

HOMEMADE HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

Anissa Villegas

South Mountain Community College

Honorable Mention, Essay

“ARE YOU SURE YOU DON’T WANT TO BUY ONE?” my husband asks every year around Halloween time. My response is always “I am positive,” attempting to be very optimistic about the long nights of work to come. Once he leaves the room I find myself thinking “I am not sure, I am not positive, ahh...” Thankfully those thoughts are pushed aside as I start to think about how cute the finished product will look. Despite all the positive energy and the cutesy thoughts, once that sewing needle breaks, or the store runs out of the needed materials, I turn into a Halloween costume-making beast!

I remember the first year my baby girl experience a homemade Halloween costume; she was two months old. I decided to make her a little mermaid, not to be confused with Disney’s *The Little Mermaid*. I figured this was perfect for her since she would just lie there in the stroller and never break character. My late nights were spent sewing shiny beige sequins to a little onsie that was no bigger than the both of my two hands put together. One night I caught myself glancing at the wall clock that displayed 11:42 p.m. Instead of going to bed, I moved on to another project; gluing green gems to a soon-to-be mermaid tail. I figured that would not take long because the tail was the length of my forearm. Gluing away and falling asleep, I was interrupted by my husband asking “when are you coming to bed?” “Well, what time is it?” I asked. “2:00 a.m.!” he barked. “Oh my goodness, I have to get up for work in 4 hours!” We ran to bed, but all I thought about was my next project, decorating her stroller with a sea theme and finishing it off with a sign that stated, *This is My First Halloween*. I believe that year was my favorite costume; it was easy and there were no objections from the wearer.

Unfortunately, the following year would not be as easy or fun. I decided to make my daughter a candy corn costume. I will never forget running to *Wal-Mart* to find pillow stuffing and yellow, white and orange fabric. I took my mom along with me to help pick out the colors and to get tips on how to make this vision that I concocted. The entire time my mom would hold up “off the rack” costumes. “This is cute, Anissa.” “How about this one...?” “Oh my, look at this!” Finally, I said, “Mom I want to make all her costumes. I am determined to do this!” She just glared at me, probably thinking, “How dare you raise your voice.” Something must have happened to her because her smoldering eyes started to soften and she stopped badgering me. She proceeded to walk ahead of me through the store aisle reminding me of things I would need. I was wondering what made her “loosen up?” Did she realize how important this was to me or did she start to feel guilty for never making our costumes?

Once we left the store, I was exhausted and not really wanting to start the project that night. I figured, “Halloween is a week away and I will have enough time.” But Halloween really snuck up on me and I found myself sewing the costume the night before the big day. I messed up so many times; the fabric had needle holes all over it. I had to run to Wal-Mart at 10:00 p.m. to purchase more fabric and fabric glue. That night was spent ironing, starching and gluing the fabrics to make a stiff triangle. Sadly, I got too excited with the starch and her costume was too stiff for her to be comfortable. My toddler decided to protest all my hard work by not wearing it. She absolutely hated it and threw a tantrum until we peeled it off of her. Thankfully, I learned a lesson about costume making; they should be functional and comfortable.

Finally, I decided to use the learning experiences from the previous years to my advantage by making a costume that is cute and easy. My husband and I sat down and brainstormed on the perfect Halloween getup. We reached the conclusion that she would be a wonderful mouse and there was no starch needed, just comfy pillow stuffing. Once again, I found myself overwhelmed with excitement and running to the stores to purchase materials. I started sewing the gray fabrics together and filling the middle with pillow stuffing. I stuffed and stuffed—I even stuffed the tail and ears. I remembered thinking, “Boy, this was easy.” My husband and I were so thrilled to get her dressed up on Halloween day, than we sent her on her way to trick-or-treat. Regrettably, all that stuffing I did came back to haunt me. There was so much stuffing, she couldn’t even walk or see the ground. As a result, she would fall a couple of times and could not get up on her own; she would just roll around and laugh. The entire evening was spent picking her up or chasing her as she rolled away laughing.

Making my little girl’s Halloween costumes is not as easy as I envisioned. I have conceded to retiring my sewing machine after experiencing three years of overwhelming excitement, joy, stress, and lack of sleep. I will start answering, “Yes,” when my husband asks to purchase the costumes. Despite how much of a failure I will feel, I will resist all desires to stay up late sewing, gluing and forming these mommy masterpieces that, as my husband says, “will embarrass our daughter for years to come.” I decided to buy her costume this year. She had a great time picking out something special—a little skunk costume. I realized at that moment that I wanted to make her costumes to show her that I put time and effort into memorable childhood moments, but in reality, I was so busy making the costumes I didn’t even spend time with her. When we were at the store, we were laughing, playing dress up and just being girls. This was the first year that we would both relax and enjoy Halloween. Maybe that’s why my mom never made our costumes; maybe she enjoyed just having fun and avoiding the things that would interfere with the holidays and with being a family.

