Narrative Writing

What is Narrative Writing?

• A narrative is a story containing specific elements that work together to create interest for not only the author but also the reader.
• This type of writing makes the reader feel as if her or she were part of the story, as if it was being told directly to him or her.

Elements of Narrative Writing

PLOT

• The who, what, where, when, why, and how outline that gives the narrative direction.
• What is the story about?
• Events unfold as they happen.
• The frame of the narrative.

Plot Structure of Narrative Writing

• Beginning:
  – Enticing opening to capture readers’ interest.
  – Setting revealed.
  – Main characters introduced.
  – Conflict presented.

• Middle
  – Characters attempt to resolve conflicts or problems.
  – Action progresses sequentially, step by step.

• Climax
  – The turning point of the narrative.
  – Reveals the process involved for solving the conflicts.

• End
  – Tells how the resolution of the conflicts have affected the characters.
  – No new characters or plot ideas introduced.
  – Theme or message understood by reader.
Elements of Narrative Writing

**CHARACTERS**
- The people, animals, or inanimate objects who are affected by the actions of the plot or who are the cause of certain events.
- Characters, real or imaginative, should be brought to life through the narrative.
- If a character is not described well, the story will not be believable.

**SETTING**
- Where and when the narrative takes place.
- Allows the readers to visualize the scenes and the characters in those scenes.
- Although the setting may be clear for the author, he/she must create a picture for the readers.

**STYLE**
- The figurative language (similes, metaphors, etc.), sensory imagery, vivid verbs, strong sentences, dialogue, and point of view that makes each author unique.
- Every student has his/her own style and technique. Although we have the same topic, everyone will write differently.

**CONFLICT**
- The problem that must be overcome or resolved so that the readers will not be left hanging.
- Types of Conflict:
  - Person versus Self
  - Person versus Person
  - Person versus Society
  - Person versus Machine/Technology
  - Person versus Nature

Types of Conflict: Examples

**Person versus Self:**
One month ago, Abby was assigned a book to read for a book report. Upon sitting at the computer to work on it, Abby struggled with the decision to do the reading or to surf the web instead. She felt guilty, knowing she should do the work, but was really motivated by her desire to look up new information about her favorite rock band.

**Person versus Person:**
Abby and her best friend Megan are working together on a group project. Abby did not do any work, leaving it all for Megan to do. When the girls get together to do the project, Megan finds out Abby did not do any work. She becomes angry, yells at Abby, and storms out of the room.
Types of Conflict: Examples

Person versus Society:
Abby needs to go to the library to begin working on her project. When she arrives, she finds out that juveniles under the age of eighteen cannot enter the library without a parent. Her mom is at work. Abby is mad about this thing, totally out of her control. She writes a letter to the library, expressing her disgust.

Person versus Machine/Technology
Abby begins her report, finally! All of the sudden, there is a power surge and her computer crashes. She loses all of the information that she has been working on for four hours.

Person versus Nature:
Abby tries to remember exactly where she left her book for the report. She remembers that she was sitting on a bench outside of her house, so she returns to that spot. She finds it, however, it had rained the night before and the book is in shambles.

Elements of Narrative Writing

**THEME**

- A theme is a message revealed in the story.
- It may be directly stated, like in a fable where the moral is told at the conclusion.
- It may be indirect, leaving the reader to decide the story’s message.
- There can be more than one theme for a narrative.

Different Points of View

Who is telling the story?

- **First Person point of view**
  - “I” as the narrator
  - Good for personal accounts.
  - Example: I will never forget the day that my hamster died…

Different Points of View

- **Third Person point of view Limited**
  - “He,” “she,” “it,” “they” perspective
  - Written as if the story is observed from outside of the characters.
  - Reader must guess the feelings of the characters by their actions and words.
  - Example: He pounded his fist against the wall and screamed, “Let me out!”
Different Points of View

• **Third Person point of view Omniscient**
  – “He,” “she,” “it,” “they” perspective
  – Narrator can write about the thoughts and feelings of all the characters.
  – Example: “She called him a liar, though she knew he was telling the truth.”

5 W+H Questions Method

• Answering the 5 W and H questions provides the basic info needed to begin a story.
  – WHO will be in the narrative?
  – WHERE will the narrative take place?
  – WHY will the characters do what they do?
  – WHAT is the narrative about?
  – WHEN will the events happen?
  – HOW will the conflict be resolved?

Sensory Imagery

• Using the five senses when writing a narrative helps the reader picture and feel what is going on.
• Describe what you see, hear, taste, touch, and smell to make your reader become involved in the story.

Figurative Language

**Figurative Language** is the use of descriptive words that bring your reader into the story.

**SIMILES**
A simile is a comparison between two unlike things, using like or as.
Examples: Her smile was so wide it looked like a piano keyboard.
He was as sick as a dog.

**METAPHOR**
A metaphor directly compares two unlike things without using like or as.
Example: The boy was a golden knight, protecting his little sister from the fire-breathing dragon that lives in the sandbox.
Figurative Language

**PERSONIFICATION**
Personification assigns human characteristics and traits to non-human objects.
*Example:* The pencil fought furiously with the eraser, battling over question number three.

**HYPERBOLE**
Hyperbole is the use of gross exaggeration to describe something that could never happen in real life.
*Example:* The teacher’s voice was so loud the astronauts orbiting Earth could hear her lecture.

**ALLITERATION**
Alliteration is the repetition of two or more sounds.
*Example:* The witch’s washed-out, withered lips whispered, “Watch what awaits you at the bewitching hour!” *(Alliteration of the “W” sound)*

**ONOMATOPOEIA**
Onomatopoeia is a word that imitates a sound.
*Example:* The cow moos in the pasture. *(Moo is the onomatopoeia.)*

Personal Narratives

• A personal narrative is a story about a personal memory. But it’s not about any old memory. It’s about a time so important you don’t ever want to forget it. Any experience that has caused you to feel a strong emotion is a good subject for a personal narrative.
Gathering Story Ideas
A good way to find ideas is to ask yourself the following types of questions:
- Who are the important people in your life?
- Where have you been?
- What do you like to do?
- What do you not like to do?

Goals for Writing
- Ideas – Tell about one special experience.
- Organization – List what happened in order from first to last.
- Voice – Write as if you are talking to a friend. This is called your writer’s voice.
- Conventions – Check your writing for correct use of capital letters, punctuation, and spelling.

Prewriting
- Show pictures from books, magazines, and newspapers, talking about the feelings the pictures elicit in the reader. Play a cassette tape of various sounds such as fire sirens, horse stampeding, lightning crashing, which elicit various feelings and discuss them.
- Read books such as My Five Senses by Aliki, The Relatives Came and When I was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant, and Winfred Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox as springboards for memories about which to write.
- Use a web or graphic organizer.

Collect Your Thoughts
- As soon as you can answer the 5 W’s- Who? What? When? Where? And Why? about the experience, you’re probably ready to write.
- Start at the Beginning – Put yourself at the beginning of the experience (“There I stood” or “As I entered the room”)

Focusing on the Most Important Part
- Zoom in on the most important part of the memory when you write. Think about being a photographer and about zooming in on the most important part of your memory.

Organization
- Effective writing flows from one idea to the next: sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, item to item. The physical appearance of the text on the page also influences the reader.
- It should have a Beginning, Middle, and an Ending.
Beginning – Writing a Lead

• Writing a Lead – The beginning of a story is called a lead because it leads the reader into the rest of the story. Writers must “hook” their readers in order to accomplish the purpose for which they are writing. The lead can be a short sentence or a paragraph. When it is well written, the lead pulls the reader into the story, and prepares the reader for what comes next.

I rode six hours in a little yellow Datsun. But it was worth it. I finally got to see the greatest concert in year.

Picture in your mind the most beautiful sunset you’ve ever seen, the one sunset that you’ll remember forever.

Lead Samplers

• Question Lead: Have you ever watched a true hot-dog over in action?
• Suspense Lead: A dog with the words is worth the indigestion.
• Begin with Dialogue: “Put me down!” Amanda shouted.
• Begin with the Main Character Introducing Himself: I might as well tell you now and get it over with. I am the shortest person in sixth grade.

Middle - Striking It Rich in Your Story

• Add Physical Details – You do this by adding important facts and by leaving out facts that are less important to your story.

Example:
“I went outside. The smell of hot cocoa flowed throughout the house. The fire crackled in the small red and brown bricked fireplace. My mother was stirring the beef soup. My two year old brother was quietly playing with wooden blocks that had little letters carved in them. My father sat playing a slow, sad song on his beautiful country guitar. I took off my parka and hung it on the brass coat rack. My mother gave me a bowl of hot beef soup and cocoa. The broth felt warm running down my throat. The feeling of warmth spread all over me.”

Snapshots

• Snapshots: Zooming in to look closely at a person, place, thing, or action, etc. Add Sounds, Tastes, Smells, and Textures – Sounds make readers feel as if they were there, living the adventure with you.

Thoughtshots

• Thoughtshots – Just as writers make physical snapshots, they can also take a snapshot of the thoughts in their characters’ heads, or in their own mind. A thoughtshot is simply a look at what a character is thinking and feeling.

For example:
Unpacking even just the few things in her brown suitcase, always seemed a waste of time to Gilly. She never knew if she’d be in a place long enough to make it worth the bother. And yet it was something to fill the time. There were two drawers at the top and four larger ones below. She put her underwear in one of the little ones, and her shirts and jeans in one of the big ones, and then picked up the photograph from the bottom of the suitcase.

Exploding a Moment

• This is describing a moment in time in great detail. It gets writers digging deeper for thoughtshots, snapshots, dialogue – anything to slow that moment down. Instead of just saying, “Then I dumped the milk over my sister’s head and she was a real mess.”

• I watched myself begin this horrible deed. My hand seemed to suddenly have a will of its own. It picked up the milk carton. The spout was already open. My arm extended over Carla’s head, tipping the carton. The liquid poured in a slow, steady, thick unending stream down through her long blonde hair, soaking the back of her clothes and running onto the floor. As the milk reached the floor I shifted the spout slightly to begin another long milky journey down the front of her. It poured over her forehead, in the eyes, running in rivers down each side of her nose, converging on the chin and splashing into her lap. Her food was soon awash and the milk poured over the edge, and ran into her lap. An still I poured on – it was too late to stop now. The rapture of it all. Oh, sweet revenge.”
Show Don’t Tell

• If you do a lot of telling in your first draft, try turning it into writing that shows. If readers can’t see and hear and touch and taste and feel what you've written, it just won't come to life for them. Use your five senses as you write, and show your readers what you mean.

Let’s say I almost drowned last summer, and I’m trying to tell a reader what it was like: “I was drowning. It was really bad. I thought I was going to die. I was really scared.” This is an example of “Telling.”

“The shape of the rock had forced his body weight out over the thin air, and he was in bad trouble. Stretched tight, the tendons above his heels began to quiver, then to tremble. His strength deserted him in a rush. He paused to rest, but his legs began to shake violently.” This is an example of “Showing”.

• Combine short sentences.

• Use powerful verbs – Verbs power sentences, making them fly or jump or skin or swim”. They help make the ideas come alive for the readers. The big fish flip-flopped against Cloyd’s leg. He nudged it back into the water with his foot, then leaped across the Rincon stream.

• Use Specific Nouns – Some nouns like car, fruit, stores, flowers, and candy are general and give readers a fuzzy picture. Other nouns like Ferrari, kiwi, K-Mart, tulips, and Snickers are specific and give readers a much clearer picture.

Endings

• Successful writing should leave the reader with more to consider. One way to end your narrative is to share something you learned from your experience or how you feel about the experience.

Prompts That Get Kids to Talk and Write

• And?

• Or?

• Because?

• So?

• How do you know that?

Time to Write

• Close your eyes. Think of a significant moment in your life that has brought about emotions such as happiness, fear, sadness, anger, etc.

• Freewrite for 10 minutes using some of the techniques discussed previously.