

## Writing Sample

## BHS AFLA Application

- **In one well-developed paragraph (no longer than one page), analyze Bowers' use of mood in this short story. Please type and double-space your response.**

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### **If You Lived Here, You'd Be Home by Now** by Joe Bowers

The boy was grey, too. He wore an olive green trench coat (an army cast-off like his boots) over funereal black, greasy hair obscuring his eyes. They must have been grey. He was narrow-shouldered and small, and walked like he was in a trance. I suppose he was. It was trance weather.

It was cold. Cold for this time of year anyway. Cold for Louisiana. The wind cut as it blew by. The heat so common to this place, the sticky wet heat and insect buzz that filled most of the year was gone; cold had come and taken its place. But the sky was still overcast. It usually was. The grey was constant.

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He wore headphones. He didn't sing along. He turned left after he crossed the railroad tracks and walked down the road. The ground was covered in leaves, wet and thoroughly dead. They were a hundred shades of light to dark brownish-gold, and might have been almost beautiful on warmer days. As it was, all shades hit the eye together, as a variation of a more familiar color, an echo of the sky. He walked past Brewbacher's Grill and The Daiquiri Cafe and into a shop with its shades down.

The writing on the front said: FUST'S COMIC BOOK EMPORIUM Buy, Sell, and Trade New and Back Issues Sports Trading Cards and More!

The boy went inside and stayed there for quite some time.

When he came out, he had a brown paper bag with him. He sat down in front of the store, pulled a bright colored magazine from the bag, and began to read. A passerby might have thought the boy was dead. He sat with a blank look on his face, pale and black and green against the vivid paper cover, blasting Action! and Adventure! and sometimes Terror! or Romance! into the atmosphere in lurid red or blue or sharp yellow lettering. He sat still. Very still. Occasionally he would turn a page, with an almost undetectable move of the thumb. He was that way for a long time, breaking his trance every once in a while quickly to exchange the comic in hand for one in the bag. He was never without an open book for long, dropping the used issues on the ground, where they lay swollen with vibrance on the icy concrete.

The daylight was dimmer when he looked up into the real world again and he blinked and shook his head quickly, like one newly awakened, shaking sleep from his mind. He rose slowly, painfully, like an arthritic. He gathered up his books and walked back past the bars, then across the tracks past the Circle K and down the road a ways. He passed a Chinese restaurant, its parking lot filling up for evening business. A group of young people hung around in front of it, getting out of their cars, not much older than he was. They were typical Baton Rouge youth: grinning young men in baseball caps with broad shoulders and cheeks and close-cropped hair. One had his arm around a

girl with a painted face and a beautiful scraping false giggle. The boy stopped to watch them in the twilight, hiding himself in the pool of shadow by the side of the building. They shouted good-

natured insults at each other in the cold, and went inside. They looked like angels. The boy walked on.

It was almost dark when he got to the hobby shop. It was dark when he came back out of it, carrying a plastic bag with model paints and glue.

He passed the Chinese restaurant again; the evening rush was in full swing. He took his headphones off.

The light was bright and gold through the glass door, and he shaded his face with an arm as he walked by, squinted under it as he passed. God, it looked warm.

It was warm, and busy. Had he walked inside he would have heard the low rumble of a thousand conversations, blending till no one word was intelligible. The sounds of people laughing, of small talk and ordering, the sounds of men telling women how beautiful their eyes were, of women telling women how all men were scum, of people complaining about the cold, of people complaining about the food, of people, people, people would all run together into a wonderful life-hum, sweet like night crickets and the rustle of leaves in the wind of summer, sweet like a woman's sigh or the warm beat of her heart. But he passed by the door in the cold and back into the dark, hearing only the wind. There was no sense in warming up if he only had to face the cold again on the way home.

He put the earphones back on; walked more quickly back past the Circle K and over the railroad tracks, through the leaf-mud on the side of River Road. The levee came into view, separating the dark road from the Mississippi. He hurried past the entrance to a subdivision and past houses and houses, past people eating dinner behind lit windows. He took three turns (a right and two lefts) and then stopped at one of the houses. He didn't go in. He walked around back.

The carport light was on. A bicycle, more rust than dull, chipped red, sat against a moss-covered wall. It hadn't been used since the fall. The moss had frozen to death. He passed through it, stopped when he got to a sliding glass door in the wall. The curtains were down. He opened it and stepped into blackness.

He placed his purchases on the floor beside him, keeping his feet planted firmly in place as if there were things on the ground he would rather not upset. He felt the wall for a switch. Then he spoke.

He cried, "Let There Be Light!"

And there was.

And it shown down upon a city and countryside in miniature, a model landscape of houses and green trees spread out on foam grass and dirt over three card tables, a desk and the tops of two dressers. The light was warm and golden, and revealed incredible microscopic detail in brilliant color, down to a tiny orange Circle K sign in front of the convenience store, down to the painted wavelets of a brilliant blue river, down to a shining red bicycle parked outside a tiny Chinese restaurant. The light shown down from a ceiling painted bright, brilliant blue, the same color as his eyes.