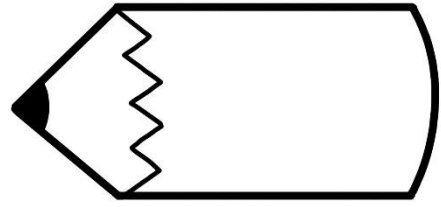


# Personal Narrative WRITING



## WHAT IS IT?

A narrative is simply a story that is being told. Think about any novel that you have read. That's narrative writing! The difference with this assignment is that it is personal, which means you are telling the story. This is not just any story, though. This is a personal story that reflects on a moment in your life that has made who you are today. It must be a story that has made a big impact on you and really defines who you are or why you are the way you are. However, it could be a story about someone else and how they made an impact on you, such as a parent or a grandparent. You could also call this a Small Moment.

## QUALITIES

Here are a few pointers about a personal narrative to keep you on track:

### The author may write about...

- ☐ An experience or an event from his or her past
- ☐ A recent or ongoing event that shapes his or her life
- ☐ Something that happened to someone else that impacted the writer's life, such as a parent or grandparent

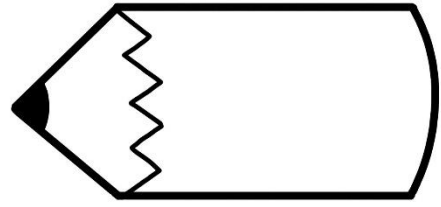
### The author needs to keep in mind...

- ☐ This is not just a story, this is an essay. Therefore, make sure your piece of writing has a lesson or something you have learned from your experience that you have chosen
- ☐ Even though it is an essay, it is personal. Therefore, you may use personal pronouns (I, me, we)
- ☐ Make sure you recreate the story using lots of details and examples. Your readers need to feel like they were right there in the story.

## HOW?

Don't worry, we will go step by step in how to create a personal narrative. You will look at real examples to give yourself some ideas, and you will use your writing partner to boost your confidence. I will also conference with you throughout the process to give some tips and tricks. This assignment is so we can all learn more about who you are!

# Personal Narrative WRITING



## WHAT IS YOUR MOMENT?

Think about and answer these questions to help you define what your moment is for your narrative.

❶ Check which type of narrative you are writing about:

- ☐ An experience or event from my past that shaped who I am
- ☐ A recent or ongoing event that continues to shape who I am
- ☐ Something that happened to someone else that impacted my life

❷ Check which prompt(s) you will use to write your narrative. For this section, you may pick more than one since we are brainstorming ideas.

- ☐ **A childhood event.** Think of an experience when you learned something for the first time, or when you realized how important someone was for you.
- ☐ **Achieving a goal.** Think about a particularly meaningful achievement in your life. This could be something as seemingly minor as achieving a good grade on a difficult assignment, or this could be something with more long-lasting effects, like getting to go to your chosen school or making a sports team.
- ☐ **A failure.** Think about a time when you did not perform as well as you had wanted. Focusing on an experience like this can result in rewarding reflections about the positive emerging from the negative.
- ☐ **A good or bad deed.** Think about a time when you did or did not stand up for yourself or someone else in the face of adversity or challenge.
- ☐ **A change in your life.** Think about a time when something significant changed in your life. This could be anything from a move across town to a major change in a relationship to the birth or death of a loved one.
- ☐ **A realization.** Think about a time when you experienced a realization. This could be anything from understanding a complicated math equation to gaining a deeper understanding of a world issue or life situation.

❸ After selecting the prompt, use that prompt to free write possible topics below the experience you will use. This means you need to have 3 options to write about.

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❹ How did these experiences shape who you are? What are the significances of these stories to you and your life?

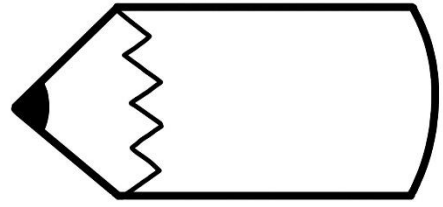
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# Personal Narrative WRITING



## SMALL MOMENTS

When writing a personal narrative, it is important to choose a small moment to zoom in and focus on. Small Moments allow you to focus your story on a specific moment in time, using descriptive details. Think of three topics or moments that you are interested in writing about. Then, focus each topic into a small moment. The first one has been completed as an example. Then, use this graphic organizer strategy to write your Small Moment Personal Narrative.

**Moment**

Trip to the beach



**Smaller**

Playing in the ocean



**Focused**

Catching the perfect wave

**Moment**



**Smaller**



**Focused**

**Moment**



**Smaller**



**Focused**

**Moment**

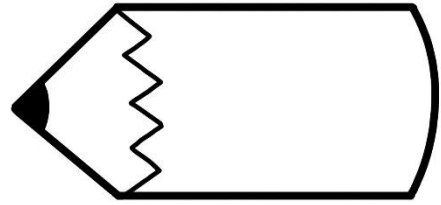


**Smaller**



**Focused**

# Personal Narrative WRITING



## BRAINSTORM AND ORGANIZE

Use this worksheet to brainstorm and organize your ideas for your personal narrative!

### Small Moment:

**1 SET THE SCENE:** Tell me when your moment happened, where it happened, and who was there.

**When?**

**Where?**

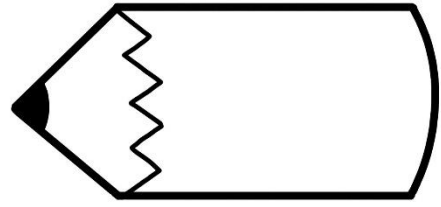
**Who?**

**2 QUICK SUMMARY:** Give a quick summary of events below.

**3 DETAILS AND REFLECTIONS:** Add some important details and reflections that would show me why this story is important.

**4 CONCLUSION:** What is the overall lesson? Why is this story important to your life?

# Personal Narrative WRITING



## WORD CHOICE

**"Said is Dead!!!"** As great writers, we have to be able to expand our vocabulary and use words that create feeling and show description.

This worksheet will help you to go through your rough draft and determine which sentences can be improved with better word choice.

### STEP 1: Identify Weak Words

- ☐ You will need a highlighter, your rough draft, and something to write with
- ☐ Read your partner's paper and look for words like **said, good, went, happy, and sad**
- ☐ Highlight words (like above) that could be improved with more descriptive words
- ☐ Trade back papers and show them what you marked and why you marked it. **Why is it a weak word?**



### STEP 2: Create Descriptive Options

- ☐ Grab a scrap sheet of paper, or use the back of this worksheet, and you will need a pen
- ☐ Using one of your papers, pick a few **weak words** from your paper and write them down
- ☐ Working with your partner, come up with at least three different options to put in the place of the weak word
- ☐ You may use the resources around the room, such as posters, mentor texts, or a thesaurus
- ☐ **NOTE:** make sure you use descriptive words that fit within the context of your sentence. For example, don't put "exclaimed" when the situation should call for a word like "whispered."



### STEP 3: Exchange the Weak Words for Strong Words

- ☐ For this step, you may do this individually or with your partner!
- ☐ Look at your rough draft and at the weak words that were highlighted
- ☐ For each weak word, decide which strong word would fit best in place of the weak word
- ☐ **NOTE:** Look for what you are really trying to say here; is it an exciting time, or is it suspenseful? **Make sure your new strong word reflect that emotion and detail.**

### STEP 4: Defend your Changes

- ☐ Using the lines below, tell me why changing these weak words to strong words helps your paper!

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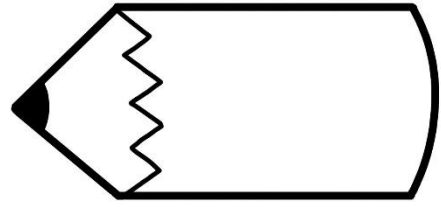
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# Personal Narrative WRITING



## BE DESCRIPTIVE!

**"Show, don't tell!"** As great writers, we have to be able to show what we mean, not just say it. Same with word choice, we need to think about how to give great visuals in our writing. Use this worksheet to edit your drafts to make sure you have plenty of sensory details and visuals in your writing.

### STEP 1: Identify what "descriptive" means

- ☐ Descriptive writing gives you a "picture" in your mind as you read. You can easily imagine the setting, the characters, or the situation because of the descriptive words used.
- ☐ Examples of being descriptive are as follows:
  - ☐ Using your senses (hearing, taste, smell, sight, touch)
  - ☐ Being specific when describing the setting, characters, or situation
  - ☐ Using adjectives, such as terrible, fantastic, or ginormous
  - ☐ Using figurative language, such as comparisons or alliterations (EX: **she was like a ray of sunshine glimmering in the evening sky**)



### STEP 2: Identify where you can add more description

- ☐ Using your partner's paper, read through the rough draft and make notes where you could stand to have more description
  - ☐ Use this checklist to see what areas they could add more description to
    - ☐ Does your partner use **the 5 senses** in their writing?
    - ☐ Does your partner use **specific details** to describe settings or characters?
    - ☐ Does your partner use **strong descriptive adjectives**?
    - ☐ Does your partner use **figurative language**, such as comparisons or alliteration?



### STEP 3: Revise your Draft with Descriptions

- ☐ For this step, you may do this individually or with your partner!
- ☐ Look at your rough draft and find where your partner indicated that you need more details, and see the checklist they marked for your paper.
- ☐ Now, choose at least two of the description types (**senses, specific details, adjectives, or figurative language**) to add to your draft; and give me a few sentences about why using them made your paper's "picture" better! Remember, **show, don't tell!**

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# EXEMPLAR #1

## 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.

# EXEMPLAR #2

## 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.