



Center for Early Reading

Unit 1

Personal Narratives

Digital Components

Grade 5

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Digital Components

Contents

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Paragraph about a Paragraph

Writers often organize good paragraphs using a common set of guidelines. First, writers include a topic sentence to introduce the topic or main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence tells what the paragraph will be about.

Next, writers include supporting sentences to explain the topic or main idea. Writers usually include at least three to five sentences to give the reader supporting details and facts about the topic or main idea. Including interesting facts and details helps make the paragraph informative and interesting to read. It is important that the sentences stick to the topic.

Finally, writers end the paragraph with a concluding sentence, or their final thought about the topic or main idea. Using these guidelines can be helpful to writing a clear and informative paragraph.

When you write a narrative, the topic or main idea introduced in the topic sentence is often the event you are writing about.

My First Camping Trip

I'll never forget the first time I went camping. We drove several hours to the wilds of Pennsylvania. My sister and I squirmed and chattered in the back set for the whole drive. Our campsite was right next to a beautiful lake, and I was really looking forward to swimming and taking out a canoe. But as soon as we set up our tent, a torrential rainstorm began. It didn't stop pouring all weekend, and my family's first outdoor adventure was spent cooped up in a tent playing gin rummy. I did not experience much nature, but I did have fun and became very skilled at gin rummy. I'm looking forward to camping again and hope the weather cooperates next time.

Passage from “The First Real San Giving Day”

With new resolve and colored dittos in hand, I approached Abuela that night as she sat at the kitchen table...“Abuela, do you know what Thanksgiving is really all about— what it really means?” “¿Qué?” she said without looking up from her notebook. “Thanksgiving,” I repeated. She looked up at me blankly, and I realized she couldn’t understand “Thanksgiving” in my properly pronounced English. So I blurted it out the way most Cubans pronounced it, as if it were the name of a saint: “San Giving, Abuela, San Giving.” “*Oh, el día de San Giving.* Yes, what?” she asked, and I began explaining: “It was because the Pilgrims and Indians became friends”...“What are *pilgreems*? And those black *sombreros*?” she asked, looking over my dittos, “We didn’t wear those *en Cuba*.”

Think As You Read

Think As You Read to improve understanding!

As you read personal narratives, think about the following:

- pictures you are forming in your mind
(mental images)
- predictions about what might happen next
- passages you like a lot
- passages you find confusing
- repeating ideas or themes
- context clues that help you understand new words and phrases

Guidelines for Listening and Commenting

- 1.** Give the reader your attention and respect.
- 2.** Keep your comments positive.
- 3.** Comment on specific language in the narrative.

Passage from “The First Real San Giving Day”

“There’s only five days left. I have to start cooking, no?” “Abuela,” I whined, “I don’t know what to buy or how to make anything. What are we going to do?” “No worry, we can have pork and black beans like we always have—maybe some Cubaroni? That’s *americano* enough, no?” she said, genuinely trying to appease me. “I guess so, Abuela, but it’s not the same,” I said.

Feedback Sentence Frames

The words _____ really helped me form a clear mental image of _____.

I liked when you used the words _____ because _____.

The words _____ really helped me understand that you were feeling _____.

I thought it was very funny when you wrote _____ because_____.

Personification Sentences

- 1.** (a) The bride danced with her father.
(b) The moonlight danced on the ocean.
- 2.** (a) The coach yelled angrily at the kids who disrupted practice.
(b) The cars honked angrily at the man who stood in the middle of the road.
- 3.** (a) The pilot flies above the clouds to avoid storms.
(b) Time flies whenever I get together with my best friend.

Passage from “The First Real San Giving Day”

Passage 1

It seemed hopeless, but I insisted. “Mirá, Abuela—mirá,” I continued, pointing at the dittos again. “They had turkey on San Giving, not *carne puerco* and *plátanos*. We are *americanos* like them now in the United States. We have to eat like Americans, Abuela, or else they’ll send you back to Cuba.” “Ay, *mi’jo*,” she said with a laugh, “we’re not *americanos*, but no one is sending us back. We’ll go on our own, when that *idiota* Castro is dead—and not one second before.” “But, Abuela, I don’t want to go back. I’m American. I want to have a real San Giving this year—like this,” I demanded, holding up the ditto. “You, *americano*? Ha—you’re *cubano*, even though you weren’t born in Cuba.” She chuckled. “And what is that food in those pictures? I never saw a chicken that big.” “That’s not a chicken, Abuela, it’s a turkey. Please—I’ll help you cook,” I pleaded, but she kept resisting.

Passage from “The First Real San Giving Day”

Passage 2

Mamá poked around and snooped inside the grocery bags. “What’s all this for?” she asked Abuela, who looked at me to answer her. “We’re gonna have a real San Giving this year, Mamá. Abuela’s going to make a turkey and yams and everything,” I explained. “¿Cómo? Turkey? Nobody knows how to make that. Especially not your Abuela. She can’t even cook Cuban food too good,” she jabbed. “Don’t worry,” Abuela said, trying to remain calm. “You just sit down and relax—like you always do. Riqui is helping me—and he knows what he’s doing.” “*Bueno*,” Mamá replied, “I don’t know, you better cook something else too—some *carne puerco*, just in case.”

Passage from “The First Real San Giving Day”

“*Sí, sí, sí*—whatever,” Abuela said just as the bird slipped through her hands. It slid across the terrazzo floor, bounced down the single step from the kitchen into the Florida sunroom, and knocked into the TV. It lay there, mocking us, mocking me, basking in the sunlight, enjoying the breeze whispering through the jalousie windows and the view of the backyard mango tree framed by the sliding glass door.

Passage from “The First Real San Giving Day”

I glared over the cereal box at my brother, Greg. And when he asked me to pass the milk, I ignored him. He jumped up and grabbed it, whistling the whole time. Then, with great enthusiasm, he started quizzing my dad about a birdhouse he was building. Greg couldn't care less about Dad's carpentry projects! I kept glaring.

Feedback Sentence Frames

When you wrote _____, it seemed like I was seeing the moment in slow motion.

The words _____ really helped me understand all that happened in your moment.

The detail about _____ created a clear picture in my mind of _____.

Showing and Telling Passages

Passage 1 (Showing)

The next day at recess, I asked some of the American kids in class what they had for Thanksgiving.

“Turkey—what else, dummy? With stuffing,” Jimmy Dawson told me.

“What’s stuffing? ” I asked.

He burst out laughing, thinking I was kidding: “It’s the stuff you put in the turkey,” he tried to explain.

“Oh, you mean like candy in a piñata?” I proposed.

“No, no, dummy . . . with bread and celery and other stuff—that’s why they call it stuffing,” he tried to clarify.

“Oh . . . okay.” I pretended to understand exactly what he meant.

Showing and Telling Passages

Passage 2 (Telling)

The next day at recess, I asked some of the American kids in class what they had for Thanksgiving. Jimmy Dawson told me he had turkey and stuffing. I pretended to understand what stuffing was.

5 Simple Rules for Writing Dialogue

1. Quotation marks are placed before the first word of a quote and after the punctuation that follows the last word.

Example:

“Give me a taste,” Bella said.

Bella said, “Give me a taste.”

2. When the tag (the name of the speaker and the speaking verb) follows the quote, it ends in a period. When the tag precedes the quote, it ends in a comma.

Example:

“Give me a taste,” Bella said.

Bella said, “Give me a taste.”

3. The punctuation that ends a quote is written *inside* the quotation marks.

Example:

“May I have a taste?” Bella asked.

Bella demanded, “Give me a taste!”

5 Simple Rules For Writing Dialogue (continued)

- 4.** When the tag follows a quote, quotes that do not end in an exclamation point or question mark end in a comma instead of a period.

Example:

“Give me a taste,” Bella said.

- 5.** When writing dialogue between two or more speakers, begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.

Example:

Bella jealously stared at Jeremy’s ice cream. She had not had ice cream in weeks. “Give me a taste,” she said.

“I paid for this. Go buy your own,” Jeremy answered.

“Pleeease,” Bella begged. Jeremy did not answer for a few seconds. He looked back and forth between his ice cream cone and Bella.

“Fine,” Jeremy conceded, handing Bella the cone. “You can have one lick, but that’s it.”

Passage from “The First Real San Giving Day”

“*Qué grande. Qué lindo,*” Abuela praised it, none the wiser, and made room for it in the freezer. Mamá poked around and snooped inside the grocery bags. “What’s all this for?” she asked Abuela, who looked at me to answer her. “We’re gonna have a real *San Giving* this year, Mamá. Abuela’s going to make a turkey and yams and everything,” I explained. “¿Cómo? Turkey? Nobody knows how to make that. Especially not your Abuela. She can’t even cook Cuban food too good,” she jabbed. “Don’t worry,” Abuela said, trying to remain calm. “You just sit down and relax—like you always do. Riqui is helping me—and he knows what he’s doing.” “*Bueno,*” Mamá replied, “I don’t know, you better cook something else too—some *carne puerco*, just in case.” “*Sí, sí, sí—whatever,*” Abuela said just as the bird slipped through her hands.

Feedback Sentence Frames

When _____ said _____ I had a clear picture
in my mind of _____.

Your dialogue between _____ and _____
reminded me of the way I talk to _____.

Your choice of the verb _____ instead of *said* helped me
understand clearly how the line _____ was spoken.

Personal Narrative Writing Strategies

- **Showing, not telling through:**
 - strong adjectives and verbs
 - dialogue
 - detailed moments and action
 - describing emotions through behavior
 - sensory descriptions using all five senses
- **Personification**
- **A strong point of view supported by evidence**
- **A logical sequence of events**
- **A specific tone**
- **Similes and metaphor**

Passage from “The First Real San Giving Day”

November came around, and my teacher, Mrs. Echevarría, handed out some ditto sheets to color for Thanksgiving. The pilgrims' tall hats I colored black, the buckles on their shoes, gold; the cornucopias of squash and pumpkins, all kinds of oranges and yellows; the huge turkey, an amber-brown (a turkey, not a pork roast like my family always had for Thanksgiving). As we colored, Mrs. Echevarría narrated the story of the first Thanksgiving, enthusiastically acting it out as if she had been there: "... Then the chief of the Indians told Pilgrim John, *We make big feast for you,* and Pilgrim John said, *Yes, let us give thanks for our new friends and for this new land where we are free.*" My teacher seemed to understand Thanksgiving like a true American, even though she was Cuban also. Maybe, I thought, *if I convince Abuela to have a real Thanksgiving, she and the whole family will finally understand too.*

Sample “Free Write” Paragraph

My name is short and sweet: Marc. It’s just four letters and one syllable. Two of my best friends when I was a kid were Zachary and Deborah, and I used to wish I had a more poetic-sounding name like they did. But I came to appreciate my name. It rhymes with lots of words, like shark, park, dark, quark, so it’s easy for me to write little poems or limericks about myself. I also have a Hebrew name, Moshe—Hebrew for Moses. When I watch *The Ten Commandments* or *The Prince of Egypt*, I feel proud that I was named after a heroic biblical figure. I also think I was given an “M” name after a great great uncle I never met—Mayer. I’ve been meaning to ask family about him, but haven’t really gotten around to it.

“Free Write” Brainstorming Questions

- How was your name chosen?
- Were you named after a relative?
- Are you ever called by a name different from the one on your birth certificate?
- Have people mispronounced your name?
- Do you know what your name means?
- Can you write your name in another language?
- Is your name important to you?
- Have you ever thought of changing your name?

Passage from “Hello, My Name Is”

So my full name is Jennifer Lou. No middle name. Nothing. Everyone else in my family has their Chinese name as their English middle name. It's on official documents, passports, licenses, and, in my brother's case, his birth certificate. The middle name field on my birth certificate? Blank. A parental oversight because they hadn't made the time to select a Chinese name.

Having no middle name is even more significant when you grow up in white, middle-class Connecticut where everyone has one. It was a rough childhood. Not only did I have to learn how to ski, how to play tennis, and how to tie sweaters around my neck, I also had to navigate Puritan New England middle name-less. “You're incomplete!” friends would say.

I took matters into my own hands. When I started seventh grade at Sage Park Middle School, I enrolled as Jennifer Elizabeth Lou. I picked Elizabeth because it was the whitest name I could think of. And, my God, I wanted to be white because in Windsor, Connecticut, where less than one percent of the population was Chinese, white, to me, meant belonging. It meant being pretty and popular, and that boys would like me.

Evidence of the Injustice of Segregation

Quote from the text	Evidence of injustice of segregation

Feedback Sentence Frames

Your narrative taught me something about you I didn't know. The words(s) _____ taught me that _____.

Your narrative taught me something interesting about what your name means to you. The words _____ taught me that _____.

The visual element added to the meaning of your narrative. It showed me that _____.

When you described _____ with the words _____, I could really picture it in my mind.

Feedback Sentence Frames

- 1.** _____ was a strong piece of evidence supporting your point of view that _____.

- 2.** The words _____ helped me form a strong mental image of _____.

Museum of Giant Rocks Passages

- 1.** I am quite convinced that the reopening of the Museum of Giant Rocks will not end well. In 1990, on the museum's opening day, the fasteners and bolts that held the giant rocks in place came loose, sending huge stones rolling in every direction, crushing cars and barely missing a crowd of people. The authorities immediately closed down the museum but then reopened it two years later.

On the second opening day, the exact same thing occurred. Since then, the museum has reopened seven times, each time with the same results. Today, again, the museum is scheduled to reopen after being rebuilt by the same architects and builders who have worked on it from the start.

Museum of Giant Rocks Passages

- 2.** Really? Reopen the Museum of Giant Rocks? What a brilliant idea by the mayor and his advisors. Because every town is better off with smashed storefronts, crushed cars, and citizens running for their lives from huge boulders rolling down the middle of Main Street.

Museum of Giant Rocks Passages

3. I squeezed my lucky penny in my pocket as we pulled into the parking lot of the Museum of Giant Rocks. I needed all the luck I could get. Rocks fall, rocks roll, rocks bounce. Rocks give people concussions! Who had the crazy idea of reopening this museum of mayhem? I hugged the wall and tried to keep my legs from shaking as my dad dragged me to the first exhibit. Let me wrestle a bear, let me juggle chainsaws. Anything but this.

Feedback Sentence Frames

Your narrative taught me something about you I didn't know.

The words(s) _____ taught me that _____.

Your narrative taught me something interesting about what your name means to you. The words _____ taught me that _____.

The visual element added to the meaning of your narrative. It showed that me that _____.

When you described _____ with the words _____,
I could really picture it in my mind

Story Sentences

Story V

The young panda was hungry.

She began climbing a tree for a bamboo snack.

She looked down from the tree and became too frightened to move.

Papa panda climbed up the tree and helped the young panda down.

Finally, he climbed the tree and brought a bamboo snack down to the young panda.

Story Sentences

Story W

Last year, I decided to memorize the definition of every single word in the dictionary.

In order to accomplish this, I began spending a half hour every morning reading the dictionary.

After two weeks, I still only knew about ten new words.

Then my uncle reminded me the whole point of a dictionary is that you don't need to memorize the definition of every single word.

Now I just try to learn one new word every day.

Story Sentences

Story X

I read that if you start lifting a calf every day starting right after it's born, eventually you'll be able to lift a cow.

When our cow had a new calf, I decided to see if what I read is true.

Therefore, every morning before school, I went out to the barn and lifted up the calf.

But no one wanted to sit next to me on the bus because they said I smelled like cow manure.

After that, I decided lifting a cow was not so important after all.

Story Sentences

Story Y

Bella did not pay much attention to the homeless people in her town.

In autumn, Bella lost her sweater at school and was cold walking home without it.

Bella then began to worry about how the homeless people would keep warm when winter came.

So Bella organized a drive at school to collect winter clothing.

Bella's favorite holiday memory is handing out coats and gloves to the homeless on Thanksgiving.

Story Sentences

Story Z

Zolflik of the planet Qrrrrn was determined to conquer Earth.

She appealed to the high council of Qrrrrn for permission to launch a massive attack on Earth.

The high council of Qrrrrn denied her permission.

Zolflik set out in a small space ship to conquer Earth all by herself.

After a few hours, she became homesick and returned to Qrrrrn.

“My Story” Details Chart

Detail Rosa Parks included	Quote from text	Infer why the detail was included
1.		
2.		

Think As You Read

Think As You Read to improve understanding!

As you read personal narratives, think about the following:

- pictures you are forming in your mind
(mental images)
- predictions about what might happen next
- passages you like a lot
- passages you find confusing
- repeating ideas or themes
- context clues that help you understand new words and phrases

Feedback Sentence Frames

The words(s) _____ really helped me imagine the moment leading up to your surprise.

When you wrote _____, I understood why the surprise was so unexpected.

I learned something new about you from your narrative. The words _____ taught me that _____.

When you described _____ with the words _____, I could really picture it in my mind.

Writing _____ was a great way to show _____ rather than tell.

Passages from “A View of the Earth”

1. The other thing I noticed was that I could feel the warmth of the sun. We were about to come into a day pass. And the light in space, when you're in the sunlight, is the brightest, whitest, purest light I have ever experienced, and it brings with it warmth. I could feel that coming, and I actually started feeling optimistic.

Passages from “A View of the Earth”

2. And that moment changed my relationship with the Earth. Because for me the Earth had always been a kind of a safe haven, you know, where I could go to work or be in my home or take my kids to school. But I realized it really wasn't that. It really is its own spaceship. And I had always been a space traveler. All of us here today, even tonight, we're on this spaceship Earth, amongst all the chaos of the universe, whipping around the sun and around the Milky Way galaxy.

Passages from “A View of the Earth”

- 3.** And we turned the corner to come down our block, and I could see my neighbors were outside. They had decorated my house, and there were American flags everywhere. And my neighbor across the street was holding a pepperoni pizza and a six-pack of beer, two things that unfortunately we still cannot get in space.

Core Knowledge Language Arts Amplify.

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Acknowledgments

These materials are the result of the work, advice, and encouragement of numerous individuals over many years. Some of those singled out here already know the depth of our gratitude; others may be surprised to find themselves thanked publicly for help they gave quietly and generously for the sake of the enterprise alone. To helpers named and unnamed we are deeply grateful.

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Susan B. Albaugh, Kazuko Ashizawa, Kim Berrall, Ang Blanchette, Nancy Braier, Maggie Buchanan, Paula Coyner, Kathryn M. Cummings, Michelle De Groot, Michael Donegan, Diana Espinal, Mary E. Forbes, Michael L. Ford, Sue Fulton, Carolyn Gosse, Dorrit Green, Liza Greene, Ted Hirsch, Danielle Knecht, James K. Lee, Matt Leech, Diane Henry Leipzig, Robin Luecke, Martha G. Mack, Liana Mahoney, Isabel McLean, Steve Morrison, Juliane K. Munson, Elizabeth B. Rasmussen, Ellen Sadler, Rachael L. Shaw, Sivan B. Sherman, Diane Auger Smith, Laura Tortorelli, Khara Turnbull, Miriam E. Vidaver, Michelle L. Warner, Catherine S. Whittington, Jeannette A. Williams.

We would like to extend special recognition to Program Directors Matthew Davis and Souzanne Wright, who were instrumental in the early development of this program.

Schools

We are truly grateful to the teachers, students, and administrators of the following schools for their willingness to field-test these materials and for their invaluable advice: Capitol View Elementary, Challenge Foundation Academy (IN), Community Academy Public Charter School, Lake Lure Classical Academy, Lepanto Elementary School, New Holland Core Knowledge Academy, Paramount School of Excellence, Pioneer Challenge Foundation Academy, PS 26R (the Carteret School), PS 30X (Wilton School), PS 50X (Clara Barton School), PS 96Q, PS 102X (Joseph O. Loretan), PS 104Q (the Bays Water), PS 214K (Michael Friedsam), PS 223Q (Lyndon B. Johnson School), PS 308K (Clara Cardwell), PS 333Q (Goldie Maple Academy), Sequoyah Elementary School, South Shore Charter Public School, Spartanburg Charter School, Steed Elementary School, Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy, Three Oaks Elementary, West Manor Elementary.

And a special thanks to the CKLA Pilot Coordinators, Anita Henderson, Yasmin Lugo-Hernandez, and Susan Smith, whose suggestions and day-to-day support to teachers using these materials in their classrooms were critical.



Illustrations by Dan Baxter

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