

Name: _____ Block: _____ Date: _____

Personal Narrative Writing Assignment

Personal Narratives allow you to share your life with others and vicariously experience the things that happen around you. Your job as a writer is to put the reader in the midst of the action letting him or her live through an experience.

Assignment: Your task is to write a story or account of an event you experienced. Please focus on the following:

- Audience: Your teacher, your classmates, your friends or your family
- One single emotional experience (5-10 minutes of time)
- Use logical ordering of events with a beginning, middle, and end
- Must be written in the first person point-of-view (I, we, me)
- Purposeful dialogue is included that shows action and not idle conversation
- Leaves the reader with a lesson or emotional connection
- Includes lively, active verbs
- Includes sensory language that appeals to the readers' five senses
- Includes descriptive language (awesome adjectives and adverbs)
- Includes the use of figurative language/literary devices (flashback, irony, etc.)
- Follows MLA formatting (i.e. Times New Roman font, 1" margins, 12 point size, double-spaced, indented paragraphs)
- Transitional words and phrases
- Varied sentence lengths

Please remember to review the directions and the rubric. Also, proofread for grammatical/C.U.P.S. (capitalization, usage & grammar, punctuation, and spelling) errors.

Due Dates:	Prewriting Work	_____
	First Rough Draft	_____
	Revision/evaluation/Peer-edit	_____
	Second Rough Draft/Teacher-edit	_____
	Final Draft Copy	_____

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Personal Narrative Writing Menu

Directions: Personal Narratives allow you to share your life with others and vicariously experience the things that happen around you. Your job as a writer is to put the reader in the midst of the action letting him or her live through an experience. Please select one of the Personal Narrative Writing Prompts from the menu, or select one of your own. Please remember to follow the directions, proofread for grammatical errors, and review your rubric. Your narrative essay must contain the following elements:

Beginning, Middle, End

Interesting Characters

Purposeful Dialogue

Transitions

Sensory Language

Awesome Adjectives

Vivid Action Verbs

Figurative Language/Literary Device(s) First Person Point-of-View

Think about a family friend or relation that you admire. It should be someone who is a role model for you. Think of a time when they did something that showed their kindness or other good qualities.

Think about a time when you had to do something you didn't really want to do. It could be a chore, a family day, or something in school. Write about one time when you were surprised at how much fun you had doing this.

Think about a time you did something special with a brother, sister, family member, or friend. Sharing this event made you realize how close you were. Write about what made this time special.

Think about a time you were surprised about something that happened to you. It could be a happy surprise or a disappointment. Write about the event.

Think about a time you succeeded at something that was hard for you to do. It could be something you finally learned how to do at school or in a game. It could also be a new way of behaving at home. Write about what happened the day you changed.

Your family celebrates special events such as birthdays, holidays, or other special events. Choose one family event and write a story about it.

You have been on many field trips while at school. Choose one and tell a story about what happened on that trip.

You have learned many things since you started school. Tell a story about one thing you learned in kindergarten that you have used this year.

Think about a day when you were very happy or sad. Write about what happened.

Or your choice:

Tips for Writing a Personal Narrative

Purpose and Audience

Personal narratives allow you to share your life with others and vicariously experience the things that happen around you. Your job as a writer is to put the reader in the midst of the action letting him or her live through an experience. Although a great deal of writing has a thesis, stories are different. A good story creates a dramatic effect, makes us laugh, gives us pleasurable fright, and/or gets us on the edge of our seats. A story has done its job if we can say, "Yes, that captures what living with my father feels like," or "Yes, that's what being cut from the football team felt like."

Structure

There are a variety of ways to structure your narrative story. The three most common structures are: chronological approach, flashback sequence, and reflective mode. Select one that best fits the story you are telling.

Methods

Show, Don't Tell

Don't tell the reader what he or she is supposed to think or feel. Let the reader see, hear, smell, feel, and taste the experience directly, and let the sensory experiences lead him or her to your intended thought or feeling. Showing is harder than telling. It's easier to say, "It was incredibly funny," than to write something that is incredibly funny. The rule of "show, don't tell" means that your job as a storyteller is not to interpret; it's to select revealing details. You're a sifter, not an explainer. An easy way to accomplish showing and not telling is to avoid the use of "to be" verbs (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been).

Let People Talk

It's amazing how much we learn about people from what they say. One way to achieve this is through carefully constructed dialogue. Work to create dialogue that allows the characters' personalities and voices to emerge through unique word selection and the use of active rather than passive voice.

Choose a Point of View

Point of view is the perspective from which your story is told. It encompasses where you are in time, how much you view the experience emotionally (your tone), and how much you allow yourself into the minds of the characters. Most personal narratives are told from the first-person limited point of view. If you venture to experiment with other points of view, you may want to discuss them with Miss Burke as you plan your piece.

Tense

Tense is determined by the structure you select for your narrative. Consider how present vs. past tense might influence your message and the overall tone of your piece.

Tone

The tone of your narrative should set up an overall feeling. Look over the subject that you are presenting and think of what you are trying to get across. How do you want your audience to feel when they finish your piece? Careful word choice can help achieve the appropriate effect.

Name: _____ Block: _____

Personal Narrative- tells a story about a critical incident in life

- Your focus can only be 5-10 minutes of time

Quicklist #1: List as many critical incidents you can think of...

Quicklist #2: Sequence the entire event that you are going to write about...

Name: _____ Block: _____

Personal Narrative -Prewriting

What event will you be describing?

Why is the event important to you?

Please answer **two (2)** of the following questions:

1. What did you learn about yourself or others from this event?

2. What lessons did you learn about life in general?

3. How did you change as a result of this event?

Name: _____ Block: _____

Personal Narrative Prewriting

One of the goals of your Personal Narrative is to leave the reader with an emotional connection to the text/story. In order to do this, your writing needs to be descriptive and specific, and then the reader feels as if he/she feels a part of the action. Please complete this chart so you can collect some specific details before you begin drafting (Use your Grammar Guide for sensory words).

Objects you can see when you remember this event...	Colors you remember...
Sounds you associate with this memory...	Smells or tastes you recall when thinking about this event...
Literary Devices you will use are...	Some strong specific verbs that describe the action of this event are...
Transitions you will use are...	Awesome adjectives you will use are...

Name: _____ Block: _____

Personal Narrative Organizer

Setting: _____

People: _____

Problem or

Goal: _____

Events: _____

Resolution of Problem or Attainment of the Goal:

End: _____

Beginning

Middle

End

This personal narrative by eighth-grader Alicia presents an engaging voice. Read the essay and notice how Alicia's personality comes through; she obviously cares about her subject. Her use of details gives the reader a clear picture of the characters and environment in this account of Alicia's first encounter with racism.

The Racist Warehouse

It was a beautiful August morning. The sun was brightly shining on my sunglasses while my mother drove the U-haul truck to a warehouse in Santa Ana, California. As my mother drove down the streets of Santa Ana, I looked out the window and began to realize that the mixture of people was no longer a mixture; there was only white.

When we arrived at the warehouse, I had to peel my arm off the side of the hot door like a burnt sausage off a skillet. There were not many cars in the parking lot, and I could see the heat waves. As we walked up the boiling pavement, it felt like we were walking through a scorching desert. When we walked into the warehouse, there was a variety of electronic appliances to choose from, and about three-fourths of them were white (of course).

About every 15 minutes, a salesperson followed us around and asked if we needed help, as if we were retarded or ex-cons. My mother really dislikes it when salespersons constantly ask if we need help; she feels if she needs their help, she'll ask for it. Finally, after about two and a half boring hours of looking for any scratches or marks on the dryers and refrigerators that might fit best in our new apartment, my mother picked a dryer and refrigerator that were just right. She then let the salesperson know, and he replied with a smile, "All right, you can pick up your items in the back in about five minutes." My mother said, "Thank you," in a nice, friendly voice and walked across the scorched pavement to drive the truck to the back.

When we got to the back, there were about three open spaces for picking up appliances. My mother chose the first parking spot she saw, which was by a white family's car. Then she

showed the employees the receipt for the appliances she had just bought. They said, “All right, we’ll be with you in just a minute.” While I waited for my mother, I looked over and smiled at the white lady in the next car, but instead of smiling back like a nice young woman, she frowned at me like I had something hanging from my nose. At first I thought, “Well, maybe she is having a bad day.” Then a few minutes later the people working at the warehouse started to look at my mother and me in a mean way. Then I figured that maybe something was on my face, but when I looked in the mirror, I saw nothing. At the time, I had only spent nine years and some months on this planet. I didn’t know racism was still around; I thought that situation had died along with Dr. King.

Five minutes passed, then ten, then fifteen. We sat there watching people get their appliances and leave. We seemed invisible to them. As I sat in the car, burning up and listening to one of the most boring radio stations my mother could possibly like, I was thinking, “We’d better leave or else I’ll go ballistic!” After 30 minutes had passed, my mother got frustrated and politely asked to have our items loaded. Five more minutes passed, and she asked again with an attitude. They replied, “We’ll be with you in a minute, ma’am.” I could tell she was beginning to get upset because she started to get that “don’t bother me” look. Five minutes later they finally packed our appliances on the truck.

When we left the warehouse, I described to my mother what the other people were doing. She explained, “They were racist. They didn’t like us because we have different skin color.”

That was my first encounter with racism. It was just a small slice of reality—that everyone isn’t going to be as nice as you, your friends, and your family might be; and that just because you look nice and politely smile at others, it doesn’t mean that others will treat you the same. This situation made me feel very out of place and confused. I didn’t expect those people to react as

they did. We are all civilized, intelligent, caring, peaceful people . . . or at least that is what I had believed.

This is a very moving narrative about a difficult experience. Sharing what she learned from this friendship makes an effective conclusion.

Giving Life

It was a hot summer day. My dad and I were getting ready to go out for a ride on the boat with my friend Katie and the dog. That's when the phone call came, the call that made that bright, beautiful day a cold, dark, gloomy one.

I had just put on my suit, shorts, and tank top, and packed my bag with sunscreen and everything else I would need for the day. I ran into my parents' room to find Dad. When I saw him on the phone, he was crying. I'd never seen my dad cry before. My heart sank. What possibly could have happened?

"Max, I'm so sorry," I heard him say. That's when it hit me. I knew that Suzie had died.

Max has been my dad's best friend for years. Suzie, his daughter, had a rare disease that mainly affected her body. Her brain was OK. She knew what was going on; she knew that she had problems and was different than other kids. Once she told her dad that she wished she could die and be born in a different body. Yet although she couldn't live a normal life, she was still happy.

When Suzie and I were little, we spent quite a bit of time together. As we grew up, we grew apart. She lived in New York, and I lived in the Midwest. When Suzie was ten she had to live in a hospital in Virginia. About eight months before she died, Max gave us her number at the hospital and we talked at least twice a week until the end. Suzie was always so excited to talk to us and wanted to know every detail about my life. She wanted to know everything I did and everything I ate. In a way, she lived through me.

After we found out about her death, we made our plans to go to New York for the funeral. When she was alive, I sent her a Beanie Baby and she sent one back to me. I had bought her another one but never had the chance to send it to her, so I took it to put in her casket.



Her funeral was very different than any funeral I'd ever been to. After they lowered her casket, each one of us put a shovelful of dirt over her. I remember crying so hard, I felt weak. My cheeks burned from the tears. My whole body was shaking as I picked up the shovel, but I'm glad I did it.

When Suzie and I first started calling one another, I thought it would be more of a burden on me, but I was completely wrong. I learned so much from her. She gave me more than I could ever give to her. I will never forget her or the talks we had. I now know that I must never take anything for granted, especially my health and the gift of life.

Name: _____ Block: _____

Personal Narrative Revision Checklist

Directions: Please make the additional changes to your Personal Narrative. Place a check once you have completed and made the revisions. Use a red or green grading pen and be sure to use all of your resources (i.e. Grammar Guide, handouts, etc.). Attach this sheet to your **Personal Narrative RD #2**.

1. _____ Read your paper out loud. Does it make sense? Have words been left out?
2. _____ Underline the claim (topic sentence). Rewrite by using an attention-getting hook.
3. _____ Draw a line through information that does not support your claim (thesis).
4. _____ Circle the sensory words in your essay. Use sensory words that make the reader see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Add three more that appeal to the reader's senses.
5. _____ Place a square  around the transition words/phrases. Add two more to your narrative.
6. _____ Place a triangle  around the beginning word in each sentence. If they sound alike, change the beginning and length to add variety.
7. _____ Highlight in yellow the dialogue in your narrative. Add two additional purposeful dialogues.
8. _____ Add descriptive adjectives that will help the reader remember your characters.
9. _____ Place a line through the "to be verbs" (am, is, are, was, were, being, been) and replace them with action verbs. For example, change **are running** to **raced**.
10. _____ Add two compound sentences to your narrative. (Sentence, [FANBOYS] sentence.)
11. _____ Add two complex sentences to your narrative. (Preposition/AWWUUBISS, sentence.)
12. _____ Look at your paragraphs. Stories need short and long paragraphs. Read your narrative aloud and ask yourself if more short paragraphs are needed, or if two short paragraphs may be combined to form a long paragraph.
13. _____ Find any word repeated more than once. Draw an **X** through it and replace it with a synonym.
14. _____ Reread the ending. Will the reader remember the ending? How does it reconnect with the beginning of your narrative and the conflict and resolution?
15. _____ Proofread for grammatical errors (capitalization, usage & grammar, punctuation, and spelling by reading your story aloud. You may need to draft, revise, and edit several times.

Writing Peer-Conference Form

Writer: _____ Peer-Editor: _____ Topic/Title: _____

Directions: Peer –editor, please complete this record as you listen to the writer/author read their piece aloud. Attach to the writing piece.

What is good about the piece?

Questions that came to mind while listening to the reader:

What needs improvement? Please circle all areas that apply.

Ideas	Unclear topic/too many words	Topic wanders/Details are unrelated to story
	Repeats often	Purpose unclear/So what?
	Not enough support/detail/personality/setting	Details are general - not from experience or heart
Organization	Needs stronger beginning	Points lack connection
	Ending needs a better thought or better place	Pacing is off/too much or little time on an idea
	Something doesn't flow right – sequencing is off	Transitions are not clear/thoughtful
Voice	Little Impact	Isn't personal or unique
	Need more emotions, feelings and/or reactions	Tone doesn't fit the topic and/or audience
	I don't see it/feel it	I don't hear any risks
Word Choice	Too general, find just the right/powerful word	Some good words aren't used accurately
	Verbs are not energetic (doing something)	It doesn't sound natural
	Few words and phrases linger	Too many jargons/overdone
	Adjectives don't paint a picture	Some words used over and over and over again
Sentence Fluency	Some parts are hard to read aloud	Many sentences start the same
	Many sentences use the same pattern and length	Sentences are too wordy – say what you mean
	Sentences are too choppy – combine or lengthen some	Sentences are too long – shorten/divide some
	Need connecting phrases to show how thoughts relate	Some sentences just don't make sense
Conventions	Incomplete/run on sentences	Spelling errors Punctuation errors
	Paragraphing needs work	Grammar issues (subject-verb agreement)

CLOCKING: Editing for Perfection

Writer: _____ Topic of Essay: _____

Peer-editor: _____ Date: _____

Best Good Fair Missing

Content: Ideas--Organization

1. Focuses on 1 emotional event

2. Focuses on 5-10 minutes of time

3. Presents specific details in logical time order that clarify the sequence of what exactly happened

4. Includes specific details including description and dialogue that reveal personality and feeling

5. Grabs the reader's attention with a strong lead in introduction

6. Reader has a clear understanding of the event and its effect

	Best	Good	Fair	Missing
	(>4)	(4)	(3-2)	(1-0)
	(>2)	(2)	(1)	

Word Choice—Voice

1. Vivid verbs—specific action

2. Original figures of speech

3. No words repeated excessively

Mechanics—Conventions

1. Correct use of punctuation

2. Words are spelled correctly—especially words such as: to, too, they're, their, there, hear, here, your, you're

3. Correct paragraphing—including dialogue

Student Name _____ Block: _____ Final Score _____/32

8th Grade Personal Narrative Writing Rubric:

Criteria Evaluated	4 Points -Clearly meets standard	3 Points -Attempts to meet standard & is fairly successful	2 Points -Makes effort to meet standard but with little success	1 Point -Does not achieve this standard
Addresses the prompt	Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task.	Addresses all parts of the writing task.	Addresses only parts of the writing task.	Does not achieve standard
Understanding of purpose and audience	Demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose and audience	Demonstrates a general understanding of purpose and audience	Demonstrates little understanding of purpose and audience	Demonstrates no understanding of purpose and audience
Consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure including effective use of transitions	Maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including effective use of transitions.	Maintains a mostly consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including effective use of some transitions.	Maintains an inconsistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure, which may include ineffective or awkward use of some transitions.	Lacks a point of view, focus, organizational, and transitions that unify important ideas.
Clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, explanations	Includes a clearly presented central idea with relevant facts, details, and/or explanations. Uses descriptive language (i.e. sensory words, active verbs, adjectives, figurative language, etc.).	Presents a central idea with mostly relevant facts, details, and/or explanations	Suggests a central idea with limited facts, details, and or explanations.	Lacks a central idea but may contain marginally related facts, details or explanations.
Sentence structure	Includes a variety of sentence types.	Includes a variety of sentence types.	Includes little variety in sentence types.	Includes no sentence variety.
English language conventions	Contains few, if any, errors in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. These errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing	Contains some errors in the conventions of the English language, but they do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.	Contains several errors in the conventions of the English language that may interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.	Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language that do interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.
Narrative Writing - Plot line	Provides a thoroughly developed plot line, including major and minor characters and a definite setting.	Provides an adequately developed plot line, including major and minor characters and a definite setting.	Provides a minimally developed plot line, including characters and a setting.	Lacks a developed plot line.
Strategies	Includes appropriate strategies: dialogue, suspense, narrative action.	Includes appropriate strategies: dialogue, suspense, narrative action.	Minimal attempts to use strategies.	Fails to use strategies.

