**Young and dyslexic: essay plan**

How does the writer use language and structure to show his readers the challenges and triumphs of having dyslexia?

**Introduction:**

Benjamin Zephaniah is a poet who grew up with dyslexia. He faced many challenges in his life, however has overcome these and triumphed in many ways. His challenges were having dyslexia, problems at school, and experiencing stereotyping from the community. His triumphs were having professional achievements, being a role model, and having many positive personal qualities.

**Paragraph 1:**

Zephaniah’s biggest challenge was his difficulties in reading and writing, as a result of his dyslexia.

* “I wrote ‘wid luv’ for ‘with love’” **(technique: phonetic spelling of ‘with love’ demonstrates his difficulties in writing)**
* “I have to draw something to let me know what the word is” **(verb: to draw)**
* “When I look at a book, the first thing I see is the size of it” **(noun: size – emphasises how he feels about reading)**
* “I was finding it difficult to engage with writing” **(adjective: difficult)** **(verb: to engage)**

**Paragraph 2:**

On the other hand, Zephaniah has had many achievements in life.

* “Brunel University offered me a job of professor of poetry and creative writing” **(verb = offered, doors have opened for him professionally with many opportunities. The University chose him)**

**Paragraph 3:**

Zephaniah’s next challenge was all the problems he had with teachers throughout his school life.

* “No compassion, no understanding, and no humanity” **(rule of 3)**
* “My ideas always contradicted the teachers” **(always = adverb, demonstrating how often he had problems)**
* “Shut up, stupid boy!” **(direct address)**
* “I stole a teacher’s car and drove it into his front garden” **(anecdote)**

**Paragraph 4:**

Despite his problems at school, Zephaniah is now seen as a great role model to other people with dyslexia.

* “Kids come up to me and say ‘I’m dyslexic too’ … use it to your advantage.” **(direct speech demonstrating how well the kids think of him) (‘advantage’ is a noun with positive connotations)**
* “When I go to prisons to talk to people, I see men and women who are the same as me.” **(does motivational/volunteer work with prisoners)**

**Paragraph 5:**

A continuing challenge for Zephaniah is that people did not understand dyslexia and would negatively stereotype him.

* “I’m of the generation where teachers did not know what dyslexia was”
* “We can’t all be intelligent” **(inclusive pronoun which excludes Zephaniah)**
* “If someone can’t understand dyslexia”

**Paragraph 6:**

Finally, regardless of the challenges, Zephaniah has had triumphs and positive personal qualities, such as being creative and talented with a strong self-esteem.

* “I had poems in my head” **(personification)**
* “I wrote more poetry and novels for teenagers”
* “We are the architects, the designers” **(inclusive pronouns)**
* “I’m not stupid … you’re the one who’s stupid.” **(adjective, stupid)**
* “I tell them if you don’t have passion, creativity, individuality, there’s no point” **(rule of 3 – saying people with dyslexia are more passionate etc)**
* “I can perform my poetry in public” **(still believes he can perform his poems despite finding it hard to read)**
* “If you’re dyslexic … it’s not you.” **(self-esteem)**

**Conclusion**

Write your conclusion for the essay, based on these points/paragraphs above. Remember your conclusion should:

* State your main idea again
* Remind the reader of your best point
* Say something in general about the topic (i.e. about having dyslexia)