

EXAMPLE SHORT NONFICTION STORY

Prompt: Write a biography about a real person who lived at the time of the U.S. Civil War. Show how the characters faced a problem and solved it. Make sure that the story contains at least five paragraphs, all the elements of a story, and a reference list containing at least four references. Use the MLA style.

TITLE OF THE STORY: Private Albert Cashier or Jennie Hodgers?

Gina Sigalito

Ms. Green

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Private Albert Cashier or Jennie Rodgers?

Jennie Rodgers is a famous woman who pretended to be a man so that she could fight for her beliefs. To begin her story, she was born in poverty in County Louth, Ireland around 1843 (“Albert Cashier” 1). She never learned to read or write. After a few years, her family immigrated to New York City when she was still a child. When the family needed money, her step-father dressed her as a boy so that she could get a job and earn money. When her mother died, Jennie moved to Illinois. She supported herself as a shepherd, farmer, and laborer. Not surprisingly, these jobs helped her to build her strength and endurance. She developed some powerful muscles.

In July 1862, when President Lincoln sent out a call for an additional 300,000 men to serve in the Union Army, she wanted to enlist (“Jennie Rodgers” 1). She believed that slavery should be abolished. However, women were not allowed in the Army. She decided to see if she could fool the examiner. She cut her hair and dressed in men’s clothing before she went to the recruiting office to volunteer for military service. Fortunately, reading and writing were not required, so she marked an “X” on the recruitment papers and provided a false name. Within a few minutes, she had transformed herself into Albert D. J. Cashier, Private First Class, Co. G, 95th Illinois Infantry Volunteer.

During the war, Private Cashier was the equal of any man in the unit. Within three years, Jennie and the 95th encountered some of the fiercest fighting of the war. She

participated in the siege of Vicksburg, the Red River Campaign, and the Battle of Guntown in Mississippi. In May of 1863, she was captured when she was with General Grant during the siege of Vicksburg. She managed to escape and elude her captors (Freedman, 1). By the end of the war, Jennie had fought in more than forty battles. She earned a reputation for bravery and perseverance under fire.

Amazingly, Albert Cashier escaped the war without serious injury, which helped her keep her true identity a secret. Interestingly, she continued to dress and act like a man after the war. She did not want to be charged with a crime. Unfortunately, she had a serious accident. While working for Illinois State Senator Ira Lish, the Senator accidentally ran over Cashier in his automobile. Her leg was broken in the accident. When a doctor treated her, he discovered that Albert was actually a woman. Jennie begged the doctor to keep her identity a secret. The doctor told the senator, but the Senator and the doctor decided to keep Jennie's secret.

Sometime later, someone told the Pension Bureau that Albert Cashier was really a woman. The Pension Bureau was in charge of giving money to retired soldiers who had fought in the war. Albert Cashier was one of those soldiers. Naturally, the Pension Bureau was concerned that Albert Cashier was defrauding the government by receiving a veteran's pension, which she had been receiving since 1890. They thought she was pretending to have been a soldier. After reviewing the evidence, the bureau decided that she had been a soldier and granted her status as a veteran.

In the end, though, the board of the Pension Bureau judged Jennie to be insane because she masqueraded as a man and fought in a war. Tragically, she was confined to Watertown State Hospital for the Insane and lived there for the rest of her life. Because she

was forced to wear a skirt, she tripped and broke her hip. On October 10, 1915, Albert D. J. Cashier died at the hospital ("Albert Cashier" 1). Newspapers across the country reported her death and noted that she was buried in a Union Army uniform with full military honors, with a marker reading: "Albert D. J. Cashier, Co. G, 95th Ill. Inf." Unfortunately for Jennie, she was a woman who was born before her time. If she were living today, she would have been welcomed into the Army and would have earned many honors. She believed in the cause for which she was fighting and was willing to risk her life and freedom so that others could be free. She fulfilled the definition of a hero regardless of her gender.

Works Cited

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