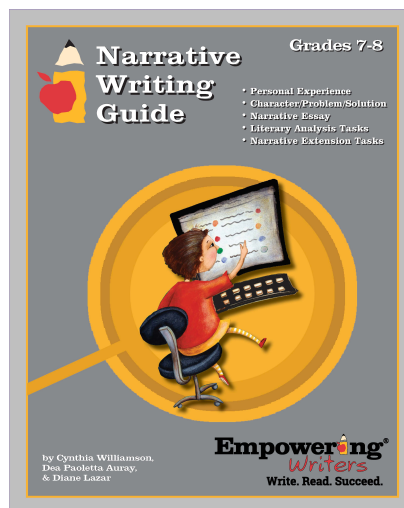




# Grades 7-8 Narrative Writing Guide

Student Pages for Print or Projection

## SECTION 1: Skills in Review



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# Grades 7-8 Unit Pacing Guide Template

NARRATIVE UNIT START DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NARRATIVE UNIT END DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TOTAL DAYS ALLOWED FOR NARRATIVE UNIT: \_\_\_\_\_

Baseline: Day 1	Focus Lessons Weeks: ____	Focus Lessons Weeks: ____	Focus Lessons Weeks: ____	Focus Lessons Weeks: ____	Focus Lessons Weeks: ____	Focus Lessons Weeks: ____
BEGIN the year with a baseline prompt -						Complete a process piece where students can apply the skills they've learned to a whole piece Teacher Background - Process Writing Timeline
1 Day	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days	____ days	8 Days

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## **The Battle in My Backyard**

### **Genre: Personal Experience**

Clover let out a whinny of joy as I leaned forward to stroke her silky mane. It was a sweltering hot day, typical weather for south Texas in May. But Clover and I weren't going to let the heat get us down. My chestnut mare and I hadn't had much time to spend together for the past few weeks and we were just so glad to be ambling along the dusty trail beside the warm, murky waters of the Rio Grande.

I felt a deep sense of contentment, a feeling that only intensified when I heard the call of my favorite bird in the whole wide world, the green jay. With brilliantly blue and green feathers, the jay looked like it belonged in a lush tropical jungle. Instead, it inhabited the same dry, flat sagebrush plains as I did.

On this sunny afternoon, I was dreaming of the day I'd fall in love and feeling as free as a bird myself due to the fact that I was away from the house of heavy sorrow. That's how I come to think of my home in the past few years. Shortly after the War of Northern Aggression broke out, my brother left home to join the cavalry and almost instantly, my mother'd been stricken with melancholy. My father looked exhausted from working without Travis' help every single day and lying awake with worry every night.

When Travis returned home in the dark of night two weeks ago, it was clear that he was a changed man. While unharmed in the fighting, Travis came back from the war looking infinitely older and sadder. I couldn't help but wonder what he'd had seen or done that transformed him into the young man with the wary eyes and the trembling hands he was today. But Travis was close-lipped about his whole wartime experience. I knew the good-humored boy I remembered was lurking somewhere within this quiet, haunted version of my brother, and hoped he'd come back to us soon.

Suddenly, I felt Clover stiffen with tension beneath me. Her ears pricked up and she tossed her head nervously. I knew she'd detected danger in the air, so I scanned

the horizon quickly. Horrified, I discovered the hazy silhouettes of uniformed men all around me. I knew in an instant that while I was lost in my daydreams, Clover and I had meandered our way into an encampment of union soldiers!

My thoughts raced. What were they doing here? The war was over. General Lee had surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant more than a month ago. Why were union soldiers camping so close to my backyard?

Without warning, Clover reared up on her hind legs and I just about fell off her back. As I struggled to calm my panicked mare, a union soldier approached. His uniform was in tatters and his boots held together with rags. My heart beat wildly and my first thought was that he was going to hurt me. But when he spoke, his tone was gentle.

“Hey, there,” he said softly, stroking Clover’s nose. “There’s nothing to worry about here.”

He turned to me. “Don’t mean to disturb you, Miss. We’re just trying to get some rest,” he said. “We’ve been marching all night.”

I nodded, still stunned and trembling with fear. Clover and I galloped all the way back home at top speed.

Hours later, I heard the thundering hooves of the Confederate Calvary heading to the encampment on the banks of the Rio Grande. The deep, resounding boom of cannon fire rang out and the battle of Palmito Ranch was on! It was close enough that I could hear rhythmic blasts of gunfire and the moans of those who lay dying on the battlefield.

All I could think of was why? The war was over. What was left to fight about? The next day, news around town was that the union soldiers had come to Texas to steal our horses and they’d received the whooping they deserved. The Battle of Palmito Ranch was being called the last battle of the civil war. So, we’d won the battle but still lost the war.

(continued)

My head was spinning with confusion. I found it hard to believe that the union soldiers had instigated a battle just to steal horses. After all, the weary, soft-spoken soldier I'd met on the banks of the Rio Grande could have easily taken Clover from me and he hadn't. Instead, he'd been a gentleman, and he might well have been among the many union casualties.

Some time later, I heard that the mission of the union soldiers was take back a nearby fort, which definitely sounded familiar. Hadn't union soldiers been ordered to reclaim Fort Sumter from the Confederate rebels four years earlier? Could it be that the first and the last battles of the Civil War were fought for the same reason? Doesn't it seem like we should have learned our lesson?

Even if I'm lucky enough to live to a ripe old age, I doubt I'll ever make sense of the battle that took place so close to my backyard. It may have been fought without much of a purpose but it taught me to never question the horrors of war and to take every opportunity to work for peace.

### Summarizing Framework:

This story is about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Character*

The problem, adventure, or experience was that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Main Event*

The problem was solved/adventure, experience concluded when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Solution/Conclusion*



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Moody Molly Meets the Past**  
**Genre: Character/Problem/Solution**

“Cheer up, Moody,” my smart-aleck brother said, sarcastically. “This vacation will be over soon and we’ll be back to our old routines. Yay!”

My name was Molly, but my brother insisted on calling me Moody. It was infuriating, not to mention, unfair. I really wasn’t all that moody, just super sensitive to the ups and downs of my daily life. Today, for instance, my mood was on a downward spiral but for a good reason. There was so much I’d rather be doing than sitting in the back seat of a economy-sized rental car with my big-mouthed brother. We could be going to an amusement park or swimming in the sparkling clear waters of the hotel pool, but no — we were headed to a civil war battlefield.

How depressing. As far as I’m concerned, the civil war was sad and it happened a long time ago. We couldn’t change history, so why did we have to remember the worst parts of it?

“That’s a terrible attitude,” my father scolded. “You know, they say if you don’t remember the mistakes of the past, you’re probably going to repeat them.”

I shrugged. Not only was I sure I’d learned all I needed to know about the Civil War from my social studies textbook, but going to a battlefield seemed kind of spooky. Somebody told me that they were haunted and, while we didn’t believe in that kind of stuff in our family, I still couldn’t shake the image of ghostly pale wisps of long-dead soldiers floating up from a shallow grave out of my head.

I stuck close to my dad as the tour began. We walked along a peaceful expanse of tall, green grass to a stone wall that surrounded a simple one-room cottage. The guide explained that it had been there since the battle took place, the home of a woman who tended to the injuries of both union and confederate soldiers during the battle. I didn’t see the ghost of the generous woman, but I could easily imagine her dressed in a bonnet and ankle-length skirt quietly singing a song to comfort the injured as she bandaged their wounds. I imagined her as bold as brass, tuning out the horrifying noise of the battle as she rushed to help anyway she could.

(continued)

We walked up a hill from which the confederate cavalry charged in the final desperate moments of the battle. In my mind, I saw the ragged silhouettes of these young soldiers, some of them no older than me, as they descended the hill in the early morning mist. I shivered with their fear.

As the afternoon wore on, I heard other such stories about the events that had taken place on the ground beneath my feet. It was fascinating and I came to understand why people said that battlegrounds were haunted. It wasn't because there were actual ghosts there. Instead, just being there so sparked your imagination that you could almost see the soldiers, smell the gunpowder and hear the roar of the cannons. I wanted to explore every inch of it and I would have done just that if my brother, who'd been so enthusiastic about visiting a battlefield, hadn't started clamoring to leave, complaining about his sore feet and empty belly.

"Who's the moody one now?" That's what I felt like saying, but I held my tongue. The somber, hushed battlefield didn't seem like a place where you should be bickering with your brother. I promised myself that I would return.

Later that night, I found myself reconsidering what my father had said about remembering the mistakes of the past so that we don't repeat them. I finally understood and admired the wisdom of his words. From now on, every vacation I take will include swims in hotel pools, trips to amusement parks and at least one visit to someplace that's as rich in history as a civil war battlefield.

**Summarizing Framework:**

This story is about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .  
*Character*

The problem, adventure, or experience was that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .  
*Main Event*

The problem was solved/adventure, experience concluded when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

*Solution / Conclusion*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Key Battles of the Civil War

### Genre: Informational

The Civil War was the bloodiest conflict in American history. Lasting four agonizing years, this tragic war pitted the northern and the southern states against one another and took 620,000 lives. The battles of Fort Sumter, Gettysburg, Vicksburg and Palmito Ranch were among the most noteworthy of many encounters between the confederacy and the union forces. Let's learn more about these four historic battles.

Located just off the coast of South Carolina, Fort Sumter was originally built after the war of 1812 to protect the harbors of the southern United States. After President Abraham Lincoln refused to surrender this fort as well as other federal installations to the newly established confederacy, the first shots of the Civil War rang out. The Battle of Fort Sumter began on April 12, 1861 and ended the following day with the first victory for the Confederacy. Vastly outnumbered, the union army surrendered before any soldiers from either side were killed or wounded. That was obviously not the case in the battles that followed.

One of the most famous battles of the entire Civil War was fought in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in July of 1863. After three days of brutal fighting, this gory battle ended with the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Robert E. Lee, surrendering to the Army of the Potomac. This was an important victory for the union since it put an abrupt stop to the progress of the confederate army into the northern states. But it came at an excruciating cost. About 50,000 lives were lost during the Battle of Gettysburg. The town was still rebuilding and healing from the horrors of the battle in November, 1863 when President Lincoln arrived to deliver his eloquent Gettysburg Address.

As the union savored its victory at Gettysburg, it also was experiencing another success further south. The town of Vicksburg, Mississippi, located along the banks of the Mississippi River, had been under the control of northern forces commanded by Ulysses S. Grant since May, 1863. Until July, Grant bombed the city constantly and

(continued)



cut off all supplies. As a result, the town was reduced to rubble. Further, the confederate forces as well as the people of Vicksburg ran out of food and other essential supplies. By July, they could hold out no longer and surrendered. This victory gave the north control of the Mississippi River and isolated the confederate states of Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas from the rest of the south. All in all, it set the stage for the defeat of the confederacy.

Why the Battle of Palmito Ranch took place at all is a mystery. This 2-day confrontation was fought on the banks of the Rio Grande River in the southeastern corner of Texas about two months after General Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant. While many historians think of it as a post-war skirmish, it is officially remembered as the last battle of the Civil War. Whatever you call it, the purpose of the battle is unclear. Some believe the northern forces instigated it in order to steal horses from the confederate cavalry or to seize a valuable shipment of cotton, but there is no evidence to support either of those theories. In any case, the Battle of Palmito Ranch resulted in a victory for the confederacy.

From the time gunfire rang out at Fort Sumter to the seemingly pointless Battle of Palmito Ranch, the Civil War years were among the most heartbreaking in the history of the United States. The horrors of Gettysburg and Vicksburg just may haunt the national conscience forever. While the four battles profiled in this text were certainly important, there are many others worth researching, including the First Battle of Bull Run and the Battle of Fredericksburg, in order to more fully understand the Civil War.

**Summarizing Framework:**

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**MAIN IDEA #1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**MAIN IDEA #2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**MAIN IDEA #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Preserving the Past Genre: Argument

Have you ever visited a civil war battlefield? If so, you most likely came away with a deeper understanding of this long, sad conflict. Today, it is vitally important that we all work together to preserve the landscapes on which Union and Confederate soldiers fought and died. Doing so pays tribute to those fallen soldiers and provides needed green spaces in sprawling suburbs. Additionally, visiting a preserved civil war battlefield brings history alive, giving us invaluable and unforgettable lessons about the past.

More than half a million soldiers died in the Civil War. That's only slightly less than those lost in all other U.S. wars combined, including World War 11 and Vietnam. Some of the dead were newly arrived immigrants who didn't fully understand what they were fighting for but were, nevertheless, eager to serve their adopted nation. Ingloriously, they died protecting their vision of the American dream. The sacrifice of these brave individuals should always be remembered. It's important to note that preservation of the battlefields began almost immediately after gunfire ceased. These early efforts at conservation were led by the veterans themselves. This speaks volumes about the desire of the soldiers who actually fought on these battlefields to honor them and remember the dead.

Urban sprawl threatens many of the places where Civil War battles were fought. This is especially true in the densely populated outskirts of Washington D.C. where some of the most notable battles took place. Today, the Manassas National Battlefield, where the two battles of Bull Run raged, as well as the preserved battlefields of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania and Chancellorsville provide necessary green, public spaces in the midst of crowded suburbs. This not only relieves some of the congestion of these rapidly developing places, but attracts tourists who contribute to the local economy. In Georgia, the Battleground of Peachtree Creek is just one example of a site that has been lost forever to paved highways and housing developments.

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Did you know that one battle of the Civil War was fought in a state that wasn't even a part of the union yet? You would if you'd had the chance to visit the Glorieta Battlefield, located near Santa Fe, New Mexico. Here, you can walk in the footsteps of soldiers on a 444-acre battlefield with deep canyons and mesas, and discover why a Civil War battle was fought on this unfamiliar terrain. Clearly, preserved battlefields are treasures troves of learning. Textbooks can give you the facts about the war, but visiting a battlefield helps you imagine the feelings of the soldiers and sparks the emotions, which leads to meaningful learning and deep understanding. As the Chinese philosopher Confucius said "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

Civil war battlefields are tributes to fallen heroes, green spaces in crowded places and treasuries of lasting learning. While it may seem like many civil war landmarks have been adequately protected, the truth is that only about 20% of the lands on which the war was waged have been preserved. It's crucial that the remaining lands be safeguarded against the ravages of development for the sake of future generations.

## Summarizing Framework:

**ISSUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CLAIM:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN REASON #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN REASON #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN REASON #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZE THIS BEGINNING (1)

Read this opening passage from The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton:

*“When I stepped out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the movie house, I had only two things on my mind: Paul Newman and a ride home. I was wishing I looked like Paul Newman — he looks tough and I don’t — but I guess my own looks aren’t too bad.”*

Think about what you know about story beginnings. Circle the technique the author used to grab your attention. Do the same for the examples that follow.

• An Action      • Dialogue      • Thoughts/Questions      • A Sound

1. From The Most Important Thing, by Avi

*“How come I get to spend only one weekend a month with Dad?” demanded Damon. He was sitting on the couch watching an action movie on the small TV.”*

• An Action      • Dialogue      • Thoughts/Questions      • A Sound

2. From Starbird Murphy and the World Outside by Karen Finneyfrock

*“The owl hooted in a hemlock tree, cornstalks shook their arms in the wind, and Indus Stone’s footsteps crunched beside mine on the gravel drive as we walked away from the main house.”*

• An Action      • Dialogue      • Thoughts/Questions      • A Sound

3. From Four, A Divergent Collection by Veronica Roth, HarperCollins, 2014

*“I emerge from the simulation with a yell. My lip stings and when I take my hand away from it, there is blood on my fingertips. I must have bitten it during the test.”*

• An Action      • Dialogue      • Thoughts/Questions      • A Sound

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZE THIS BEGINNING (2)

Read this opening passage from Ready Player One by Ernest Cline:

*“Everyone my age remembers where they were and what they were doing when they first heard about the contest. I was sitting in my hideout watching cartoons when the news bulletin broke in on my video feed, announcing that James Halliday had died during the night.”*

Think about what you know about story beginnings. Circle the technique the author used to grab your attention. Do the same for the examples that follow.

- An Action      • Dialogue      • Thoughts/Questions      • A Sound

1. From What’s Left of Me, by Kat Zhang

*“The end-of-school bell blasted everyone from their seats. People loosened their ties, slapped shut books, shoved folders and pencils into backpacks.”*

- An Action      • Dialogue      • Thoughts/Questions      • A Sound

2. From The Bungalow Mystery by Carolyn Keene

*“Look at those black storm clouds!” Nancy Drew pointed out to her friend, Helen Corning, who was seated beside her in the bow of the small red motorboat.”*

- An Action      • Dialogue      • Thoughts/Questions      • A Sound

3. From If Only by Jennifer Gilmore

*“Will the sweetness swallow all the bitter? Is that a way to start a letter?”*

- An Action      • Dialogue      • Thoughts/Questions      • A Sound

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**ANALYZE THIS BEGINNING! - MAKE-IT-YOUR-OWN**

Read this opening sentence from \_\_\_\_\_ :

by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Think about what you know about story beginnings. Circle the following technique or techniques that the author used to grab your attention.

- **An Action**
- **Dialogue**
- **Thoughts/Questions**
- **A Sound**

After reading this opening, write down what you are wondering about on the lines below.

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ENTERTAINING BEGINNING - MAKE-IT-YOUR-OWN

**REMEMBER:** Story beginnings should capture the reader’s attention right away through the use of several techniques. Put yourself in the head of the main character and start your story as close to the main event as possible. Use the productive questions to help you write your beginning.

- **ACTION:** What would the main character do?
- **DIALOGUE:** What would the main character say or exclaim out loud?
- **A THOUGHT/QUESTION:** What would the main character wonder or worry?
- **A SOUND:** What would the main character hear?

Write a boring story beginning.

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REVISE this story beginning using any combination of techniques from above.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## STORY CRITICAL CHARACTERS, SETTINGS, OBJECTS

In every story there are certain people, places and things that are especially important. These are called **story critical characters, settings and objects**. Authors highlight these story critical elements by stopping and taking time to describe them. Read each story plan below. Think about the characters, settings and objects that would be most interesting to the reader. **Underline the story critical characters in RED, settings in BLUE, and objects in GREEN.**

1. As soon as I walked into the gym and heard Henry's band rocking out at top volume, I knew this was going to be a school dance to remember. Before I lost my nerve, I stashed my bulging backpack under a chair and asked Kyle to dance with me.
2. It was a rainy morning and I'd forgotten that it was Mother's Day. I was very grateful when Leo stopped over bearing a fragrant bouquet of lilacs for me to give to my mom.
3. Lulu knew she could be the best trapeze artist in the world if she could only find the courage to run away from her boring small town and join the circus. Too bad she had a fear of heights that not even her powerful bravado potion could cure.
4. Just minutes after we arrived at the mountain, the snow turned to rain and Julia discovered that she'd forgotten her favorite pair of goggles, which she insisted always brought her good luck.
5. I'd sent Stephen a dozen texts but he hadn't responded. I guessed my best friend wasn't going to forgive me for the unfortunate incident at the lake any time soon and I couldn't blame him. That canoe had been important to him.

**BONUS:** Most of these story plans are for realistic personal experience narratives, but one is not. Circle that story plan.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ZOMBIE

- REMEMBER:**
- When you elaborate, you STOP THE ACTION and observe.
  - Use the five *senses* to describe!
  - Your elaborative segment should make the reader feel as though he or she is *right there* with the main character.
  - Use specific rather than general details.
  - Make sure your description includes figurative language, similes and/or metaphors. Make your writing memorable by using alliteration when appropriate.
  - Sentence variety is always important - Use a combination of simple, complex and compound sentences as well as questions and exclamations.

Write an ELABORATIVE SEGMENT of the **character** below. Tell what you saw, smelled, felt and heard. Do NOT write a grocery list. Use rich vocabulary and imagery to make it entertaining.

The zombie appeared out of nowhere.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## RODEO QUEEN

- REMEMBER:**
- When you elaborate, you STOP THE ACTION and observe.
  - Use the five *senses* to describe!
  - Your elaborative segment should make the reader feel as though he or she is *right there* with the main character.
  - Use specific rather than general details.
  - Make sure your description includes figurative language, similes and/or metaphors. Make your writing memorable by using alliteration when appropriate.
  - Sentence variety is always important - Use a combination of simple, complex and compound sentences as well as questions and exclamations.

Write an ELABORATIVE SEGMENT of the **character** below. Tell what you saw, smelled, felt and heard. Do NOT write a grocery list. Use rich vocabulary and imagery to make it entertaining.

The crowd cheered as the rodeo queen sauntered into the arena.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## JUNGLE

- REMEMBER:**
- When you elaborate, you STOP THE ACTION and observe.
  - Use the five *senses* to describe!
  - Your elaborative segment should make the reader feel as though he or she is *right there* with the main character.
  - Use specific rather than general details.
  - Make sure your description includes figurative language, similes and/or metaphors. Make your writing memorable by using alliteration when appropriate.
  - Sentence variety is always important - Use a combination of simple, complex and compound sentences as well as questions and exclamations.

Write an ELABORATIVE SEGMENT of the **setting** below. Tell what you saw, smelled, felt and heard. Do NOT write a grocery list. Use rich vocabulary and imagery to make it entertaining.

It was hot and humid in the **jungle**.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## A SCULPTURE

- REMEMBER:**
- When you elaborate, you **STOP THE ACTION** and observe.
  - Use the five *senses* to describe!
  - Your elaborative segment should make the reader feel as though he or she is *right there* with the main character.
  - Use specific rather than general details.
  - Make sure your description includes figurative language, similes and/or metaphors. Make your writing memorable by using alliteration when appropriate.
  - Sentence variety is always important - Use a combination of simple, complex and compound sentences as well as questions and exclamations.

Write an **ELABORATIVE SEGMENT** of the **object** below. Tell what you saw, smelled, felt and heard. Do **NOT** write a grocery list. Use rich vocabulary and imagery to make it entertaining.

A sculpture stood in the middle of my front yard.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ELABORATIVE DETAIL (1)

Read this descriptive segment below. The author uses elaborative detail to describe this story critical setting. The sensory information allows the reader to see, and experience the setting right along with the main character.

*I had never been in a hospital before, so I was surprised to see that it resembled our school in a lot of ways. Inside, people moved through hallways and doors like blood cells pumped along by an invisible heart. Every possible surface was labeled and marked by arrows. The last door we went through was labeled “Children’s Ward” and had streamers and clowns taped to the door. One clown had a bubble coming out of his mouth that read: “Don’t share. Germs, that is.”*

From: The Phoenix Cave by Hope A.C. Bentley, Golden Light Factory, 2018

Now, think about the questions the author must have asked herself in order to compose this descriptive passage. Write the questions on the lines below.

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**CHALLENGE:** Where did the last party or family gathering you attended take place? Write an elaborative segment describing this place in great detail. Make sure your reader will be able to visual the setting of the party or gathering. The questions below will help you.

- *Where did it take place?*
- *What size was the space?*
- *Who was there?*
- *What kinds of decorations? Games?*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ELABORATIVE DETAIL (2)

Read this descriptive segment below. The author uses elaborative detail to bring this character to life. The sensory information allows the reader to become acquainted with this story critical character.

*When he spoke, I wanted to listen. I also wanted to look at him nonstop: the pale face, the brown eyes, the flyaway hair. He was like a long beaker in chemistry class and the top was always bubbling over because some interesting process was taking place inside*

From: Belzbar by Meg Wolitzer, Dutton Books for Young Readers, 2014

Now, think about the questions the author must have asked herself in order to compose this descriptive passage. Write the questions on the lines below.

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**CHALLENGE:** Who is your favorite character from history? Write an elaborative segment describing this person in great detail. Make your reader feel acquainted with this person. The questions below will help you.

- *In what era did this person live?*
- *What is he or she known for?*
- *What did she or he look like?*
- *What color eyes and hair?*
- *What did his or her voice sound like?*
- *How did she or he dress?*
- *Did she or he use any specific gestures or particular phrases?*



Name \_\_\_\_\_

### ELABORATIVE DETAIL (3)

Read this descriptive segment below. The author uses elaborative detail to paint a portrait of a story critical object. The sensory information alerts the reader that the bracelet is important to the story.

*The bracelet felt cold and disgusting on my wrist, more like a poisonous snake than a piece of silver. I tried to work it over the bones of my hands but only succeeded in making my skin raw and bruised. I tried to force it open with a butter knife and then a screwdriver. I found Mom's secateurs and tried to cut it off, but the wretched thing remained, rigid and gloating*

From: The Phoenix Cave by Hope A.C. Bentley, Golden Light Factory, 2018

Now, think about the questions the author must have asked herself in order to compose this descriptive passage. Write the questions on the lines below.

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**CHALLENGE:** Think back to when you were a child. What was your favorite toy? Write an elaborative segment describing this toy in great detail. Make sure your reader is able to visualize it! The questions below will help you.

- *How big was the toy? What shape?*
- *What was it made of?*
- *How did it feel?*
- *How did you play with it?*
- *How did this toy talk or move?*
- *What did you call this toy?*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### ELABORATIVE DETAIL - MAKE-IT-YOUR-OWN TEMPLATE

Select a passage of elaborative detail from a book you are reading, and write it on the lines below. The author uses elaborative detail to bring this ordinary character, setting or object to life and make it real. The sensory information allows the reader to see and experience the character, setting, or object.

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Now, think about the questions the author must have asked himself in order to compose this descriptive passage. Write the questions on the lines below.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## SHOWING RATHER THAN TELLING

Showing how a story character feels allows the reader to get to know that character better and to empathize with or relate to the character. Sometimes authors will simply tell how the character feels. This is not as entertaining or as powerful as “showing” those feelings. Read the pair of story segments below. Circle the example that SHOWS rather than TELLS.

Jane flew into a rage.

Jane stretched her mouth open as far as it would go and let out a resounding howl of dismay. Stomping her foot, she grabbed a plate from the counter and smashed it on the tile floor. She reached for another, her eyes blazing with fury.

What does this description tell us about the character of Jane? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Revise each of these examples and try to bring the characters to life by **SHOWING** their emotions.

1. Tim was tired.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Rosalie felt shy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## FIND THE SUSPENSE!

Authors can build suspense by raising story questions to make you wonder or worry. They can use word referents in order to hint at rather than name a revelation. Reach each suspenseful segment below. Underline the story questions in red and the use of word referents in blue.

1. A sharp antiseptic smell filled the air as I walked down the empty hall to my grandmother's room. The sound of my footsteps on the hard tile floor seemed to echo in the silence of this bleak place where my grandmother just might spend her last days on earth. How could I get her out of this dreary dungeon of disease and back to the cozy home she loved?
2. Where was that wily creature? Was it a mistake to have taken on the responsibility of pet sitting for my neighbors while they were away? I was beginning to think so! I'd tried to make friends with their precious fur baby but she'd been super suspicious of me right from the start. Now, she'd snuck out the door and I was frantic with worry about what could happen to her alone in the outdoors. Hit by a car? Preyed upon by foxes? Lost forever? The possibilities were endless and none were pleasant. I had to find that unfriendly feline! But I didn't even know where to look first.
3. I saw it scurrying up a wall and stifled a scream. With eight long skinny legs and a bulbous body, the creepy crawler was hideous, but I knew in my heart that it was nothing to be so afraid of. After all, I could've squashed it with one stomp of my foot like any respectable arachnophobe would have done. Why didn't I? That was the question.
4. Where was my mom? Had she been in an accident? She couldn't possibly have simply forgotten about me — right? Soccer practice had ended more than an hour ago. The school was locked up tight and the grounds were deserted. There I sat on the steps in front of the familiar brick building waiting for my ordinarily dependable driver. The sun was setting and I was getting really, really worried.

**BONUS:** On another sheet of paper or at the keyboard, write a paragraph foreshadowing the events in one of the three suspenseful segments above.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### WORD REFERENTS

Imagine that the author wants to build suspense before revealing a story critical element. One way to do this is by using word referents instead of immediately naming the character or object. Using word referents makes the reader wonder exactly what kind of character or object will be revealed. See how many different ways you can refer to each story critical character or object.

**Ex. Story critical character: A Cowboy**

Adjective

- bovine
- rugged
- horseback riding
- capable

Noun

- buckaroo
- roper
- herder
- cowpoke

Now, it's your turn:

Story critical setting: **The Desert**

Adjective

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Noun

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Story critical object: **A Lasso**

Adjective

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Noun

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## RED FLAG WORDS AND PHRASES

Authors use red flag words and phrases most commonly at the beginnings of paragraphs. They build suspense by grabbing the reader's attention and alerting the reader that something important is about to happen. Look at the list of red flag words and phrases below. Then, read the suspenseful segment. Using a caret (^), write in the red flag word or phrase of your choice in the sentence and use the proofreaders symbol to indicate that this is where a paragraph break belongs.

### RED FLAG WORDS AND PHRASES

In spite of	Simultaneously	As a result	In a heartbeat
Subsequently	Suddenly	Without warning	All of a sudden
Meanwhile	Just seconds later	Almost as quickly as	Almost immediately
(Add your own)			

I bit my lip and rubbed my forehead, struggling to remember what an integer was and how to simplify an algebraic expression. Math had always confused me and pre-Algebra was even more baffling. I looked around the room and saw my classmates working diligently. None of them looked as lost as I felt. Time was ticking away and I'd completed only the first two problems on my final pre-Algebra exam. I was as anxious as a ship's captain on a storm tossed sea. A shrill blast shattered the silence. A fire drill! Who knew today would turn out to be my lucky day? Now, the teacher would surely give me some extra time to finish the exam tomorrow and I'd have another night to study. I gathered my backpack and joined my classmates lining up at the door, all of them chattering away happily. It was a relief to see that it wasn't only me who was grateful to be getting a break from the headache-inducing test.

We were following our math teacher through the crowded hallway to the closest exit. When we stepped outside and saw smoke billowing from the windows near the cafeteria, we knew that this was no ordinary fire drill! Our school was really ablaze! We heard sirens approaching and, one by one, fire trucks careened into the school parking lot. Some of my classmates started to panic while others joked about getting an early start to summer vacation. Word began circulating that a fire had started in the kitchen and quickly spread into the cafeteria. It was definitely a relief when I spotted my favorite lunch lady, Mrs. Jamison, wearing her hairnet and white cotton jacket standing amidst the crowd on the lawn. Like us, she watched anxiously as firefighters rushed into the school. The ear-splitting sound of the fire alarm finally went silent. The police chief announced that the fire had been contained and it was safe to re-enter the building. I was simultaneously relieved and a little disappointed. The fire had added a touch of excitement to my day and now I was back to struggling to understand pre-Algebra.







Name \_\_\_\_\_

## COMPARING SUMMARIES AND FULLY ELABORATED MAIN EVENTS

Read each version of a main event about a friendship between two girls.

1. I suspected that my new best friend, Carly, might be keeping a secret from me when she wouldn't come to my birthday party. I learned I was right when I accidentally saw her at a shelter for the homeless. I told her that I didn't think being homeless was anything to be ashamed of and Carly agreed to come to the party.
  
2. First, Carly and I became friends in school. But when I asked her to come to my birthday party, she said no. Then, I tried to tempt her by describing how much fun we would have but she still said no. She said no even when I said my mother would give her a ride home afterwards. Then, I figured it out when I accidentally saw her at a shelter for the homeless. When I saw her the next day, I said I didn't think being homeless was anything to be ashamed of and she told me that she didn't like people feeling sorry for her. Then Carly finally agreed to go to the party.
  
3. Even though I'd only known Carly for a couple of weeks, there was no doubt in my mind that we were destined to be best friends. We both hated math and loved social studies. She and I were great volleyball players and we dreamed of living near the ocean someday. Both of us laughed at the same jokes, craved the same salty snacks and crushed on the same redheaded boy.

"This must be what it's like to have a sister," I told her and I could tell that my words touched her heart. This reminded me that I didn't know if Carly had a sister or a brother, where she lived or where she'd come from when she arrived at our school. She didn't seem to like to talk about herself, but I was sure that would change as we got to know each other better.

"I guess so," Carly agreed with a smile.

My 14th birthday was in two weeks and I was planning the best party ever. First, we'd play a game of volleyball and then we'd watch the creepiest zombie movie of all time. Dad would not only grill us hotdogs and hamburgers but he'd promised to bake the biggest, chocolatiest birthday cake ever. I invited everybody I knew and most of them had quickly RSVPed: "Count me in!"

But not Carly. Strangely, she fell silent or tried to hurriedly change the subject whenever I mentioned the party. After a few days of wondering, I asked her outright.

"So you're coming to my party, right?"

(continued)

“Sorry,” she said with a shrug. “My mom works weekends and I don’t have a ride. But have a great time.”

“My mom will pick you up,” I said. “No problem. Just tell me where you live.”

A panicked look crossed her face and she blushed.

“Thanks,” she said. “But no.”

Carly walked away without another word, leaving me with my mouth agape with astonishment. Had I done something to make her angry with me? Or, was she keeping a secret from me? I knew it had to be one or the other when she ignored me for the rest of the day.

The next day, I had a dentist appointment and my mom picked me up early from school. I told her how Carly had been acting.

“She’s probably just a little jealous,” Mom said. “Maybe she never had a birthday party of her own.”

Bzzz. Bzzzz. Bzzzzz. The droning noise of the dentist’s drill was still echoing in my ears as Mom and I drove home. The route from the dentist’s office to our house took us through a crowded part of town with lots of traffic and people on sidewalks. Suddenly, I spotted a familiar face seated on a stoop and reading from our social studies text in front of the shelter for the homeless. It was Carly!

I waved at her through the open car window and called her name. She looked up from her book and, when she recognized me, she quickly snapped it shut and ran to the open front door of the shelter. It was as though she couldn’t even stand to look at me.

“She really is mad at me,” I said.

“I think it’s more likely that she’s just ashamed of living in the homeless shelter,” mom said. “And that’s nothing to be ashamed of. Everybody goes through hard times at some point in their lives.”

I mimicked her words when I saw Carly the next day. “Everybody goes through hard times, Carly. It’s nothing to be ashamed of.”

Carly breathed a sigh of relief. “I hated keeping a secret from you,” she said. “But I don’t like it when people feel sorry for me.”

“I don’t feel sorry for you,” I said. “But I will if you miss my birthday party.”

She laughed. “Okay, count me in,” she said with a smile.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZE THIS ENDING (1)

Read this ending from Prep, by Curtis Sittenfeld:

*“The world was so big. The sharpness of that knowledge went always almost as soon as I’d boarded the T, but it has returned over the years, and even now sometimes — I am older and my life is very different — I can feel again how amazed I was that morning.”*

Think about what you know about extended endings. Circle the technique the author used to grab your attention. Do the same for the examples that follow.

• A Memory • Feelings • A Wish or Hope • A Decision • A Defining Action

From Emako Blue, by Brenda Woods

*“I fastened my seat belt as Daddy drove through the cemetery toward the gates. I looked at row after row of graves and thought I didn’t want Emako to be gone. I wanted her to come back and finish growing up with me and I wanted to hear her say, ‘Hey, Monterey,’ again and I wanted her to diss me and smile and I wanted her to be rich and famous and I wanted to tell her that she had the most beautiful awesome voice I’d ever heard. It wasn’t supposed to be this way. My friend, Emako Blue, was supposed to be a star.”*

• A Memory • Feelings • A Wish or Hope • A Decision • A Defining Action

From Twisted, by Laurie Halse Anderson

*“I won. I beat the game. And then a new screen, one I had never seen before, never even heard of, popped up. It gave me a choice. I could become the new Lord of Darkness myself, or I could take a gamble and be reincarnated. I chose wisely.*

• A Memory • Feelings • A Wish or Hope • A Decision • A Defining Action

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZE THIS ENDING (2)

Read this ending from Blackout, by Hope A.C. Bentley:

*“The big difference is that we are grateful. It gets dark early these days, so my mom lights a lantern in the living room and we all sit around the one light and read or do homework or sketch or plan. We wear slippers and sweaters and Grandma and I usually share a blanket on the couch, but it’s not terribly cold yet. I look around the bowl of light in that dark room and each of my family’s faces is lit up, warm and yellow. We have what we need. We have a task for each day. We have each other.”*

Think about what you know about extended endings. Circle the technique the author used to grab your attention. Do the same for the examples that follow.

- A Memory • Feelings • A Wish or Hope • A Decision • A Defining Action

From Summerland, by Michael Charbon

*“Ethan got knocked down. When he stood up again, his mouth was full of dirt, he had taken a knee in the eye, and his nose was bleeding. But he was still holding onto the ball.”*

- A Memory • Feelings • A Wish or Hope • A Decision • A Defining Action

From So Yesterday, by Scott Westerfeld

*“So you ask the question — What can the Jammers do anyway? Won’t they just fizzle like any other fad, fail like a million other revolutions, wind up useless and bitter, like an orphaned pile of pet rocks in the closet? Or, can a small group of well-organized and charismatic Innovators really change the world? Maybe they can. By my reading of history, that’s the way it’s happened every time.”*

- A Memory • Feelings • A Wish or Hope • A Decision • A Defining Action

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### EXTEND THIS ENDING!

**REMEMBER:** Story endings should sum up the story and show how the main character has grown and changed. Extended endings often include:

- A memory - What do you remember most?
- A feeling - How did you feel after everything that happened?
- A decision - What did you decide to do after everything that happened?
- A wish or hope - What did you wish or hope for?
- A defining action - What did you do to show how you felt, or what you decided?

Read this story summary:

*This is a story about the first time Tino ate a new food.*

Now read the way the author ended the story. It is abrupt and unsatisfying.

**Tino realized that he really did like the new food. THE END**

REVISE this story ending. Include the main character's memories, feelings, decisions, hopes, or wishes.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

### EXTEND THIS ENDING! - MAKE-IT-YOUR-OWN

**REMEMBER:** Story endings should sum up the story and show how the main character has grown and changed. Extended endings often include:

- A memory - What do you remember most?
- A feeling - How did you feel after everything that happened?
- A decision - What did you decide to do after everything that happened?
- A wish or hope - What did you wish or hope for?
- A defining action - What did you do to show how you felt, or what you decided?

Write a story summary:

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Now write a boring story ending.

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REVISE this story ending. Include the main character's memories, feelings, decisions, hopes, or wishes.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

**As you get older, you are expected to take on more responsibilities. Write a personal experience story about one responsibility you face at school or home.**

As you prepare to write:

1. Analyze the givens and variables in this prompt.
2. List at least two segments of elaborative detail you would include.

\_\_\_\_\_ .

3. Remember to showcase all of the writing skills you have learned.
4. Use the following framework to plan your story:

This is a story about \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*character - GIVEN*

The adventure, experience, or problem is that \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*main event - GIVEN and VARIABLE*

The adventure or experience concluded/problem solved when \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ .



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Learning something new can be challenging. Write a story about a time you learned how to do something you'd never done before.**

As you prepare to write:

1. Analyze the givens and variables in this prompt.
2. List at least two segments of elaborative detail you would include.

\_\_\_\_\_ .

3. Remember to showcase all of the writing skills you have learned.
4. Use the following framework to plan your story:

This is a story about \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*character - GIVEN*

The adventure, experience, or problem is that \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*main event - GIVEN and VARIABLE*

The adventure or experience concluded/problem solved when \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ .

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Emotions often run high and sometimes get out of control. Think about a time when you experienced a strong emotion and write a story about that time. (It can be happy, sad, confusing, embarrassing, etc.).**

As you prepare to write:

1. Analyze the givens and variables in this prompt.
2. List at least two segments of elaborative detail you would include.

\_\_\_\_\_ .

3. Remember to showcase all of the writing skills you have learned.
4. Use the following framework to plan your story:

This is a story about \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*character - GIVEN*

The adventure, experience, or problem is that \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*main event - GIVEN and VARIABLE*

The adventure or experience concluded/problem solved when \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ .

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Everyone has special people in their lives. Write a story about a time you spent with a special person.**

As you prepare to write:

1. Analyze the givens and variables in this prompt.
2. List at least two segments of elaborative detail you would include.

\_\_\_\_\_ .

3. Remember to showcase all of the writing skills you have learned.
4. Use the following framework to plan your story:

This is a story about \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*character - GIVEN*

The adventure, experience, or problem is that

\_\_\_\_\_ .  
*main event - GIVEN and VARIABLE*

The adventure or experience concluded/problem solved when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ .