

THE COST OF FREEDOM

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Seminar: People and Freedom

[Assignment: Relate a personal incident or experience that has to do with the theme of freedom. Choose one single incident and focus on the point you are going to make. Your thesis paragraph, in addition to catching the reader's attention, should orient him well to the story you are about to tell. Be sure your narrative has an end; wrap it up and pull the loose ends together into an effective conclusion.]

(1) I awoke to the sun beaming brightly through the shades at my window, making my bedroom shine brilliantly. As I looked through the window and saw what a beautiful day it would be, I was overwhelmed at the thought of my trip; today was the day my friend Cassi and I were leaving for Chicago and Indiana Beach alone--no parents, no rules, and no restrictions. The wonderful thought of absolute freedom for at least a few days was beyond ordinary excitement. I floated downstairs and found a delicious breakfast awaiting me. I could see that my parents were nervous because this would be the first time I was completely on my own, but I could also see that they shared my enthusiasm.

(2) Cassi and I hopped in the car, waiting impatiently for my father to drive us to Ugly Duckling Rent-a-Car. We were all wondering what kind of a car a place with a name like that would offer, but it was a nice tan Reliant K, and we were pleased. Because cars are rented only to people who are twenty-one or older, my Dad went to much trouble to get us that car. After stressing the importance of responsibility for the car and also the budget for the trip, my Dad said his good-bye and left us alone--totally independent.

(3) The first thing Cassi and I did was stop at the Hostess Thrift Shop to fill the car up with snacks for the road. We made sure not to eat nutritiously and grabbed boxes of Ding Dongs, bags of potato chips, and cans of soda. Next, we hit the bank and withdrew our money for the trip. Finally, we were on the interstate and on the way to our destination.

(4) The five-hour trip to Chicago seemed to fly by. The radio blared our favorite songs and we screamed non-stop the entire way. We arrived in Chicago by noon, stopping at my aunt and uncle's house to drop off our things.

"Hi Sarah. Who's your friend?"

"Gotta go, Aunt Kathy. I'll introduce you later."

(5) We rushed downtown to the malls and corner shops, trying our hardest to hit as many as possible. Hour after hour quickly passed and I found myself loaded down

with all sorts of new items, but also with a wallet which was empty. "What do I do?" I asked myself. I still had two more days of vacation, but I had no money to enjoy them. All I could picture was myself as a bag lady like the ones we had seen downtown. It was horrid to think about.

(6) When we got back to my uncle's home, I called Mom and Dad.

"Hello, Mom?"

"Yes, Sarah? Oh my God, has something happened?"

"No, Mom, it's just that-uh-I ran out of money."

"But dear, you've only been gone twelve hours."

How could that possibly happen?"

I explained the buying binge we took, and I could hear her laughing at my compulsive buying habits. Being the sweet woman that she is, my mother asked my aunt to write me a check and said she would repay her. I thought my mother was wonderful--not to get mad at me in the slightest way. I felt invincible.

(7) We spent the next day sight-seeing. We went to all the "educational" places, such as the art and science museums and the Planetarium. We even went out to eat at a Pakistani restaurant. We thought this culture-filled day would compensate for yesterday's buying spree and would even make my parents proud of me. Yet this day was also expensive, and I found myself with a limited supply of cash.

"Hello, Mom! It's me again."

"Sarah? What now?" (I could tell her voice was not as cheery as before.)

"Well, I'm gonna need a few more bucks--just to get me through tomorrow."

To my surprise, she didn't seem the slightest bit angry. I was shocked; I had spent way over the budget. She even told Uncle Bob to write me out a check for as much as I wanted, but, of course, I had to be realistic. I could tell Cassi was jealous. She had been very conservative with her money. I felt as if I was on top of the world.

(8) Early the next day we began our venture to Indiana Beach. We said good-bye to my aunt and uncle and literally sped to our destination. Indiana Beach! Here were sun, sand, gorgeous males in skimpy swimsuits, tons of junk food, and even amusement park rides. It was heaven! Because of the large wad in my pocket, I was carefree with my money. I bought souvenirs for my family and even treated Cassi to lunch and an Indiana Beach T-shirt. I was having the time of my life. For the first time ever, I could buy what I wanted without the hassle of Mom's constant nagging. We lay out for most of the afternoon, then met a few nice-looking young gentlemen. We walked around the midway, rode all the rides, and ate all the sticky cotton candy, until it was time to depart.

(9) It was only a short distance home, and we were

filled with disappointment as our vacation time was running out. I dropped off Cassi at her house when we arrived in Franklin, and I was practically in tears as I pulled up in my driveway. I had no more freedom now that I was home, but I knew I would always remember that trip. Even as I stepped out of my rent-a-car, I realized I had become attached to it. I wondered if maybe, by the slightest chance, my parents would buy the car for me! They had been so nice about my asking for their money; one can never tell.

(10) I walked inside and was warmly welcomed home by my parents and two sisters. My mother, seeing how worn out I was, suggested that I go upstairs to bed and tell them all the details of my trip in the morning. I gladly accepted her suggestion and dragged myself to my room. My eyelids were like a load of bricks and I fell on my bed still fully dressed. I noticed a piece of paper on my bed and could barely make out my name and a few scribbles in the darkness. I turned on my light and read from the paper:

Dear Sarah,

This is your bill. All those figures are the checks we sent. We expect this to be paid by the end of the summer.

Love,

Mom and Dad

I think it was at that moment that I learned the cost of freedom and the importance of responsibility.