

Sample Response: Day 3, Finish Drafting

"Tyler!"

Tyler spun around at the sound of his name and scanned the crowd. Fast-moving travelers made it difficult to scan the faces in the airport. Suddenly Tyler noticed a jostling in the crowd, and Mari burst towards him. He ran to meet her, but as soon as they were within a few feet they both paused. Should he hug her? Give her a high five?

Before he could decide, Tyler was tackled around the waist by Mari's younger sisters, Lubi and Ofie. They bounced around him, eager to hear about his plane ride.

"Leave him alone, Tyler must be exhausted!" Mari laughed, as she shooed her sisters away. She grabbed the handle to his suitcase, while Tyler shouldered his duffel bag.

"Wow, I can't believe I'm actually here!" Tyler exclaimed, as they followed the crowds that seemed to be heading towards an exit. He could hardly believe that he was in another country, and that he was actually seeing his friend again.

On the drive to Mari's family home, Tyler was awestruck by the scenery around him. The vivid green trees and dirt roads were so familiar to him— just like Vermont— and yet at the same time everything was different. The color of the earth, the species of trees, and the songs of birds felt like a whole new world. While the two younger Marias chattered away beside him, Tyler tried to notice every detail of this new land.

Tyler could still hardly believe that his parents had allowed him to travel all the way to Mexico. After last year's canceled D.C. trip and the wild events on the farm, they sat him down and explained how proud they were of how he had handled all that had happened. The farm was doing well, especially now that Dad could work a little more, and Tyler had been saving all of his money that he earned working for Mr. Rossetti. His parents knew how much Tyler missed Mari and her family, and his grandmother had persuaded them to let him come for a visit. Still, Tyler hadn't quite believed the trip would really happen until he stepped onto the plane in Boston.

But now that he was here, Tyler was finding it hard to talk to Mari. They had exchanged letters for many months, yet seeing each other in person left his brain feeling frozen. What should they talk about? Why did seeing his friend feel so strange?

When they arrived at the family's home, Ofie and Luby grabbed Tyler's hands and excitedly showed him the house, the small yard with a cat lounging in the sun, and the garden that was bursting with peppers, tomatoes, and leafy greens. When they burst into the kitchen, Tyler was overwhelmed by warm hugs and laughter from various family members, whose names he could

hardly catch as he was introduced. His grandmother and Mr. Rossetti joined them for the meal, and he couldn't believe how easily they fit into the large Mexican family!

All through dinner Tyler answered questions from aunts, uncles, and grandparents, with the younger Marias translating for him. Mari sat quietly next to Tyler, but they barely spoke the entire meal. By the end of the evening, Tyler was exhausted and couldn't wait to fall into the bed of the extra room in his grandma's rented apartment.

Just as he was about to leave, he felt a tap on his shoulder. He spun around to see Mari. He felt a pit of guilt in his stomach, and began to apologize for his rude words to her. Just then he stopped, as he noticed what she was carrying. Mari smiled, holding Tyler's old telescope in her arms.

"Do you think you have time for a quick stargazing lesson before you leave?" she asked shyly. Tyler couldn't contain his smile, and for the first time that day, he knew exactly where he fit in.