

## **EXAMPLE SHORT NONFICTION STORY BASED ON RESEARCH**

**Prompt:** Write an interesting journalistic story that might appear in a magazine about a real person who is an unlikely hero. Show how the person does not have many resources to become a hero but becomes one anyway. Make sure that the story contains at least five paragraphs and all the elements of a story. Provide at least three references in a reference list. Use the MLA style.

TITLE OF THE STORY: A Smart Sister

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### A Smart Sister

Mary Katherine Smart was 9 years old and living the normal life of an elementary student, with school, church, and a variety of activities filling her days (“Sister recounts” 1). Those days were happy days. She was part of a large loving family as one of her parents’ six children. She had learned a lot from her parents who were generous and charitable. She had watched them help many homeless people by giving them jobs and food. Nonetheless, tragedy came knocking on the Smart family door. One night, while Mary Katherine and the rest of the family were sleeping soundly in their beds, her 14-year-old sister, Elizabeth, was kidnapped from their home (“Sister recounts” 1). How did this happen and what role did Mary Katherine play in the event?

By way of background, the Smart family lived in Salt Lake City, Utah. In early June of 2002, while the family was getting ready for bed, Mary Katherine’s father made sure that all the doors were locked, but he did not switch on the burglar alarm (“Elizabeth Smart” 1). He feared that the children would set off the alarm if they got out of bed in the middle of the night. Meanwhile, Mary Katherine and Elizabeth were getting into their twin beds in the bedroom that they shared. They said their prayers and told each other “Good night.” Later, their parents visited them for a final “Good night” wish.

That night, a man broke into the house and entered the bedroom where Mary Katherine and Elizabeth were sleeping. Mary Katherine was awakened by the sounds, but

she acted as if she were asleep with her eyes shut. Nevertheless, she listened carefully to everything that happened. The man told Elizabeth to be quiet and come with him, and he would not hurt her. When she heard his voice, Mary Katherine thought she recognized it, but she could not remember who he was. She kept her eyes shut so that the man would think she was still sleeping. She did not see his face. Of course, she was very frightened, and she did not want the man to hurt them. Thus, she stayed perfectly quiet until she was sure the man had left.

A couple of hours later, Mary Katherine woke her parents and told them Elizabeth had been taken away. At first, they didn't believe her until they tried to find Elizabeth. They looked everywhere for Elizabeth. Later, her father found a cut window screen and called the police. The police came to the home and took a report. Then the official search began. Her father went on TV to ask the kidnapper to return Elizabeth. Weeks and months passed with no leads, but her parents kept Elizabeth's name and photos in the newspapers and on TV. Naturally, Mary Katherine felt terrible. She kept thinking that if she had just woken her parents sooner, the kidnapper would have been caught. Her parents assured her that she did the right thing to protect herself and the rest of the family.

One day in 2003, Mary Katherine kept thinking about the voice she had heard on the night of Elizabeth's kidnapping. She reviewed all the men she had known. Suddenly, she remembered the man who had the kidnapper's voice. He was a man named Emmanuel who had raked leaves and completed odd jobs for the family back in 2001. Immediately, the family hired an artist to draw Emmanuel's face, based on their memories of him. Then the drawing was shown on "America's Most Wanted" TV show along with Elizabeth's photo.

Members of Emmanuel's family saw the drawing on TV. They told the police that his real name was Brian David Mitchell.

In the late winter of 2003, a biker who had seen the TV show about Elizabeth's kidnapping saw Mitchell on the street. He reported Mitchell's location to the police. The police started looking for him in earnest. When he showed up in Sandy, Utah, the police took him into custody along with two other people who were with him. One of those people was Elizabeth Smart. Mitchell had forced her to wear a gray wig, sunglasses, and a veil. Although she stayed quiet, the police recognized Elizabeth during the questioning process. They returned her to her family. They arrested Mitchell and charged him with kidnapping. When they asked Elizabeth why she had not spoken up, she said that Mitchell had threatened to kill her family if she tried to escape. When she was returned to her family, she told them that she knew that they would not give up on looking for her. She continued to hope every day that they would find her. Needless to say, Mary Katherine was very relieved, and she is considered to be a hero for saving her big sister.

Works Cited

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