

I was a very cute toddler...

Note: The sample essays on this website were written by my Junior Cert students over the years. I tidied up the spelling and grammar when necessary, but the ideas were all theirs. It is with their kind permission that these essays are reproduced here, to give you an idea of what can be done. These essays cannot be copied and passed off as your own work, of course. That is plagiarism. Don't forget that this website is accessible to everyone, and your teacher is likely to check online if he or she suspects that the work you hand up is not your own.

I was a very cute toddler; I've seen the pictures. What the photos don't show, however, is that under that thick head of golden curls, devil's horns were growing.

My mum says tolerantly that I was 'a bit difficult' as a child. That's putting it mildly. One of my earliest memories is refusing point blank to allow Mum to help me tie my shoelaces before playschool. I was determined to do it myself. I could manage it, but I certainly wasn't fast. I needed about ten minutes with no interruptions, and that was a luxury my mum couldn't afford when she was trying to hustle four children out the door and into the car in order to have everyone at their respective schools in time. Rather than give in to her fussing and rushing, though, I simply hid behind the couch, crouching there until I had tied my shoes. I ignored the frantic calls for me to come out of wherever I was hiding. This job needed complete focus, after all.

Things didn't get any better when I got home from playschool each day. My best friend and partner in crime – Amy – lived next door, and we spent every moment we could in one another's company, always up to mischief. We didn't see it as mischief, of course. Like my tying of the shoelaces, we simply thought we were being grown-up and helpful. Our parents didn't see it the same way. I remember the feeling of bewilderment when they failed to see how much money Amy and I had saved them by giving each other haircuts. It hadn't been easy, because the only scissors we could find was a small Crayola one that was only supposed to be able to cut paper. I'm here to tell you that it can do a lot more than that, though. With its help, I gave Amy a lovely mullet cut, while she thoughtfully ensured my hair wouldn't get into my eyes by giving me an exceptionally short fringe. Because my hair was so curly, the little bit of hair she had left bounced high up on my forehead. I looked like a boy with a particularly unfortunate perm.

Amy and I may have felt hard-done by that day, but it was only one example of the many times we felt our parents failed to appreciate our independent spirits and initiative. Our mothers broke their own rule about children watching too much television and actively

encouraged us to sit still and enjoy cartoons rather than engage in some new enterprise designed to liven up family life a little. They simply didn't appreciate our talents, we felt. Still, there was something to be gained from watching cartoons. Amy and I were nothing if not quick learners. 'Tom and Jerry' was our favourite. Now there was a pair who knew how to live. Not for them, sitting quietly on the couch, doing what their mothers told them. They got up to all sorts of things. And what was the result? They were film stars! We decided to take a leaf out of their book. It was Amy who came up with the bright idea of throwing our banana skins into the next door neighbours' garden so that the youngest daughter, Caoimhe, would slip and fall. It would be hilarious, just like the cartoons. And it would have the added bonus of making Caoimhe look foolish. We didn't like her at all. She was far too dull, always washing her hands before meals and running to tell tales if we suggested something interesting like teaching the cat to swim in her goldfish pond.

The experiment wasn't a complete success. On the first day, we threw the banana skins high over the hedge and on to Caoimhe's patio. Helpless with giggles, we ran upstairs and peeped out my bedroom window, waiting for the hilarity that would doubtless ensue when Caoimhe appeared. We were deeply disappointed to see her come outside, walk past the skins and over to the swings. Back to the drawing board. Where had we gone wrong? Not enough banana skins, Amy declared. Caoimhe had been able to skirt the two we had thrown, but how would she fare if the patio was covered in skins? I gazed at Amy in admiration. She really was a friend in a million, and I was lucky to have her. She was so clever and clear-thinking. We set to work.

Well, that particular episode did not end well for either of us. Caoimhe's father came around to ask my parents if Amy and I could please stop flinging fruit at their house. He brought the evidence with him: a Tesco carrier bag full of banana peel. We were both grounded and didn't see one another for a whole week.

I didn't waste that week, though. I decided to make things up with my mum by helping her out around the house a bit more. She was always cleaning and tidying, and I knew she'd be grateful for any little thing I could do. Where to start? Why, what about cleaning her phone? It was very grubby, mainly because she had allowed me to play games on it, admittedly. The best thing to do, obviously, would be to give it a good wash in the sink with plenty of hot water. Then I remembered how angry she had been when I had done the same thing with her purse a few months earlier. Perhaps she didn't want me standing up on the stool to reach the sink. That was probably it. Then inspiration struck. The toilet. That would be just perfect. A few good flushes should have Mum's mobile phone sparkling. I popped it in to

soak for a little while first, and wandered out into Mum and Dad's bedroom to see what else I could do to help out.

My parents had redecorated recently and I thought they had done quite a bad job of it, frankly. They had ignored my suggestions about paint colours and had chosen a dull cream for the walls. The bed linen was even worse. It was white. How boring. I felt instinctively that I could improve on this and that my parents would be delighted with the result. And the materials I needed to brighten things up were right there on Mum's dressing table. There was an array of bottles and jars, all containing lovely, coloured make-up. I hesitated briefly before opening any of it, recalling how much trouble I had been in the time I had put nail varnish on my eyelids, thinking it was eye-shadow. But this was different, wasn't it? I wasn't putting it on myself; I was putting it on the walls and on the duvet cover.

The whole job took me less than an hour, and the final effect was eye-catching, to say the least. I had become so inspired that I had even painted part of the carpet with lipstick. It looked fantastic. Gone was the dull, cream room and in its place was a riot of colour and texture. I was very pleased with myself and trotted back to the bathroom to finish cleaning the phone. A good daughter's work is never done.

Mum, to her lasting credit, rarely brings up those incidents. In fact, she saw the funny side of most of it and even got Dad to take a photo of my artistic work in the bedroom. When we moved house last July, I was allowed to choose all the colours for my new room. Mum only contributed one thing to the décor: a framed photo of their old bedroom, covered in foundation, mascara, eye shadow, lipstick and nail varnish. And there, sitting on a stool in the middle of it all, looking sheepish, is a small girl, almost equally covered in makeup. Still, despite the devastation around me in that picture, there is no denying that I was a very cute toddler indeed.