

PENNY LEARNING LITERATURE

Penny's Essay Tree

A story about growing your whole essay, Thesis, Reasons,
Evidence, Explanation, Significance

Book Six · The TREES Song

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Penny's desk was a wonderful mess. She had a thesis on one sticky note, three reasons on another, tracks of evidence highlighted here and there, and little explanations scribbled all around the edges. She had learned so much. But when she tried to line it all up into one whole essay, her pieces just slid around like puzzle parts with no picture on the box. Champ sighed at her feet, as if he felt it too.

“I have all the pieces,” Penny said, “but I don’t know how they fit together.”

Mrs. Ray looked at the happy jumble and smiled. “That’s because you’ve been collecting the parts of something that likes to GROW, Penny. A strong essay isn’t a pile. It’s a tree. And you already have almost every branch.”

Penny blinked. A tree? She pictured roots and leaves and sat up straight.

“Let’s plant it,” said Mrs. Ray. “The word TREES will hold the whole shape for you. T-R-E-E-S.” She wrote the letters down the side of Penny’s page like a growing trunk. “Each letter is a part you already know. Watch how they stack into one tall, strong essay.” Penny leaned in. Five letters. She could grow five letters.

“T is for THESIS,” said Mrs. Ray.

“That’s your trunk, the one big idea everything else grows out of.” Penny placed her thesis at the top: Recess helps kids learn better. “There’s my trunk,” she said, patting it. It stood up straight and sturdy, ready to hold the rest.

“R is for REASONS,” Mrs. Ray went on, “the strong branches that reach out from the trunk.” Penny hung her three reasons off the thesis, one branch, two branches, three. “And the first E is EVIDENCE,” said Mrs. Ray, “the proof that makes each branch real.” Penny tucked a track of evidence onto every branch. Her tree was filling in, green and full.

“The second E is EXPLANATION,” said Mrs. Ray. Penny grinned, she knew this one. “Connect, Support, Infer!” she said, and she told what each piece of evidence meant, so no branch was left bare. Her tree was leafing out now, every branch explained, every leaf pointing back to the trunk.

“One letter left,” said Mrs. Ray softly.

“S is for SIGNIFICANCE.” Penny paused. That was the one part she had never met before. “Significance is the very top of the tree, where it reaches for the sky. It answers the biggest question of all: so what? Why does this matter, out beyond your page?” Penny looked up, thinking bigger than she ever had.

She thought about recess, and kept thinking, past the playground, past her school. Then it came to her, tall and bright. She wrote: “When we give kids recess, we are really giving them stronger bodies, calmer minds, and kinder hearts, and that helps them for their whole lives, not just at school.” It was the highest branch of all, and it reached way up past the prompt. “That’s my significance!” Penny whispered. “That’s why it matters.”

Penny stepped back and looked at her whole tree, from the thesis trunk to the significance sky. Nothing was sliding around anymore. Every piece had a place, and every place had a purpose. Her scattered sticky notes had grown into one tall, living essay. “It was never a pile,” she said, wonderstruck. “It was a tree the whole time.”

*Penny sang the growing song, letting each letter
branch out:*

T-R-E-E-S, grow your essay, if you please!

**Thesis, Reasons, Evidence too,
Explanation, Significance, that's what strong
writers do!**

T-R-E-E-S, grow your essay with TREES!

**Plant your TREES and watch them grow,
a great essay, top to bottom, row by row!**

From that day on, whenever Penny had a jumble of good pieces, she didn't panic. She planted a tree. Thesis for the trunk, Reasons and Evidence and Explanation for the branches, and Significance reaching up at the very top. Her essays grew tall, and every part knew exactly where it belonged.

Now you know how to grow one too. A strong essay is not a heap of parts you shove together. It is a tree. Start with your thesis trunk, branch out with reasons, evidence, and explanation, and let your significance reach for the sky, telling the reader why it all matters.

So the next time your good ideas feel scattered, do not push them into a pile. Plant them. Say the letters like a promise, T-R-E-E-S, and watch your writing grow, from a sturdy thesis trunk all the way up to a significance that reaches past the page. Every essay you grow will stand a little taller, just like Penny's.