



**NEW ENGLAND  
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Student Work Samples  
2008**

**Grade 11**



# Writing

1

Norm's way of learning (hands-on) vs. my  
way of learning (classic, visual)

2

college or conformed education is not for everyone

some people would not be able to learn Norm's way - need guiding interest to learn this way

learning by pure immersion into the field of work hands on not instructional, willing, experimental → lasting impression

3

not everyone thrives in closed learning environment, yet  
some need instruction and classroom time, <sup>ex</sup> college, jobs in world, etc.

4 Education is only influential when the student is willing to absorb the information. In the US today, most public school systems teach and expect students to learn in the standard method of classroom lecture. Yet, this approach is not successful for everyone. It is understandable that for the basic core classes that need to be taught students must be conformed into an equal mass - all needing to learn the basics. However once you have a solid knowledge of the basics in education, every student is different in terms of their learning styles. Some students are hands-on learners, others are visual, and others are even auditory. Not everyone reaps the same benefit from a thirty minute explanatory powerpoint as from a lab experiment. Therefore projected levels of success can not solely be determined by whether you're a straight A student or an Ivy league graduate - knowledge and work ethic depends on the individual student and their varying needs.

Some students absorb information best in a hands-on learning environment. This method is exemplified by Norm Abram's story about his beginnings as a carpenter. Norm didn't go to school for carpentry, but this lack of formal education did not hinder him whatsoever in becoming a successful carpenter. Guided by the motives of "intuition and curiosity," Norm learned his skills from being immersed in the field at a young age. A perpetual

self-teacher, Norm was "never lectured" with "this is how to use a screwdriver". Norm gained valuable experience by being placed directly in the workforce. Because of his hands-on, or Kinesthetic-tactile, instincts - it's probable that he would have gained less from sitting in a classroom learning the textbook version of carpentry. One of the best ways to learn how to do something is to simply go out into the real world and do it. Instructional information in books and classroom lecture only goes so far to cover the depths of the concept.

As for my style of learning, at a public-school in New Hampshire in all honors level classes, my options for types of learning are limited in variety. Unless you take part in the SST program where you can work with automobiles or animals, the classroom style is fairly uniformed. Many of my teachers use powerpoints during notes to give a visual aid in understanding the material. Classes also incorporate some Kinesthetic-tactile teaching styles through science labs, performing skits, educational games, or competitions to test learning. Our school has pre-formed concept of what classes make you successful, an opinion that is shared by most schools and universities about the country. If you want a white-collar job that brings you a good income, then you generally take the more

classic, lecture-type classes. If you are on the track for a blue-collar job, then you get to take the hands-on classes that are viewed as fun and easy by the rest of the student population. Many people overlook the individual student and their personal needs. Some students thrive in the classroom-type learning area, while others find success in direct experience in the workforce.

Therefore different occupations are almost incomparable in their levels of difficulty or rigor. Every person is different in their learning style and also in their view of what comes easily to them. Success is not dependent on a top-notch education, although in many cases this is conducive. In the end a carpenter can be just as successful as a doctor. It's all about what you put into it.

① That while my abilities are different than his, I benefited from working just as much as he did, albeit slowly and rather minimally in comparison.

② I used his details about working in the shop and working with his father at the carpentry job the most, because I felt those correlated with my own learning experience.

3

Anyone can learn New tasks or tools, it just takes different environments and amounts of time to do it.

④ I am envious of Norm Abram. His learning ability, to observe and deduce, puts my own to shame. While Mr. Abram is able to see a tool and know how to use it, I need to see the tool, hear how it is used, and see it done, even for rudimentary tools like squares and levels. If I was able to learn as easily as Norm, this past summer - a summer when I too joined the workforce - would have been much easier.

Norm did have one advantage over me when he started working compared to me. He grew up around tools, where as my only exposure was to hammers, nails, screw drivers and the Christmas tree saw. Perhaps having grown up around tools and his father's work helped Norm develop such strong deduction and learning abilities. When he entered the workforce he was much better off than I was, even though I was nearly two years older than him.

The job I worked wasn't nearly as demanding as his was either; mine mostly was menial tasks, with the few tasks requiring new tools stumping me. I can't imagine working for a carpenter, where not only do you need to know the tool and trade, but apply them. I had enough trouble with simply

pull mechanisms, needing my boss, much to his aggravation, to explain it 2 to 3 times!

His job was that much harder too; the fact that other people were counting on him to complete his task probably adding significant pressure to the situation. In my case, my boss would give me some tasks, leave, and return when it was time for lunch. This gave me plenty of time to experiment with too tools, much like Norm in his shop, until I was comfortable with them. Unfortunately, if I couldn't figure out the tool, or how to use it effectively, my boss would not be happy when he returned.

This summer I learned a lot. Working allowed me to learn a lot of new things, much like it allowed Norm to do when he worked; gaining knowledge about different tools, or even simple maintenance or building jobs. While it would have been nice to have had the experience and intuition in regards to tools and tasks that Norm had, I learned enough this summer to work all summer, and to hopefully help me out in the future. I don't expect to be the host of my own Home Improvement show like Norm, but, knowing how to improve my home, learning things as I go, would be good enough for me.

1

Before

Norm Abram learned through on-the-job training,  
watching his dad and being around other carpenters.

2

After

↑

, Norm learned gradually from doing the work, not at school, Norm's menial work, (the last paragraph)

3

After-

I connected Norm's experience with mine and things I've learned - life lessons specifically.

4 Norm Abram learned his carpentry skills from watching his dad and his dad's coworkers, then trying the techniques out himself. He also experimented.

Personally, I learn better doing hands on work, so I have a certain admiration for it.

Norm learned very gradually over his childhood and teenage years, which would, and did, cement his knowledge.

On-the-job training has pros and cons though. On the one hand, on-the-job training gives one experience actually doing the work. On the other hand, on-the-job training does not provide one with a degree to prove one is a pro in the trade. It also does not provide one with notes to look back at in times of doubt or questioning.

For example, I am in the Automotive Technology program at my school. Since I am a hands-on learner, taking notes before doing the actual mechanical work does little good and is not very helpful. However, once I am under the hood or under the car, looking back at my notes saves me time, frustration and parts. It is still the actual work which I learn from though.

Norm Abram appears to have a good attitude about even the menial, tedious work his father had him do. A good attitude is very important because if one has a negative attitude, they will eventually lose their love and appreciation for their work. Also, others will not want to work with or around them.

The saying "If you can be trusted with little, you can be trusted with lot" comes to mind. Norm Abram didn't simply start building houses. He started with side jobs for his mother's relatives, then he got a job with his dad. Within a few years, he joined a general contracting firm with his dad. From there he went on to solo professional projects. He proved he could be trusted with small, menial jobs, and was allowed to move on to bigger, more important jobs.

①

The importance of hands on and experience oriented learning.

- ②
- His father never lectured him on how to do something
  - He experimented
  - He started off with small jobs during vacation, and then advanced to whole houses

3

Experience is necessary to learning any skill.

④ Norm Abram learned his skill by simply trying and experimenting until something worked. He didn't have a formal education or read any books about his skill. This is a good way to learn, because it involves hands on work. The only way we can know if something is right is by trying it. Norm Abram absorbed knowledge from his father, and then picked up his own skills throughout his life. He is constantly learning new things about carpentry, and I think this is a great and necessary way to learn.

This passage is similar to Merlin's teachings in The Once and Future King, when he states, "Experience is the key to self-reliance." This means that no matter how much you've learned in school or through books, the best way to learn is by experience. Norm Abram started off with

small jobs during vacations that could help him learn unique tricks and skills. However, he gradually advanced to larger projects as he learned more about carpentry. He understood that nothing can replace hands-on experience.

I try my best to learn in a similar way, yet I also have a formally educated background before I experiment. Learning by experience is very productive and realistic for many skills and fields of business. More people should explore this option instead of relying on text books. Getting out there and trying a skill first hand is the most efficient way to learn.

1

My focus was to give insite on how I myself learn and apply it to the situation.

② The way that Norm just watches his father and picks up the craft of carpentry.

3

I think a lot of people learn this way and it is proving how different minds can be.

4 I think the way Norm learned his skills is a very useful way to learn. I know a lot of people who learn in that sense. "monkey see, monkey do." I myself love singing, and want to pursue it for my career. I am very good and have never had one lesson. My mother plays the piano and tried desperately to teach me to read music. This did not work and in fact, I can play some of my favorite songs with piano parts in them on the piano simply by seeing it on a music video being played, or more often I only have to hear it and I can sit right down and play. I also take dance and have been dancing for 14 years. When you take dance class you learn in the same way that Norm did, you watch and learn and then eventually do it for yourself. The way Norm learns and the way I learn are very similar and I find it easier to learn that way.

①

my focus is on a man who learned carpentry

2

The detail that his dad never  
taught him he just learned by school.

3

my text in the response connects to the  
world cause it just proves that you can't do it by yourself

4 I think that he learned them by himself by asserting himself by going to school for it. This compares to the way I learn cause I go to school and learn I didn't get taught by my parents. They also gave me their own problems with math, ect. to ~~do~~ do by myself.

①

The way above learned his  
skills.

② Examples of him working  
on jobs and learning at  
the same time. Experience was  
key

3

Every has to try something to learn it.

④ Norm Abram is a American  
Hero do every man's dream,  
The life of a Carpenter.  
Smashing houses down only to  
be a new one afterwards.  
I love his show and  
think he should run for  
governor.