

Strategies for Writing Effective Personal Narrative



5th Grade Common Core Writing Unit

Generate ideas by thinking about
special people and places
in your life and
memorable experiences.

Camping at Yellowstone

Grandpa
Morris

Spring Break in Florida

Mom
My 9th birthday party
Backyard Fort

Choose an experience to write about,
close your eyes and
make a movie in your head.



Focus on what made it memorable!

Choose descriptive details that will help to **paint a picture** in the mind of the reader.

"He took his grandfather's **cold, rough** hand and smiled up at him. Abuelo was **tall and skinny** as an old oak tree."



Excerpt from *A Day's Work* by Eve Bunting

Generate more ideas by thinking
about times when you felt a
strong emotion or times when I
learned a lesson in life.

Regret

Embarrassment

Worry

Loneliness

Hope

Joy

Sadness

Excited

Use **concrete words and phrases** to
convey experiences and
events precisely.

Move the thoughts from the mind
of the writer (**YOU!**)
into the mind of the reader
using **exact details and specific words.**

Which is better?

The children
played all day
at the beach.

Excerpt from *Time of
Wonder* by Robert
McCloskey

This morning the rock is warm in the sun, and loud with happy noise of children who have come to spend the day.

They dive off the rock and swim, stretch out, dripping, in the sun, making salty young silhouettes on the old scars made by the glacier.

In the afternoon, when the tide is out, they build a castle out of rocks and driftwood below the spot where they had belly-whoppered and dog-paddled during the morning.

Include **sensory details** to help the reader experience the story.

When I write, I include the following sensory details:



What I **see**.

What I **smell**.

What I **hear**.

What I **taste**.

What I **feel**.

Use transitional words, phrases, and clauses (**where and when**) to manage the sequence of events.

Words that tell **where**:

- *As we walked along the dark streets...
- *In the middle of the field...
- *Beneath the mountain of papers...
- *At the end of the long, dark hallway...
- *Deep in the woods...

Word that tell **when**:

- *Right after dinner...
- *The moment I opened my eyes...
- *At 12:30, just after lunch,...
- *Suddenly...
- *Without warning...

Slant your story by telling the
internal story - your
thoughts, feelings, and responses
to what is happening.

Include **your thoughts** about what is happening:

*I wondered...

*I couldn't believe it when...

*I thought about...

*I wanted to ...

*It was a crazy idea, but I decided to...

Include **your feelings** about what is happening:

*My hands were sweaty and my heart was racing...

*I couldn't stop giggling...

*Tears began to sting my eyes...

Include **your responses** to what is happening:

*I stared right back at her...

Include **details, actions, and dialogue** that help to slant your story:

*I grabbed the bar and closed my eyes when the ride stopped unexpectedly at the top.

*"I can't believe this is happening!" I shouted.

Include a flashback by stepping back in time and recalling past events or thoughts.

*I remembered back to the time when...

*This reminded me of the time I...

*I thought about how I had once...

*It occurred to me that this same thing happened when I was younger...

Include a **flash forward** by stepping forward in time and considering **future possibilities.**

- *I thought about all the things I could do with...
- *I thought about what could happen...
- *I imagined what he might say...
- *I wondered what she would do...
- *I began to consider...
- *Maybe... *What if... *The next time I ...

Elaborate by adding actions, descriptions, dialogue, and thoughts.

Actions:
What is
happening?

Thoughts/Feelings:
What are you
thinking?
What are you
feeling?

Descriptions:
What do things
look like?

Dialogue:
What are
people saying?

Some examples:

He pulled open the back door, threw in the bag of lunch Mama had packed, and hurried his grandfather into the van ahead of him. (**action**)

The high bank was spotted with pretty white flowers and overgrown with coarse green spikes. (**description**)

"What did he say?" Abuelo asked as the van drove off. (**dialogue**)

He thought about how proud Mama would be tonight. (**thoughts/feelings**)

Create strong leads - action, setting, character, dialogue, and thoughts - by studying the work of published authors.

Action Lead:

The night before Michael and Jesse were to try out for the Little League team for the third year in a row, the two brothers sat in their bedroom listening to the radio, pounding their fists into their gloves, and talking about how they would bend to pick up grounders or wave off another player and make the pop-up catch.

"Baseball in April" from Baseball in April and Other Stories, Gary Soto

Setting Lead:

Out on the islands that poke their rocky shores above the waters of Penobscot Bay, you can watch the time of the world go by, from the minute to minute, hour to hour, from day to day, season to season.

Time of Wonder, Robert McCloskey

Character Lead:

Lupe Medrano, a shy girl who spoke whispers, was the school's spelling bee champion, winner of the reading contest at the public library, blue ribbon awardee in the science fair, the top student at her piano recital, and the playground champion in chess.

"The Marble Champ" from *Baseball in April and Other Stories*, Gary Soto

Dialogue Lead:

"Where's Papa going with that ax?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.

Charlotte's Web, E.B. White

Thought Lead:

The moment Fausto saw the group Los Lobos on "American Bandstand", he knew exactly what he wanted to do with his life - play guitar.

"The No-Guitar Blues" Baseball in April and Other Stories, Gary Soto

Create effective conclusions - resolve a problem, change feelings, learn a lesson, reach a goal - by studying the work of published authors.

Resolve a problem:

"I've been saving a little every month," said Mrs. Moreno. "For you, m'ija." Her mother held up five twenties, a blossom of green that smelled sweeter than flowers on that Saturday. They drove to Macy's and bought a blouse, shoes, and a skirt that would not bleed in rain or any other kind of weather. "Mother and Daughter" from *Baseball in April and Other Stories*, Gary Soto

Reach a goal:

Back home, in the privacy of her bedroom, she placed the trophies on her shelf and was happy. She had always earned the honors because of her brains, but winning in sports was a new experience. She thanked her tired thumb. "You did it, thumb. You made me a champion." As its reward, Lupe went to the bathroom, filled the bathroom sink with warm water, and let her thumb swim and splash as it pleased. Then she climbed into bed and drifted off into a hard-won sleep.

"The Marble Champ" from *Baseball in April and Other Stories*, Gary Soto



Change a Feeling:

He was a nice little guy.

He was kinda like a little brother.

Little Stevie

Stevie, John Steptoe

Learn a Lesson:

Francisco nodded. He understood. He would tell his grandfather, and would tell him something else. He, Francisco, had begun to learn the important things, too.

Francisco took his grandfather's cold, rough hand in his. "Let's go home, Abuelo," he said.

A Day's Work, Eve Bunting

Reread your story with a singular focus on each item on the checklist and make revisions and corrections by adding, changing, or deleting.

Use a revision/editing checklist to revise and edit your story so that it will be the best that it can be.

**Rewrite your revised and
edited story on special paper.**

**Celebrate
SUCCESS**

**When you finish, we will
celebrate you as a writer!**
You should be proud of all your hard work!

Photo Credit:

Slide 1:

"Kid writing". <http://www.loveandfidelity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Kid-writing-300x198.jpg>

Slide 3:

"movie-reel". <http://orlywiner3.wikispaces.com/file/view/movie-reel.jpg/343443632/movie-reel.jpg>

Slide 4:

"White Oak Tree". <http://www.ohio-nature.com/image-files/white-oak-bark-lg2.jpg>

Slide 8:

"What are the 5 senses?". <http://questgarden.com/95/65/7/100203135728/images/five-senses.jpg>

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Lesson_Learn. 3 Guest Blogging Lessons You Can Benefit From. Posted on 30/08/12. http://www.bloggerfreelance.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/lesson_learn.jpg

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"Celebrate-success-logo". <http://sheilaembry.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/celebrate-success-logo.gif>

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Adapted from Writing Unit 1: Writing Personal Narrative with Power.
Created by MAISA and Oakland Schools.

<http://oaklandk12-public.rubiconatlas.org/Atlas/Browse/View/UnitCalendar?SourceSiteID=&CurriculumMapID=746&YearID=2014>