

A PERFECT DIVE

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[Assignment: Nearly everyone has expertise about some subject or activity. Using the definition mode, explain an activity you know well to general readers who do not have the "insider's" perspective which you have.]

(1) She looked into the crowd, hoping to see at least one familiar face. Instead, she was greeted by thousands of people holding American flags and chanting, "Beck-e, Beck-e." She found no signs of comfort or encouragement in those faces, only determination to cheer her on to victory, and they did want to see her win.

(2) If only those fans knew what she was feeling, knew of the turmoil going on inside her, but they didn't. They knew that she was one of the best divers in the country; they did not care how nervous she was; they wanted her to perform and prove her worth. Why couldn't they see how knotted her stomach was, or how many hours of practice she had put in to get to this meet? They couldn't possibly understand, because all they saw was the surface, the accomplished performer, not the very human person with human fears.

(3) The next moment, she was forced to clear her mind of all of these thoughts. It was her turn to dive, and she had to give full attention to the feat at hand. The crowd became silent, so silent that she wanted to scream--just to ease the tension in the arena.

(4) Her long legs glided gracefully to the end of the diving board. She turned, her back facing the water. She looked at the metal "Dura-Flex" tag at the end of the board, remembering how her coach had encouraged her to focus on something to keep her concentration.

(5) She slowly lowered her arms to her side, taking in a deep breath. Concentration was etched on her face by the deep wrinkles that appeared on her forehead. She closed her eyes and pictured her dive four times, making mental notes in her head.

(6) Water began to drip from her shoulder-length hair, running down her back and onto her legs. She could feel the board shaking below her, and couldn't decide whether or not her knees were contributing to the problem. She stood so straight and was so tense that if someone in the crowd had sneezed, she would have lost her concentration and possibly her balance.

(7) The muscles in her legs were tight and heavy as she began to gently rock the board, preparing to take off. There was no turning back now. She used every ounce of power and strength she had to spring from the board and control what was a near perfect dive.

(8) She felt the cool water engulf her, as her arms broke through, preparing a path for the rest of her body to follow. She had executed the dive; now it was time to nail the entry. As straight as the diving board

itself, she glided into the water. Her toes were pointed and every inch of muscle showed through her suit.

(9) When she was finished, she shot to the bottom of the pool, gathering up enough momentum to push herself to the surface. She approached the surface and could faintly hear her scores. "Nine, eight and one half, nine, nine, nine and one half." As she gingerly climbed out of the pool, she heard the crowd greet her with an enormous cheer.

(10) She again looked up into the stands, this time catching a glimpse of her mother and father. They were holding a sign that said "WE ARE PROUD OF YOU." She felt a sense of relief rush through her. She was no longer worried about the fans who didn't know her--because she realized how much they did know. They knew she was a good diver, and they were right.