

Unit 1

Personal

Narratives

Lesson 13: Conclusions – Finishing Strong



Introducing Conclusions

What does an ending or conclusion do?



Introducing Conclusions

An ending or conclusion should:

- **Resolves the conflicts.**
- **Shows how characters have changed.**
- **Reminds the reader of the main point of the narrative.**
- **Answers any questions from the beginning.**



Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio

Chapter 18: Back to School

by Peg Kehret

In April, after months in hospitals and therapy at home, Peg is finally allowed to go back to school.

“Did the new braces work?” I asked.

Dorothy shook her head, no. “My brothers are building a ramp so I can get in and out of our house.”

I was glad that she was going home, and sad that she would always need the wheelchair.

When it was time for us to leave, I hugged Dorothy; wondering if I would ever see her again. We promised to write often, and that promise held back my tears.

We had good intentions, but letters between me and my roommates slowed, in both directions. There were two new girls in 202 now.

About two weeks after she was discharged, I got a letter from Dorothy. “I wanted to leave Sheltering Arms more than anything,” she wrote, “but now sometimes I wish I could go back. Isn’t that silly?”

It wasn’t silly to me. We were safe at the Sheltering Arms, cocooned in Room 202, where everyone understood what it was like to have polio. Getting around in the normal world, even in our own homes, was more difficult than hospital life.

How did Dorothy expect to feel when she left Sheltering Arms?

How did Dorothy actually feel?

Why does Peg think it makes sense that Dorothy wants to return to Sheltering Arms?

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Kehret uses a strong, vital verb when she writes that the girls were "cocooned in Room 202."

What is a cocoon?

Think about why Kehret might use "cocooned" to describe her stay at Sheltering Arms. What does this word suggest is happening to the girls while they are there?

In April, I got permission to return to school. I was still on my walking sticks, but I could go up and down stairs if I held the railing with both hands and had someone carry my sticks for me. I was slow because both feet had to touch every step, but I could make it.

Dad bought me a backpack for my books. I was to start by attending only in the mornings. If I could manage that, I would gradually work up to a full day.

On my first day back, I was so nervous my hands began to sweat and I was afraid the sticks would slip out of my grasp. What if people never quit staring? What if no one would carry my sticks up and down stairs for me? What if I couldn't get around in the crowded halls, and fell? Worst of all, what if I discovered that I was hopelessly behind the other kids in every class?

When I walked into my first-period class, which happened to be English, the students whistled and clapped and cheered, welcoming me back. All morning, kids begged for a turn to carry my sticks up or down the stairs. They offered to help me with the backpack. They walked ahead of me in the halls, clearing space.

Without knowing it, I had become a celebrity. Since I was the only person in Austin to get polio that year, the whole town had followed my progress while I was in the hospital. It seems all of Austin had been pulling for me, hoping I would walk again.

Rather than falling behind in my classes, it quickly became clear that I had remained equal or even pulled slightly ahead. By the end of the morning, I felt sure that I would pass the final exams.

My last class of the morning was chorus practice.

Thanks to all those songs in the dark, my singing voice was improved, even though I now used my stomach muscles rather than my diaphragm.

As I found my seat and placed my sticks on the floor beside me, I remembered how my skirt had jumped because of my twitching thigh muscle on Homecoming day; and how I had collapsed in the hall when chorus ended.

I had been gone seven months. I had been gone a lifetime. Although I returned on walking sticks, moving slowly and taking small steps, I knew that in many ways, I was stronger than when I left.

I opened my music and began to sing.

How is Peg transformed when she arrives back at school?

Concluding Thoughts

Activity page 13.1

Concluding Thoughts

Because the Small Steps conclusion comes at the end of a long piece of writing, it is several paragraphs long and includes several events, but it is still a final thought about the topic or main idea of the text.

Answer the following questions to think more closely about the conclusion of Small Steps. You may consult your Reader as you work.

1. What is the main plot of *Small Steps*? Describe what happens in one sentence.

2. Describe the plot of "Back to School" in one sentence.

3. How has Peg grown "stronger" from her time away?

Concluding Thoughts

Activity page 13.1

4. Why do you think Kehret chooses to end her book with her first day back to school?

5. Now complete the chart below.

Main Idea in <i>Small Steps</i>	Support in the Conclusion

Writing - Planning Conclusions

Activity Page 13.2

Now write your own conclusion to your narrative!

Include the following things:

➤ **Why was this experience memorable?**

➤ **How does this continue to impact you today?**

➤ **What did you learn from this experience?**

➤ **What could others learn from this experience?**

Writing - Drafting Conclusion

Now write your own conclusion to your narrative!

Include the following things:

- **Why was this experience memorable?**
- **How does this continue to impact you today?**
- **What did you learn from this experience?**
- **What could others learn from this experience?**

