

MADLINEMAN Essay (Middle School Grades 6th – 8th)

“Pressing On Toward the Goal”

DUE DATE: Tuesday, December, 16th by End of School Day

Instructions for Students

Read the article “Weary: Leader of the Line” (attached). After reading, you will write a 1–2 page essay (minimum 350–500 words) about the character, integrity, and determination Fred Weary showed during his early life.

Your essay should explain what you learned from his story and how his experiences connect to your own life as a student and young leader.

You Must Choose At Least 3 Prompts from the List Below to Include in Your Essay.

Choose Three (3) or More Essay Prompts

You may respond to these in any order. Be thoughtful and specific.

1. Character Traits in Action

Pick one character quality below and describe a time when you or someone you know showed it:

- Persistence (not giving up)
- Optimism (staying positive)
- Self-awareness (knowing your strengths and weaknesses)
- Self-control (managing emotions and reactions)

Explain:

- What happened
- Why this trait was important
- How the situation affected you

2. Understanding Important Words

Explain in your own words:

- What does empathy mean to you?
- What does self-motivation mean to you?
- Give a real example of when you showed one of these or wished you had.

3. Tough Decisions

Describe the hardest decision you’ve ever had to make.

- What choice did you make?
- Why was it difficult?
- What did it teach you about yourself?

4. Influential People

Write about a person who has made a positive impact on your life.

- Who are they?
- What did they do?
- How have they helped you grow?

5. Reflecting on the Lessons You Chose

After responding to three (or more) of the prompts above, reflect on them.

Explain:

- Which lesson helped you the most?
- How can these lessons guide you as you move through middle school, high school, and beyond?

Essay Requirements

Your essay will be graded on:

1. Content & Ideas

- Original voice (sound like YOU)
- Clear point of view
- Creativity and thoughtfulness
- Specific examples
- Connection to leadership and character

2. Writing Quality

- Descriptive language
- Good word choice (diction)
- Organization and flow
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- Sentence structure

3. Formatting

- Typed
- 12-point font, easy-to-read (Arial, Times New Roman, Calibri)
- Double-spaced
- 1" margins
- Include your name and date in the top left corner

4. Submission Instructions

- Put your printed essay inside a large envelope
- Write your full name on the front
- Turn it in on or before the due date

GOOD LUCK!

WEARY: LEADER OF THE LINE

Excerpts from Knox-News Sentinel Article

By Mike Griffith

August 19, 2001- Take one look at Fred Weary and you know what he's all about.

Fierce eyes dart from within a chiseled 6-foot-4, 300-pound frame. He carries himself with a forward lean that warns of the shackled aggression that lies beneath.

Ask anyone on the University of Tennessee football team and they will tell you Weary is the toughest, meanest offensive lineman with whom they have crossed paths. Ask Weary and he will contort his face into what's supposed to be a smile. Weary shows his teeth for only a few seconds before a determined look reappears. It's an expression that says Weary has unfinished business, and woe to those who stand in his way.

The Undertaker

"Once Fred gets his hands on you, it's over," UT offensive line coach Mike Barry said.

A USA Today All-American at Robert E. Lee High School in Montgomery, Ala., Weary spent his first two years at UT as a defensive lineman. But while watching line drills, Barry couldn't help but notice the inordinate leverage Weary exhibited. Not only was he natural, he was a coach's dream.

"Fred enjoys punishing himself in his workouts, and he pushes himself through that pain threshold," Barry said. "I think that comes from his wrestling background."

Weary embarked on a successful wrestling career when he was a 9th grader at Capitol Heights Junior High School in Montgomery.

"I wrestled because I wanted to be athlete of the year," Weary said. "Wrestling practice started 6th period, so I'd do that and then go to basketball practice."

Weary also played football and ran track. "He was fantastic," said Randy

Mularz, a physical education teacher at Capitol Heights who coached Weary in football. "No one could block him, and in wrestling he was so big and strong the other kids called him 'The Undertaker.'"

Bad to the bone

Lela Weary gets emotional when she talks about her son's success. It seems too good to be true.

"I think about it all the time," she said. "If Freddie (Fred's family nickname) hadn't changed in junior high, he'd have been in jail, or something worse. I thank the good Lord he changed."

"I was headed down a dead-end street," said Weary, who was expelled from the public school system for two consecutive years during his seventh-grade year for fighting, skipping class, defiant behavior, etc. "I'd gotten mixed in with the wrong crowd, running with

“Weary: Leader of the Line” By: Mike Griffith

older guys in the housing projects (low-income housing) I grew up in.”

But then another guy came along, a little guy named Matthew. “When my little brother Matthew was born, that was my motivation to change,” Weary said. “He had to have someone to look up to.” Matthew spent the first 30 days of his life looking up to doctors in the intensive-care unit. He was born one month early with a collapsed lung, and he was not taking to his mother’s milk. A hole was drilled in his chest so doctors could feed air into his body.

“We were worried that he wasn’t going to make it,” Lela said. “He was hooked up to tubes and I.V.s. Freddie went there when he was first born, and I know all that scared him.” Weary, 12 years old at the time, blamed himself. Had all the trouble he had gotten into at school stressed his mother’s pregnancy?

“I remember that was an emotional time,” Weary said. “I had to take a long look at myself.” Weary’s prayers were answered when his little brother recovered. One year later, Weary got the first of many jobs he worked to help support his mother and

baby brother, working weekends with an electrician. He took a job at a grocery mart when he was 16, working a 7-to-midnight shift after practice. “I didn’t think about it,” Weary said. “I got a job so I could get the things I wanted, and I had a little brother who also wanted things. It wasn’t a burden. I had my priorities and goals.”

“Fred is a wonderful young man who has his priorities in order,” UT coach Phillip Fulmer said. “Dedicated is an understatement. Tough is an understatement. He takes coaching and plays the game like it should be played.”



“Pressing on Towards the Goal”