

My Job as a Tutor

By Emily Cameron

I had never envisioned myself as becoming a teacher one day, but my mother made that happen. My fingers fumbled nervously with my red correcting pen, uncapping and capping the pen over and over again. Red ink stains were smeared across my sweaty palms, but I couldn't help it. Today was my first day of tutoring, and I was terrified.

I had never tutored anyone before. I hadn't even babysat anyone yet. In fact, I hadn't really interacted with little kids much other than my own brother. So when my mother announced to me that one of our neighbors named Judy wanted *me* to teach creative writing to her two young daughters, I had refused. Her cheeks flushed with pride and excitement, my mother eventually convinced me to take up the job. It was easy money—ten bucks an hour. Why not?

Now it was the first day of tutoring. My sneakers plodded across the sidewalk as I hurried toward Judy's nearby house. Drawing a sharp breath, I hesitated for only a moment before ringing the doorbell. Seconds later, the door swung open, and I found myself staring into Judy's beaming face. "Hi," I stammered, anxiety clenching my heart. I stepped inside and kicked off my sneakers. Elysa and Kristen were perched awkwardly at a table, watching me as I plunked down across from them and managed a smile. "My name's Emily," I said. "I'm going to be your tutor for creative writing, okay?" They nodded uncertainly. "Why don't we start by getting to know each other?"

"My name's Elysa," the older of the two said. "I'm in fourth grade." She had a pleasant, round face and a sweet smile. Her almond-shaped eyes glowed with anticipation and her dark, silky hair was pulled back in a loose ponytail.

"And you are . . . ?" I asked the smaller girl.

"I'm Kristen," she whispered, her voice barely audible. "I'm a third-grader." Unlike her sister, her frame was slender and petite. She wore braces and her dark eyes stared up at me with guarded caution. I could tell right away that she was going to be a lot shyer than Elysa.

I handed them two spiral-bound composition notebooks and began the lesson by asking them to write about their favorite thing about school. Immediately, Elysa snatched up her pencil and began frantically writing in her notebook, but Kristen took a while to think. I could tell she was having trouble with thinking up an idea. "Kristen?" I prompted. "Do you . . . need some help?"

She hesitated, staring at me uncertainly, until she finally nodded. "Okay."

"So did your class do anything interesting this year so far at school?" I asked.

"Not really." She frowned and thought hard for a moment. "Well, I really liked the class Halloween costume competition."

"Why don't you write about that?" I suggested. "Once you're all done, I'll check over what you've written to see what level you're at."

Kristen nodded and grabbed her pencil. The room was absolutely silent except for the sound of pencil lead scratching on paper. Several times, they were uncertain of the spelling of a word and turned to me for help, but other than that the silence was unbroken.

The hour passed quickly. When there was only about ten minutes left of class, Elysa slammed down her pencil and shoved her notebook toward me. "Done!" she announced proudly.

Tugging out my red correcting pen, I read over her paper, slashing marks across words that were spelled incorrectly or sentences that were irrelevant and didn't make sense. Overall, the plot of the story was well-written, but I could see the areas where she might need improvement. I gave her a brief talk about what she needed to do in the future to make her stories better.

It was the same thing with Kristen, although Elysa did write slightly better than her, which was inevitable because Elysa was a year older and seemed to be more enthusiastic to write than Kristen. However, Kristen wasn't bad, I could see lots of great potential for her.

The end of the lesson came too soon. Judy thanked me vigorously as she handed me a ten dollar bill. I tucked the money into the back pocket of my ripped jeans and slipped my feet into my sneakers. "Bye!" I called as she closed the door after me. I skipped all the way home. My first tutoring session actually hadn't been all that bad, *and* I got ten dollars for it.

Now I've been tutoring Kristen and Elysa for over a year, and I have enjoyed every moment of it. Tutoring has helped me learn to interact better with younger children, and also become more patient. I'm really glad that I have been presented with this wonderful opportunity.