Corkscrew

I have never really liked roller coasters.

Unfortunately, I have come to the conclusion that life is very much like one.

The first and only time I ride a roller coaster, I am thirteen and naively excited. I lack the foresight to remove my glasses before boarding - a silly mistake, especially considering the beast in question is called “The Corkscrew,” a monstrous structure that, as the name implies, loops up, down and upside-down in a giant corkscrew.

Like a lamb brought to slaughter, I am calm while the tangle of gears beneath us clicks and groans. I endure the gradually increasing angle of the track in silence, innocently curious about what lies next.

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These sentences introduce the **purpose** of the narrative. It seems like the student will compare life to roller coasters.

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The student develops appropriate **characterization**. She introduces herself as a naïve, hesitant roller coaster rider.

The student develops a **personal** **connection to her purpose** through diction and figurative language.

The student uses an interesting **detail** to **introduce conflict and describe setting.**

The student develops **conflict** and continues to shape **purpose** through diction and figurative language.

My mother knows what’s coming, and I catch her muttering complaints under her breath before we’re at the very top with the entire amusement park spread below our feet. As I am confronted with the vertical descent below us, all spidery dark metal curving sharply down and away, my stomach starts twisting uncomfortably. The realization that *This is definitely* ***not*** *where I want to be right now* becomes a solid block of panic tearing at my chest as the coaster pauses for a moment and then slices downward.

Student has a clear **purpose**. This diction shows a personal connection between the roller coaster ride and her view of life.

Student provides a **specific, well-chosen physical detail** about her personal life to connect her audience to the emotional purpose of the essay.

The student creates a **coherent structure** that **flows smoothly** to support **purpose**. She moves from a specific example to an insight about life.

The student demonstrates **purposeful variety in sentence structures** by inserting a direct thought.

This well-chosen detail supports **purpose** and continues to develop **character** and **conflict**. The **appropriate**, sincere **tone** in her description shows an **awareness of audience and purpose**.

We don’t always know what’s going to happen or how to behave, and sometimes we just want to escape the whole messy affair. Like any well-designed coaster, life has twists and turns and steep drops, but it also has ups. When I am sitting alone in my room late at night with only my desk lamp, my homework and my procrastination for company, it seems as if my life is stuck in a permanent downhill spiral. But after the homework’s done, my heart is lighter, and I can go to sleep having learned the consequences of procrastination—even if I don’t always apply the lesson.

Aside from teaching me to remove my glasses before I ride a roller coaster—especially one that goes upside-down—the experience has stayed with me as a fitting, if somewhat cliché, metaphor for life.

I want to scream, I really do, but the whole of my mental capacity is focused on somehow preventing my glasses from slipping off my face using sheer willpower. My mother has no such preoccupations. Her scream competes with the dull roar of the coaster as it curves into a corkscrew, straining to throw us off.

Somehow the ride is over, and I make it off and onto the nearest bench, sanity and glasses still surprisingly whole and present. I breathe a sigh of relief - *I survived*.

Student creates a **strong, reflective sense of closure** by reinforcing her purpose.

Agony is inevitable, but it does not last forever, and we are stronger and wiser for having lived through it, even if only by a little bit.

So perhaps while I do not plan on getting on a roller coaster anytime soon, chances are I may end up on one - but I will not panic or be scarred by the memory of my last coaster ride, because I’ll know and believe that it gets better.

It always gets better.