

# *Unit 1*

# *Personal*

# *Narratives*

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Lesson 12: It's All in the Details



# Vocabulary

A background image showing a wooden desk. On the desk, there is a black mesh pencil holder filled with various colored pencils. To the right of the pencil holder, there is a stack of several books. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the desk items.

## Core Vocabulary

**O.T., n.** stands for occupational therapy, which consists of exercises and projects used to help patients recover skills for daily life

**melody, n.** a tune

**adept, adj.** very skilled

**flawlessly, adv.** perfectly, without imperfections

**gazed, v.** looked at closely

# Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio

## Chapter 13: The Great Accordion Concert

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by Peg Kehret

*After Peg regains movement, she is transferred to Sheltering Arms, a rehabilitation hospital. There she lives with a group of other girls her age who are also recovering from polio. Peg begins to use a wheelchair and works hard in physical and occupational therapy to get stronger so that she can walk and move easily again. Her parents come to visit every week and she and her roommates have fun together, even as they face the challenges of polio.*

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Although I had not yet mastered the fine art of moving the pile of marbles from spot to spot with my toes, I received a new challenge in O.T. I was going to learn to play the accordion.

Certain muscles of the arms and hands are used when pushing an accordion in and out, and it happened that I needed help with those particular muscles. The Sheltering Arms owned an accordion, and Miss Ballard knew I'd had two years of piano lessons. She said the accordion was the perfect exercise for me.

From my very first attempt, I hated the accordion. It was heavy and awkward, and pushing it in and out made my arms ache. The trick of playing a **melody** on the keyboard with one hand, pushing



the proper chord buttons with the other hand, and at the same time pushing and pulling on the accordion itself was completely beyond me.

"It would be easier if you asked me to juggle and tap dance at the same time," I said.

"You just need practice," Miss Ballard replied. "Try a little longer."

I did try however, even when I got the correct right-hand note with the proper left-hand chord and pushed air through the bellows at the same time, I didn't care for the sound. I had never liked accordion music, and my efforts during O.T. did nothing to change my mind.

When my parents heard about the accordion, Mother said, "What fun! You've always loved your piano lessons."

"That's different," I said. "I like the way a piano sounds."

"You already know how to read music," Dad pointed out. "You will master that accordion in no time."

I insisted I would never be **adept** on the accordion, and Dad kept saying it would be a breeze.

I finally said, "Why don't *you* play it, if you think it's so easy?"

"All right. I will," said Dad, and off he went to the O.T. room to borrow the accordion.

He came back with the shoulder straps in place and an eager look on his face. My dad played piano by ear, so he didn't need sheet music. Even so, the sounds he produced could only be called squawks and squeaks.



He pushed and pulled. He punched the buttons. He grew red in the face. Beads of perspiration popped out on his bald spot. Something vaguely resembling the first few notes of "Beer Barrel Polka" emerged from the accordion, but they were accompanied by assorted other sounds, none of which could be called musical.

We girls covered our ears, made faces, and booed. We pointed our thumbs down. Mother laughed until tears ran down her cheeks.

Finally, Dad admitted defeat. Temporary defeat.

"I'll try again next week," he said. "Meanwhile, I want you to keep practicing."

"It will sound just as terrible next week," I said, but I agreed to work on my accordion technique awhile longer.

The following Sunday, we could hardly wait to tease Dad about his musical fiasco.

"When do we get the accordion concert?" Renée asked the minute my parents arrived.

"Wait!" exclaimed Alice. "I want to put in my earplugs."

We teased until Dad reluctantly agreed to try it again.

We snickered and tee-heed as he brought the O.T. accordion into the room. He sat on a chair and carefully adjusted the straps.

"Quit stalling," I said.

"What's the rush?" said Renée as she put her fingers in her ears.

Dad began to play. Instead of squeaks and squawks, he played "Beer Barrel Polka" **flawlessly**, from start to finish.

Our jaws dropped. We **gazed** at him and at each other in astonishment. When he finished the song, our questions exploded like a string of firecrackers. "How did you learn to play?" "Who taught you?" "Where did you get an accordion?" He simply smiled, while Mother applauded.

Then they told us the whole story. He had rented an accordion from a music store and practiced every spare second in order to surprise us with his concert.

"Can you play any other songs?" I asked.

"It took me all week to learn that one," Dad said.

"And he stayed up until midnight every night, practicing," Mother added.

After that, I didn't dare complain about my accordion sessions. I never did get as good at it as Dad got in just seven days, but I managed to produce a few recognizable tunes, and the effort did help strengthen my arm muscles and my fingers.

**Does Peg's mother think Peg will like playing the accordion?**

**Why does Peg think the accordion will be different from the piano?**

**Why does Peg's father think she will learn the accordion quickly?**

**Peg has many reasons to try playing the accordion. What finally causes her to start playing it?**

**What is the effect of Peg's accordion playing?**



# Identifying Good Details

## Activity page 12.2

Good writers use many different kinds of details to help readers understand and visualize the events.

Use this chart to record some of the details that Kehret uses in her work.

### Identifying Good Details

Remember that good writers use many different kinds of detail to help readers understand and visualize the events described in the text. Use this activity to record some of the details Kehret uses in her work.

**Part 1:** You have already noted some of the text’s details about accordions. Use the chart below to record at least two different kinds of details that describe something other than the accordion.

#### “The Great Accordion Concert”

Type of Detail	Detail

# Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio

## Chapter 14: Good-bye, Silver; Hello, Sticks

by Peg Kehret

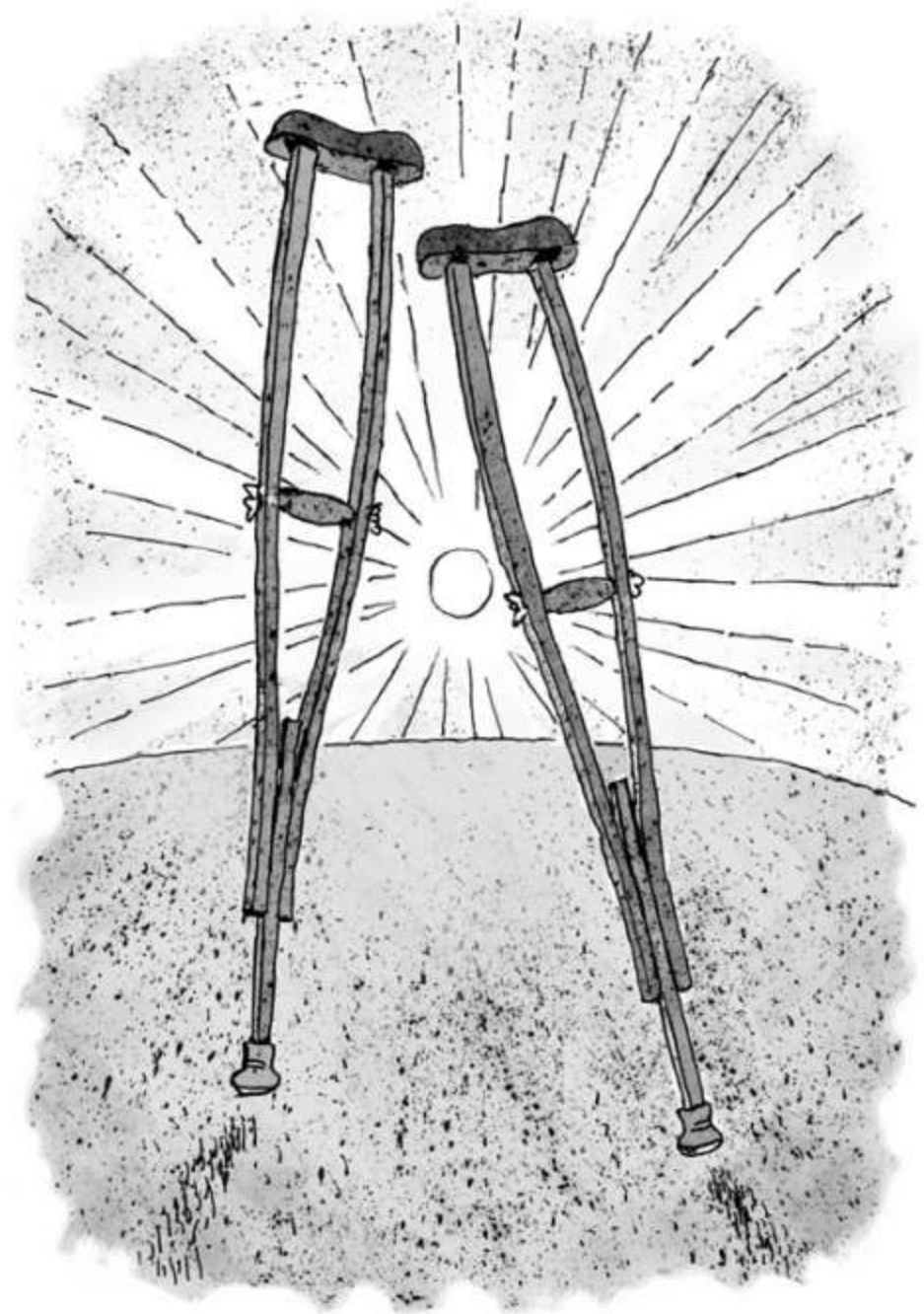
*After weeks of intensive therapy, Peg is finally ready to walk again with her newly-arrived walking sticks.*

Two weeks after I got my sticks, Miss Ballard told me I was strong enough to use them exclusively. I didn't need Silver anymore.

"You gave me a lot of good rides," I whispered as I patted Silver's side for the last time. I blinked back tears, feeling foolish. I had looked forward to this day for months, and now that it was here, I was all weepy about leaving my wheelchair behind.

Silver had carried me to school, distributed countless treats, and taken me safely to O.T., my sessions with Miss Ballard, visits with other patients, and special events in the sunroom. I'd had many fine times, including my thirteenth birthday, in that wheelchair. As I thought about them, I realized that even if I had never grown strong enough to leave Silver, I still would have been able to lead a happy life.

I took Silver for a farewell trip, which ended with a high-speed dash down the hall, a screech of brakes, and a final shout of "Hi, yo, Silver! Awa-a-ay!" Teetering on the two rear wheels, I tipped farther back than I had ever gone before. It was a terrific last ride.



**How did Peg *expect* to feel when she got to stop using the wheelchair?**

**How did Peg *actually* feel when she told Silver goodbye? Name the word or phrase in the text that helps you know this.**

**What “fine times” did Peg have with Silver?**

**How has Peg’s perspective on life changed through her time in the wheelchair?**





# ***Writing - Detail Drill***

## ***Activity Page 12.3***

**Let's work on adding and improving details in your personal narratives!**

**Find details that describe:**

- ☐ **What something looks like**
- ☐ **What something feels like**
- ☐ **What something sounds like**
- ☐ **What something smells or tastes like**
- ☐ **A physical action**
- ☐ **A quote of what someone said - dialogue**

**If you can't find a detail, add one to your narrative!**



# ***Writing - Detail Drill***

## ***Activity Page 12.3***

**Use this chart to write down your details!**

Type of Detail	Detail from Narrative	Detail from Narrative
What something Looks like		
What something Feels like		
What something Sounds like		
What something Smells or Tastes like		
A Physical Action		
A quote of what someone said - Dialogue		