

Narrative Writing Guide

Let's get started with narrative writing!

Part 1: SHOW me your story!

Your Name:

Subject:

Audience:

Purpose:

Voice:

Part 2: Who are your characters?

List each of the characters and provide a brief description of the role each one plays in your story.

Character 1

Character 2

Character 3

Part 3: Describe your characters

Bring your characters to life for your readers by describing them in great detail.

Character 1:

1. Describe your character's traits (physical appearance and personality)
2. Describe what your character is thinking and feeling throughout your story
3. Describe your character's actions throughout your story
4. Describe what others in your story think or say about this character.
5. Using dialogue, describe what your character actually says in your story.

Part 4: What is your setting?

Describe your setting so that your readers are able to picture where and when your story takes place. Use your senses to imagine your setting.

1. Where? Describe each location in great detail.
2. When? Describe the time, day, season, and/or year.
3. Surroundings: Describe the colors, textures and sounds you hear.

Part 5: What is the plot?

Make your plot exciting and suspenseful for your reader. Begin with the conflict, that is, the problem that your characters have to face and solve in your story.

1. Describe the major conflict in your story and why it occurred.
2. Describe how the conflict affected each character.
3. Describe what events or actions happen during your story to increase the conflict.
4. Describe the climax or turning point of your story. This is where your characters solve their conflict.
5. Describe the final outcome or resolution and how your characters were affected.

Part 6: Drafting your story

Compose your draft in MY Access! using your story map and your outline.

1. Introducing your story: How will you begin your story so that your readers will get really excited about reading on?

The following are some suggestions.

- Dialogue—“ “

- A flashback—
- A startling statement—
- A puzzling statement—
- A description of your main character and your setting—

2. Organizing your ideas

- Using your story map, how will you tell your story?
- Will you start from the beginning and describe each scene until you get to the end?
- Or will you start by describing the end of your story to create interest before you tell your story in chronological order?
- Once you decide, take your story map and make an outline of what happens in each scene of your story in the order that it happened.
- Include information about your setting and characters.

What happened first?

What happened second?

What happened third?

What happened fourth?

Drafting the body of your story:

Now, follow the sequence of events in your outline as you continue writing your story, adding more details about your characters, setting and plot.

Let's get started with narrative writing!

Part 1: SHOW me your story!

Name: Elizabeth

Subject "Acts of Kindness"

Audience middle school students and adults

Purpose I will write a story about learning a lesson through an act of kindness

Voice entertaining

Part 2: Who are your characters?

List each of the characters and provide a brief description of the role each one plays in your story.

Character 1:

Elizabeth (me)--- a fifth grade student who learns a lesson about cheating

Character 2:

Sarah --- my best friend who encouraged me to submit her short story as my own

Character 3:

Miss Love ----- my fifth grade teacher who discovered what I had done and taught me a valuable lesson

Part 3: Describe your characters

Bring your characters to life for your readers by describing them in great detail.

Character 1 ----- Miss Love

1. Describe your character's traits (physical appearance and personality).

Miss Love was a kind woman, an elementary school teacher, who taught in the same neighborhood school for ten years. She had lovely blue eyes and a soft, but serious tone that won the respect of all her students. No matter how many students needed her help, she never rushed, always having the patience and time to care for all her students' needs.

2. Describe what your character is thinking and feeling throughout your story

I could see that smile spread across her face. She knew what I had done, but was anxious to help me learn from my mistake. Not at any time did that woman yell at me or even given me a stern look. I knew, however, by the quizzical look on her face, that she was surprised that I would do such a thing. Yet, she kept those thoughts to herself until the end of the school day.

3. Describe your character's actions throughout your story

Miss Love flashed me a warm smile, took my hand, and sat me down at a nearby desk. Miss Love sat at the desk along side of me, her hands folded together, with a look of concern and feeling. She looked me square in the eyes.

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4. Describe what others in your story think or say about this character.

Her name was Miss Love, which suited her perfectly. Everyone in my 5th grade class loved her. The students could always count on Miss Love greeting them at the door each morning and giving each one a smile and a hug at the end of the school day.

5. Using dialogue, describe what your character actually says in your story.

"Is there something you would like to tell me, Elizabeth?"

"You know how much trouble you could get in with a stunt like this, don't you, Elizabeth?"

"That's enough. I just want you to be aware of your mistake and to agree not to do anything you are doubtful about in the future."

Part 4: What is your setting?

Describe your setting so that your readers are able to picture where and when your story takes place. Use your senses to imagine your setting.

1. Where? Describe each location in great detail.

Francis Scott Elementary school was a one-story brick building situated next to a small stream on a quiet tree-lined street. The doors were dark brown, worn, and too heavy to open for a 10-year-old. No matter what time of year, every window was decorated to celebrate a holiday or season.

2. When? Describe the time, day, season, and/or year.

The room was quiet as we wrote our short stories, so quiet, that we could hear the swishing of the leaves, and birds chirping excitedly about the warm spring day that followed a long, harsh winter.

3. Surroundings: Describe the colors, textures and sounds you hear. No one could miss the strong smell of fresh paint coming from the hallway.

The bulletin board was brightly decorated with red and gold cut-outs of book markers that surrounded a display of our short stories.

I could hear the sound of laughter in the halls as the 4th grade students were heading out to the playground for recess.

Part 5: What is the plot?

Make your plot exciting and suspenseful for your reader. Begin with the conflict, that is, the problem that your characters have to face and solve in your story.

1. Describe the major conflict in your story and why it occurred.

Every marking period we would receive a short story assignment in our grammar class, and every marking period my final average would dramatically drop. It was hard for me to put words on paper and actually have them make sense.

2. Describe how the conflict affected each character.

After the first three papers I had written, I grew tired of trying and felt hopeless about getting better. Sarah decided that she would "help me out" by writing a story that I could hand into Miss Love as my own.

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When I was first informed of the idea, my heart sank to the floor, and I could feel my stomach tumble. The idea of cheating strangled me, but Sarah sugarcoated it so well that, in the end, I finally gave into her master plan.

3. Describe what events or actions happen during your story to increase the conflict.

We had a week to complete our short story, and Sarah got right to work the day the assignment was given. On the due date, Sarah and I met each other on the front steps of Francis Scott Elementary School, and she discretely slid the finished paper into my backpack.

At the beginning of class, Miss Love announced to everyone to pass their papers in. I got the three-page-long story out of my folder and checked to make sure that my name was somewhere on it. In the bottom right hand corner of the last page, I could see my name typed in a small font, and my knees began to shake.

4. Describe the climax or turning point of your story. This is where your characters solve their conflict.

Miss Love flashed me a warm smile, took my hand, and sat me down at a nearby desk.

"I'm so sorry, Miss Love," I cried, "I was doing horrible in this class, and I needed a good grade on this paper. Sarah offered and I didn't know what else to do."

As I sat that day in Miss Love's classroom, with the spring sun bouncing off the brightly decorated walls, I thought my life would soon be over. I had been caught, cheating. The C word was like a curse when you were in the presence of your teacher.

5. Describe the final outcome, or resolution and how your characters were affected. Miss Love led me to her desk, tore up the story, and disposed of it into the trashcan. Again, I could see that smile spread across her face. Everyday, for the next three days, Miss Love held a private session with me after school. We would go over the grammar exercises that we had discussed that day. After that, we would write another paragraph or two of my story... together. When it was finished and handed in, the meetings were still held when I felt it was necessary.

Part 6: Drafting your story

Compose your draft in MY Access! using your story map and your outline.

1. Introducing your story: How will you begin your story so that your readers will get really excited about reading on?

The following are some suggestions.

- Dialogue—"It's perfectly clear why she wants it," said Marge, as she cut through the store, making sure she would beat out Jessica.
- A flashback—Erin was a hundred yards from the finish line and knew she shouldn't look back. The problem was that she couldn't help herself.
- A startling statement—My town of Newbridge was a village of fools, fools young and old.
- A puzzling statement—Across the street lived old Johnson, blind as a bat, but kept my house safe from the zombies who visited every night.
- A description of your main character and your setting—Erica pulled back her hair and put on her glasses. Now that she was running for class president, she wanted to look the part.

2. Organizing your ideas

- Using your story map, how will you tell your story?
- Will you start from the beginning and describe each scene until you get to the end?
- Or will you start by describing the end of your story to create interest before you tell your story in chronological order?
- Once you decide, take your story map and make an outline of what happens in each scene of your story in the order that it happened.
- Include information about your setting and characters.

What happened first?

Every marking period we would receive a short story assignment in our grammar class, and every marking period my final average would dramatically drop.

Sarah decided that she would "help me out", by writing me a story and handing it in as my own.

What happened second?

When I was first informed of the idea, my heart sank to the floor, and I could feel my stomach tumble. The idea of cheating strangled me, but Sarah sugarcoated it so well that, in the end, I finally gave into her master plan.

What happened third?

We had a week to complete every word processed story, and Sarah got right to work the day the assignment was given. On the due date, Sarah and I met each other on the front steps of Francis Scott Elementary School, and she discretely slid the finished paper into my backpack.

What happened fourth?

I got the three page long story out of my folder and checked to make sure that my name was somewhere on it.

Drafting the body of your story

Now, follow the sequence of events in your outline as you continue writing your story, adding more details about your characters, setting and plot.

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Student Sample

She was a kind woman, an elementary school teacher, who had been in that particular building for ten years. She taught an array of subjects, ranging from mathematics to social studies, grammar to sciences. In my elementary school, there was no such thing as 1st or 2nd period. The entire day was taught in one room, and this particular room was the one everyone hoped to be placed in. Her name was Miss Love, which suited her perfectly... Everyone in my 5th grade class loved her.

Miss Love was more than just a teacher to all of us. She was a friend... a friend who knew us as if she read our life story, a friend who knew our weaknesses and strengths. My weakness, as she knew quite well, was English.

Every marking period we would receive a short story assignment in our grammar class, and every marking period my final average would dramatically drop. It was hard for me to put words on paper, and actually have them make sense. After the first three papers I had written, I grew tired of trying and hopeless of getting better.

My best friend had a, at the time, marvelous idea. She was an excellent author, and frankly, she enjoyed every minute she put into writing. Sarah decided that she would "help me out", by writing me a story and handing it in as my own.

When I was first informed of the idea, my heart sank to the floor, and I could feel my stomach tumble. The idea of cheating strangled me, but Sarah sugarcoated it so well that, in the end, I finally gave into her master plan.

We had a week to complete every word processed story, and Sarah got right to work the day the assignment was given. On the due date, Sarah and I met each other on the front steps of Francis Scott Elementary School, and she discretely slid the finished paper into my backpack.

At the beginning of class, Miss Love announced to everyone to pass their papers in. I got the three page long story out of my folder and checked to make sure that my name was somewhere on it. In the bottom right hand corner of the last page, I could see my name typed in small font, and my knees began to shake.

At the end of the day when everyone had gone, I was still at my tiny locker at the back of the room. I could feel someone standing behind me, and when I turned around, there was Miss Love. Automatically my head dropped to the floor, for I knew that I had been caught. Miss Love flashed me a warm smile, took my hand, and sat my down at a nearby desk.

"Is there something you would like to tell me, Elizabeth?"

"I'm so sorry, Miss Love... I was doing horrible in this class, and I needed a good grade on this paper. Sarah offered, and I didn't know what else to do..."

Not at anytime had that woman yelled at me, or even gave a stern look. Miss Love just sat in the desk aside of me, her hands folded together, with a look of concern and feeling.

As I sat that day in Miss Love's west side room, with the spring sun bouncing off the brightly decorated walls, I thought my life would soon be over. I had been caught, cheating... The C word was like a curse when you were in the presence of school. But instead of making that phone call to the office that I could feel coming, Miss Love looked me square in the eye.

"You know how much trouble you could get in with a stunt like this, don't you, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, Miss Love, and I-"

"That's enough... I just want you to be aware of your mistake, and be sure not to agree to anything you are doubtful about in the future."

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Miss Love led me to her desk, tore up the story, and disposed of it into the trashcan. Again, I could see that smile spread across her face. Every day, for the next three days, Miss Love would hold a private session with me after school. We would go over the grammar exercises that we had just discussed that day, and after that, we would write another paragraph or two of my story... together. When it was finished and handed in, the meetings were still held when I felt it was necessary.

On the day that everyone's papers were handed back, I received mine, and on top was a red A+. Never had I felt happier in my life... My very own work, time, and effort were finally a success. Miss Love never mentioned the incident to my parents nor the school, and we never breathed a word of it to each other again.

On the last day of school that year, when everyone cleared out, I stayed behind to say a proper goodbye to Miss Love. I gave her a poem that I had written on my own time, reliving the happening and what I felt on the day Miss Love taught me a valuable lesson. Before she could read the paper, I wrapped my arms around her, trying with everything I had to choke back the tears. I whispered softly in her ear, "Thank you", and scurried out the door.