

Handouts

Teaching Elements of Personal Narrative Texts

Gateway Resource TPNT0003

Drafting an Introduction Model Lesson

Section 1

We have been learning about personal narratives. Turn to your partner and discuss the following question. What is a personal narrative?

Allow 1 minute. Ask students to respond to the question. (Answer: A personal narrative is a true story about an event or experience in the writer's life that is important to the writer.)

We have brainstormed ideas, narrowed the topic or focus, and written the central idea for a personal narrative. Now it is time to start writing our own personal narratives.

Personal narratives include a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning of a narrative includes a strong introduction. Today we will learn how to write an interesting and strong introduction.

We previously completed the Developing the Central Idea of a Personal Narrative graphic organizer. Find your graphic organizer.

Pause while students locate the organizer.

This organizer helped us to develop a central idea by visualizing, or picturing in our minds, exactly what happened during this experience. Remember, the central idea tells the reader what the essay is about. The central idea may also provide a clue as to how you, the author, feel about the experience.

Do you remember the central idea of my personal narrative about the snake on the bus during a class field trip? My central idea is: "Be prepared for the unexpected and clarify expectations on out-of-town field trips."

The introduction of your personal narrative should include the central idea that you wrote on the graphic organizer. Do *not* include all of the details listed on the graphic organizer. These details will help you sequence and develop the body paragraphs in the middle part of your personal narrative. Write "body" next to the list of details.

Section 2

The introduction usually sets the tone or reveals the writer's attitude toward the experience. To establish the tone of the essay, the writer thinks about the effect he or she wants the essay to have on the audience—for example, to laugh, cry, or share the pleasure of a special time or place.

The tone of my essay about the snake on the bus will be light and humorous. I want my readers to laugh as they read about my experience.

Think about the central idea of your personal narrative. What effect do you want your personal narrative to have on the reader? Turn and talk with your neighbor.

Pause for several minutes. Have two or three students share their ideas.

Section 3

A strong introduction also needs a hook to get the reader interested and motivated to read more. Let's look at some of the ways that authors have started their narratives and tried to hook their readers' interest.

Distribute or display the following examples or examples from your grade-level anthology. Have volunteers take turns reading the examples.

Foreshadowing (a hint of something to come)

It was the time of year Farmer Bailey liked best, when summer turned to fall. He whistled as he drove along. A cool breeze blew across his face through the truck's open window. Then it happened. There was a loud thump.

(The Stranger by Chris Van Allsburg, p. 274)

Action

A storm was approaching, but Peter crawled through the strange little hole in the fence anyway.

(Time Traveler by Dan Simmons, p. 189)

Dialogue

"Bet you can't jump over that rille, Runt," Vern challenged. Gary Kandel hated it when his brother called him Runt. "Watch me, Runt," Vern taunted. "I'll show you how to do it."

(Moonwalk by Ben Bova, p. 614)

Character Description

Reba Jo loved to twang her guitar and sing while the prairie wind whistled through the thirsty sagebrush.

(The Horned Prince by Jackie Mims Hopkins, p. 94)

Setting Description

As they entered the camp, the longest shadows Marven had ever seen stretched across the snow, and he realized with a start that the shadows were the lumberjacks walking in the moonlight. He could smell hay and manure and saw silhouettes of horses stomping in a snowy corral.

(Marven of the Great North Woods by Kathryn Lasky, p. 218)

Look back over the list of ways to hook readers. Think about which one you would like to try when you begin writing your introduction. Turn and discuss which hook you want to use in your personal narrative.

Pause for several minutes. Have two or three students share their ideas.

Section 4

Now it is time to begin drafting an introduction for our personal narratives. I will show you how to establish tone and incorporate a hook as I draft the introduction for my personal narrative about the snake on the bus. I think that I will begin with some dialogue and foreshadowing to hook my readers.

“Help, Ms. Smith! There’s a snake on the bus!” These are words that no first-year teacher wants to hear. But I did.

I think I would want to read more. Do you? I have given readers a hint of what is to come. I also used dialogue to tell exactly what was said when one of my students discovered the snake. Now I will include the central idea of my essay in the other sentences.

There was no doubt that my first out-of-town field trip was about to teach me a valuable lesson: Be prepared for the unexpected and clarify expectations on out-of-town field trips. It’s too bad that my college professors had not covered these important principles before I landed my first job in the classroom.

I have added more information about the experience and included my central idea. Let me read the entire introduction:

“Help, Ms. Smith! There’s a snake on the bus!” These are words that no first-year teacher wants to hear. But I did. There was no doubt that my first out-of-town field trip was about to teach me a valuable lesson: Be prepared for the unexpected and clarify expectations on out-of-town field trips. It’s too bad that my college professors had not covered these important principles before I landed my first job in the classroom.

Now it is your turn. Write the introduction for your personal narrative. Your introduction should include the central idea that you previously developed. It should also set the tone by determining the effect you want the essay to have on your readers (laughter, sadness, etc.). And finally, your introduction should include a hook to interest readers and motivate them to read more.

Monitor and provide support as students write their introductions. Refer students to the Personal Narrative Elements handout and the section on a strong introduction.

Read your introduction to yourself.

Pause.

Read your introduction to your neighbor.

Allow 2 minutes.

Source: Portland Public Schools. (2014). *Narrative writing: Personal narrative*. Retrieved from <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/curriculum/G4WritingBinderInsert.pdf>

Personal Narrative Essay Draft 1