and may sometimes impede understanding. |
| <b>1</b> | The response shows little or no understanding of the task. The response may not identify a relevant experience; if an experience is identified, there is minimal description of it. The response is minimally developed, with few specific examples or details provided. | There is little or no evidence of an organizational structure or of the logical grouping of ideas. If the response possesses paragraphs, they demonstrate little coherence or unity. | The language of the response is mostly unclear, and ideas are hard to comprehend. Response language has awkward or unclear sentences and word choice. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may frequently be distracting and may significantly                |