Unit 1 Personal Narratives

Lesson 7: Chronology and Transition Words

Introduction to Polio
Activity 7.1

Read the questions below and then keep them in mind as you read "Introduction to Polio," which you'll find on this activity page after the questions. After reading the entire article, answer the questions.

1. What is polio?

2. What are the symptoms of polio?

3. What is the most important year in the history of polio? Why do you think it is the most important?

4. How did communities try to prevent polio epidemics before the vaccine was developed?

5. Why did Dr. Salk and Dr. Sabin share their research?

6. Are you at risk for polio?

Introduction to Polio Activity 7.1

Introduction to Polio

Polio is a serious and contagious illness caused by a virus. The polio virus spreads through contact with feces or less commonly, being coughed or sneezed on. Most people infected with the virus have no symptoms. For others it results in flu-like symptoms such as fever, sore throat, nausea, headache, and tiredness. But when the polio virus affects the brain and spinal cord it is very serious and can cause severe symptoms, including muscle weakness and paralysis, which may be temporary or permanent. While polio can infect anyone, it mostly affects children.

Stories and drawings from as early as the year 1500 BCE suggest that people have gotten sick with polio for a long time. In 1789 British physician Michael Underwood published the first description of polio in medical literature, and in 1840 a German doctor named it: "infantile paralysis."

Polio epidemics increased in the late 1800s, and polio epidemics occurred regularly in the United States throughout the first half of the 20th century. Because polio is so contagious, these epidemics were very frightening, and communities treated the threat very seriously. Swimming pools closed, and children were not allowed in other public gathering places, such as movie theaters. In the summer, when polio epidemics were most likely to occur, some parents kept their children indoors or made them wear gloves.

One of the most famous polio patients was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In 1921, when he was 39 years old and already an important politician, he developed polio. Although he recovered, and worked hard on rehabilitation, his legs were permanently paralyzed. Even so, he was elected president in 1932 and led the United States through the Great Depression and much of World War II. During his presidency he created the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, later called the March of Dimes, which raised money to help polio patients and to research a vaccine or cure for polio.

The March of Dimes funded research by two main scientists. Dr. Jonas Salk and Dr. Albert Sabin were both working on inventing vaccines, but using different approaches. Dr. Salk's vaccine was ready first in 1953. He was so sure of his vaccine that he started by testing it on himself and his family. Some of his lab workers also chose to have it tested on themselves. The results were promising. No one got sick, and everyone developed polio antibodies.

In 1954 Dr. Salk and his researchers vaccinated almost two million healthy school children. A year later the results were in: the vaccine worked! Over the next two years polio rates in the United States fell over 80%. Soon after, in 1959, Dr. Albert Sabin's version of the vaccine was also proven safe and effective.

Both Dr. Salk and Dr. Sabin chose to make the details of their research and how to manufacture their vaccines public. If they had chosen to keep it secret, they might have made a lot of money selling their vaccines, but they decided it was important to share so that the vaccines could be produced and distributed as quickly and inexpensively as possible.

Today, thanks to vaccination, polio has been eliminated in the Western hemisphere, which includes the United States, Mexico, Canada, Europe and South and Central America. While polio is still present in a few countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nigeria, programs dedicated to vaccination are working hard to wipe out polio worldwide.

Vocabulary

VOCABULARY

Core Vocabulary

virus, n. a tiny creature that infects a living organism with a disease

contagious, adj. capable of being passed from one person to another

vaccine, n. medicine given to prevent catching a disease

crippled, adj. disabled, unable to walk normally

Homecoming, n. fall celebration at many American high schools and colleges

float, n. a decorated sculpture or scene in a parade

buckled, v. bent or collapsed

limp, adj. wilted, not firm

woozy, adj. dizzy, weak

spasm, n. violent muscle contraction

spinal tap, n. a medical test taking fluid from around the spinal cord

diagnosis, n. specific disease or other cause of an illness

Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio

Chapter 1: The Diagnosis (Part 1)

by Peg Kehret

Peg Kehret is an award winning author of books for children. When she was 12 years old she contracted polio, which resulted in a long hospital stay and rehabilitation, but she finally made an almost complete recovery. Small Steps *is her memoir of that time in her life.*

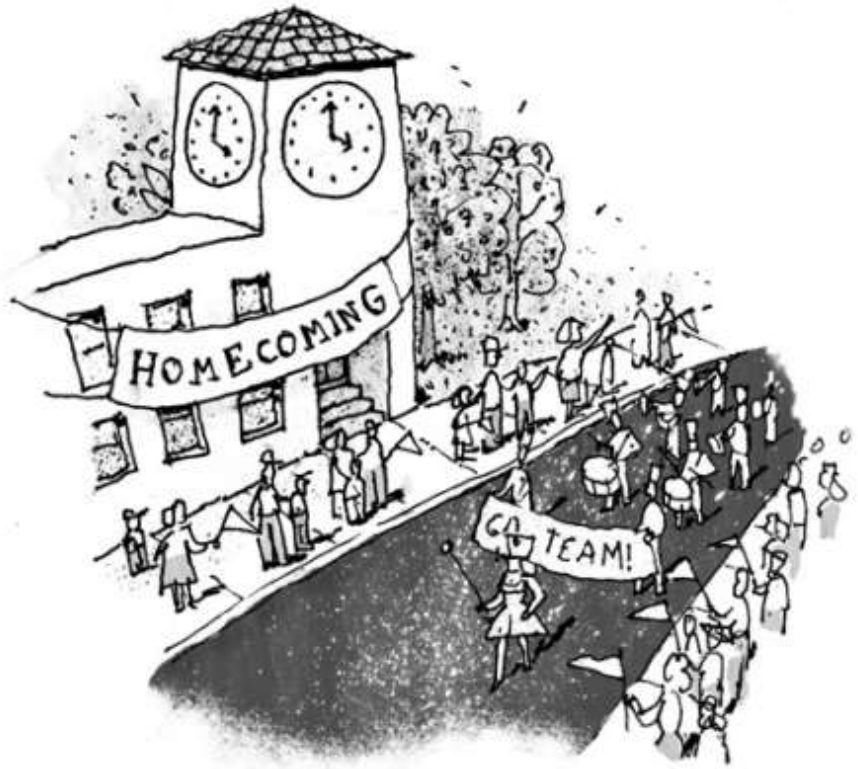
You will read several excerpts from Small Steps. *"The Diagnosis" is the first chapter in the book and subsequent chapter numbers reflect those in the original text.*

I never thought it would happen to me. Before a polio **vaccine** was developed, I knew that polio killed or **crippled** thousands of people, mainly children, each year, but I never expected it to invade my body, to paralyze *my* muscles.

Polio is a highly **contagious** disease. In 1949, there were 42,033 cases reported in the United States. One of those was a twelve-year-old girl in Austin, Minnesota:

Peg Schulze. Me.

My ordeal began on a Friday early in September. In school that morning, I glanced at the clock often, eager for the **Homecoming**



parade at four o'clock. As a seventh-grader, it was my first chance to take part in the Homecoming fun. For a week, my friends and I had spent every spare moment working on the seventh-grade **float**, and we were sure it would win first prize.

My last class before lunch was chorus. I loved to sing, and we were practicing a song whose lyrics are the inscription on the Statue of Liberty. Usually the words "Give me your tired, your poor …" brought goosebumps to my arms, but on Homecoming day, I was distracted by a twitching muscle in my left thigh. As I sang, a section of my blue skirt popped up and down as if jumping beans lived in my leg.

I pressed my hand against my thigh, trying to make the muscle be still, but it leaped and jerked beneath my fingers. I stretched my leg forward and rotated the ankle. Twitch, twitch. Next I tightened my leg muscles for a few seconds and then relaxed them. Nothing helped.

The bell rang. When I started toward my locker, my legs **buckled** as if I had nothing but cotton inside my skin. I collapsed, scattering my books on the floor.

Someone yelled, "Peg fainted," but I knew I had not fainted because my eyes stayed open and I was conscious. I sat on the floor for a moment.

"Are you all right?" my friend Karen asked as she helped me stand up.

"Yes. I don't know what happened."

"You look pale."

"I'm fine," I insisted. "Really."

I put my books in my locker and went home for lunch, as I did every day.

Two days earlier, I'd gotten a sore throat and headache. Now I also felt weak, and my back hurt. What rotten timing, I thought, to get sick on Homecoming day.

Although my legs felt wobbly, I walked the twelve blocks home. I didn't tell my mother about the fall or about my headache and other problems because I knew she would make me stay home.

I was glad to sit down to eat lunch. Maybe, I thought, I should not have stayed up so late the night before. Or maybe I'm just hungry.

When I reached for my milk, my hand shook so hard I couldn't pick up the glass. I grasped it with both hands; they trembled so badly that milk sloshed over the side.

Mother put her hand on my forehead. "You feel hot," she said. "You're going straight to bed."

It was a relief to lie down. I wondered why my back hurt; I hadn't lifted anything heavy. I couldn't imagine why I was so tired, either. I felt as if I had not slept in days.

I fell asleep right away and woke three hours later with a stiff neck. My back hurt even more than before, and now my legs ached as well. Several times I had painful muscle **spasms** in my legs and toes. The muscles tightened until my knees bent and my toes curled, and I couldn't straighten my legs or toes until the spasms passed.

I looked at the clock; the Homecoming parade started in fifteen minutes.

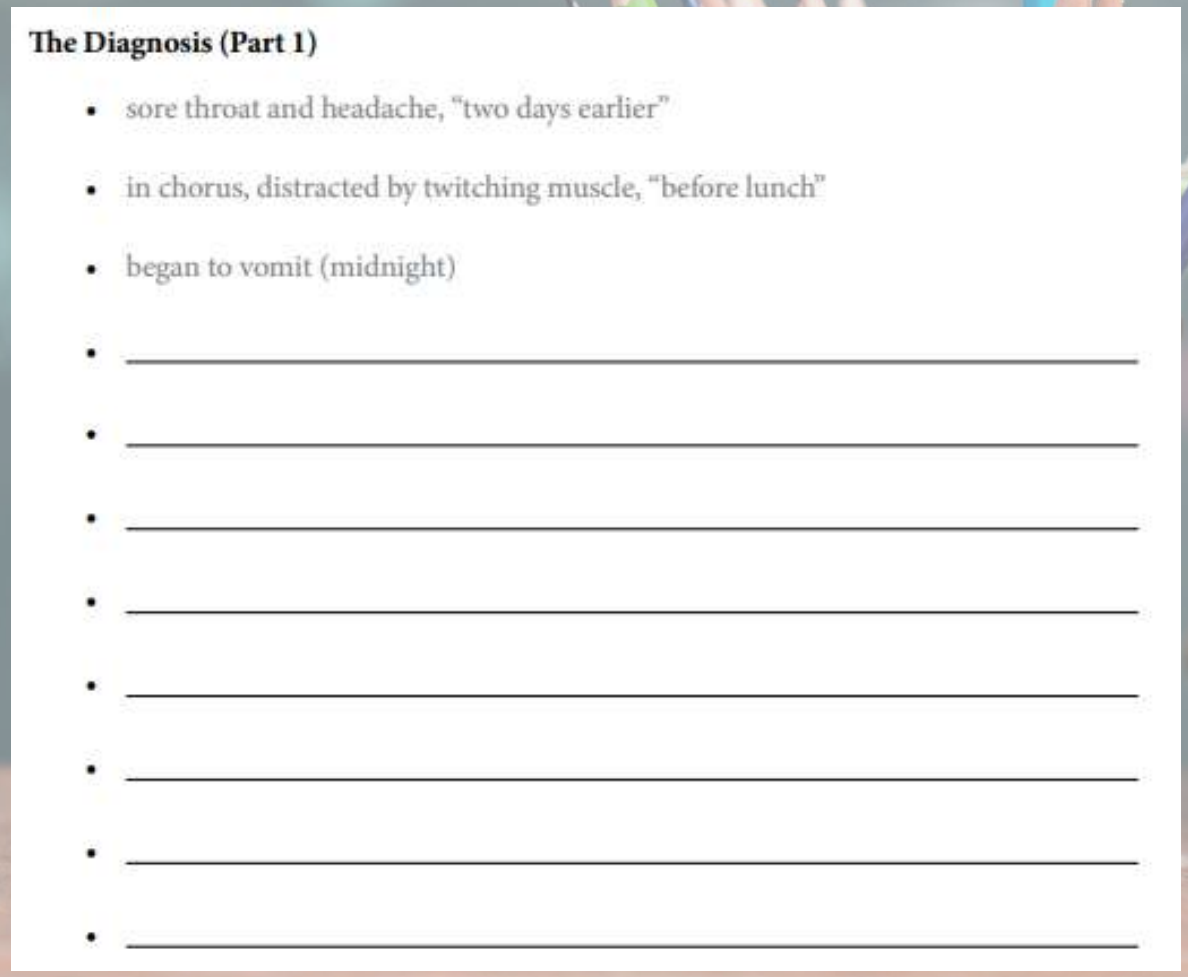
"I want to go to the parade," I said.

Mother stuck a thermometer in my mouth, said, "One hundred and two," and called the doctor. The seventh-grade float would have to win first place without me. I went back to sleep.

Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio

The Diagnosis (Part 1)

Activity 7.2



The Diagnosis (Part 1)

- sore throat and headache, "two days earlier"
- in chorus, distracted by twitching muscle, "before lunch"
- began to vomit (midnight)
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio

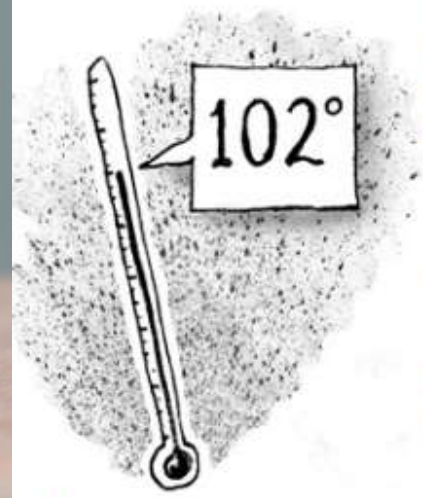
Chapter 1: The Diagnosis (Part 2)

by Peg Kehret

Dr. Wright came, took my temperature, listened to my breathing, and talked with Mother. Mother sponged my forehead with a cold cloth. I dozed, woke, and slept again.

At midnight, I began to vomit. Mother and Dad helped me to the bathroom; we all assumed I had the flu.

Dr. Wright returned before breakfast the next morning and took my temperature again. "Still one hundred and two," he said. He helped me sit up, with my feet dangling over the side of the bed. He tapped my knees with his rubber mallet; this was supposed to make my legs jerk. They didn't. They hung **limp** and unresponsive.



I was too **woozy** from pain and fever to care.

He ran his fingernail across the bottom of my foot, from the heel to the toes. It felt awful, but I couldn't pull my foot away. He did the same thing on the other foot, with the same effect. I wished he would leave me alone so I could sleep.

"I need to do a **spinal tap** on her," he told my parents. "Can you take her to the hospital right away?"

When Dr. Wright got the results, he asked my parents to go to another room. While I dozed again, he told them the **diagnosis**, and they returned alone to tell me.

Mother held my hand.

"You have polio," Dad said, as he stroked my hair back from my forehead. "You will need to go to a special hospital for polio patients, in Minneapolis."

Polio! Panic shot through me, and I began to cry. How could I have polio? I didn't know anyone who had the disease. Where did the **virus** come from? How did it get in my body?

I didn't want to have polio; I didn't want to leave my family and go to a hospital one hundred miles away.

As we drove home to pack, I sat slumped in the back seat. "How long will I have to stay in the hospital?" I asked.

"Until you're well," Mother said.

When we got home, I was not allowed to leave the car, not even to say good-bye to Grandpa, who lived with us, or to B.J., my dog. We could not take a chance of spreading the deadly virus. Our orders were strict: I must **contaminate** no one.

"Karen called," Mother said when she returned with a suitcase. "The seventh-grade float won second prize."

I was too sick and frightened to care.

Grandpa waved at me through the car window. Tears **glistened** on his cheeks. I had never seen my grandfather cry.

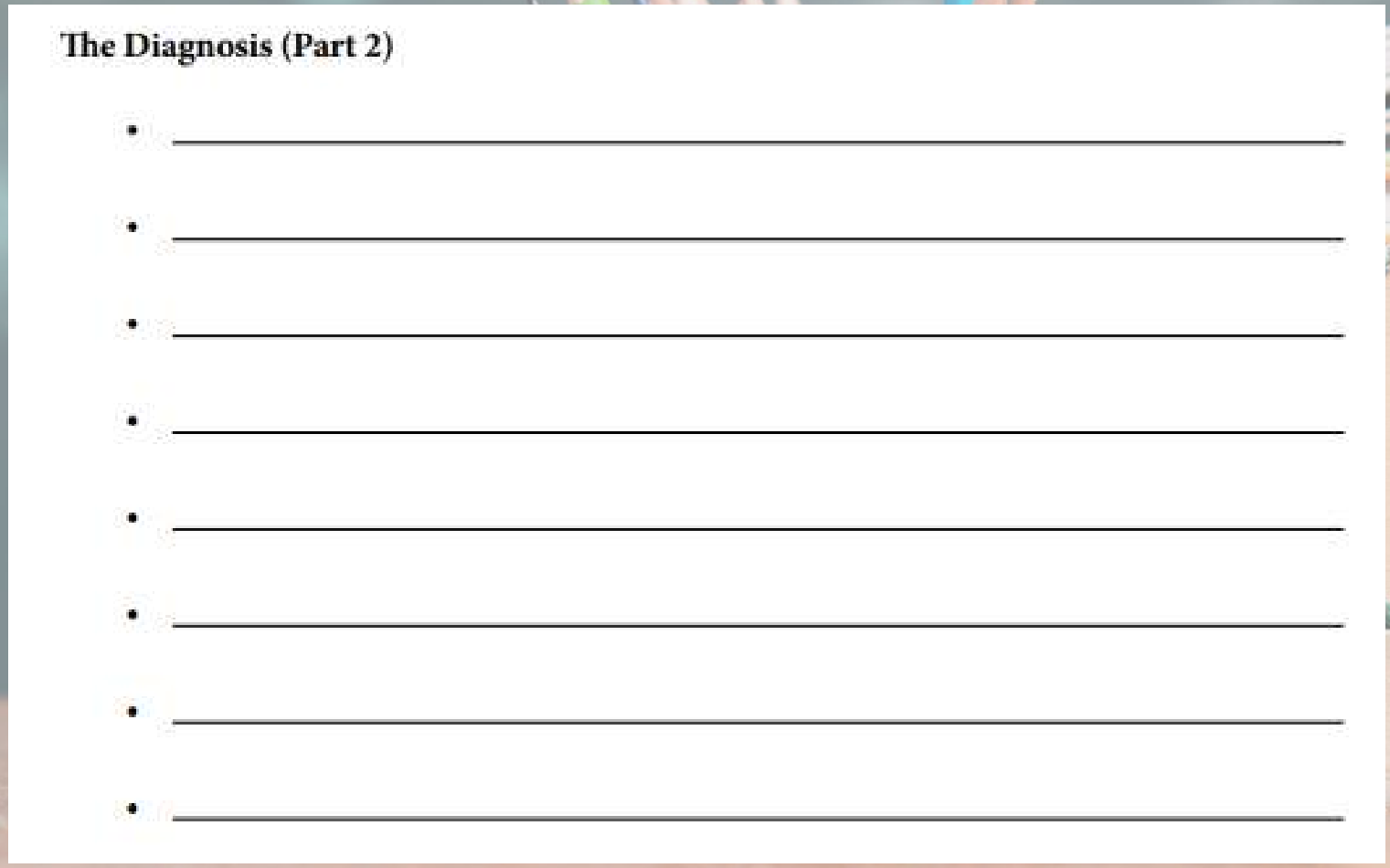
Later that morning, I walked into the **isolation ward** of the Sheltering Arms Hospital in Minneapolis and went to bed in a private room. No one was allowed in except the doctors and nurses, and they wore masks. My parents stood outside on the grass, waving bravely and blowing kisses through the window. Exhausted, feverish, and scared, I fell asleep.

When I woke up, I was paralyzed.

Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio

The Diagnosis (Part 2)

Activity 7.2

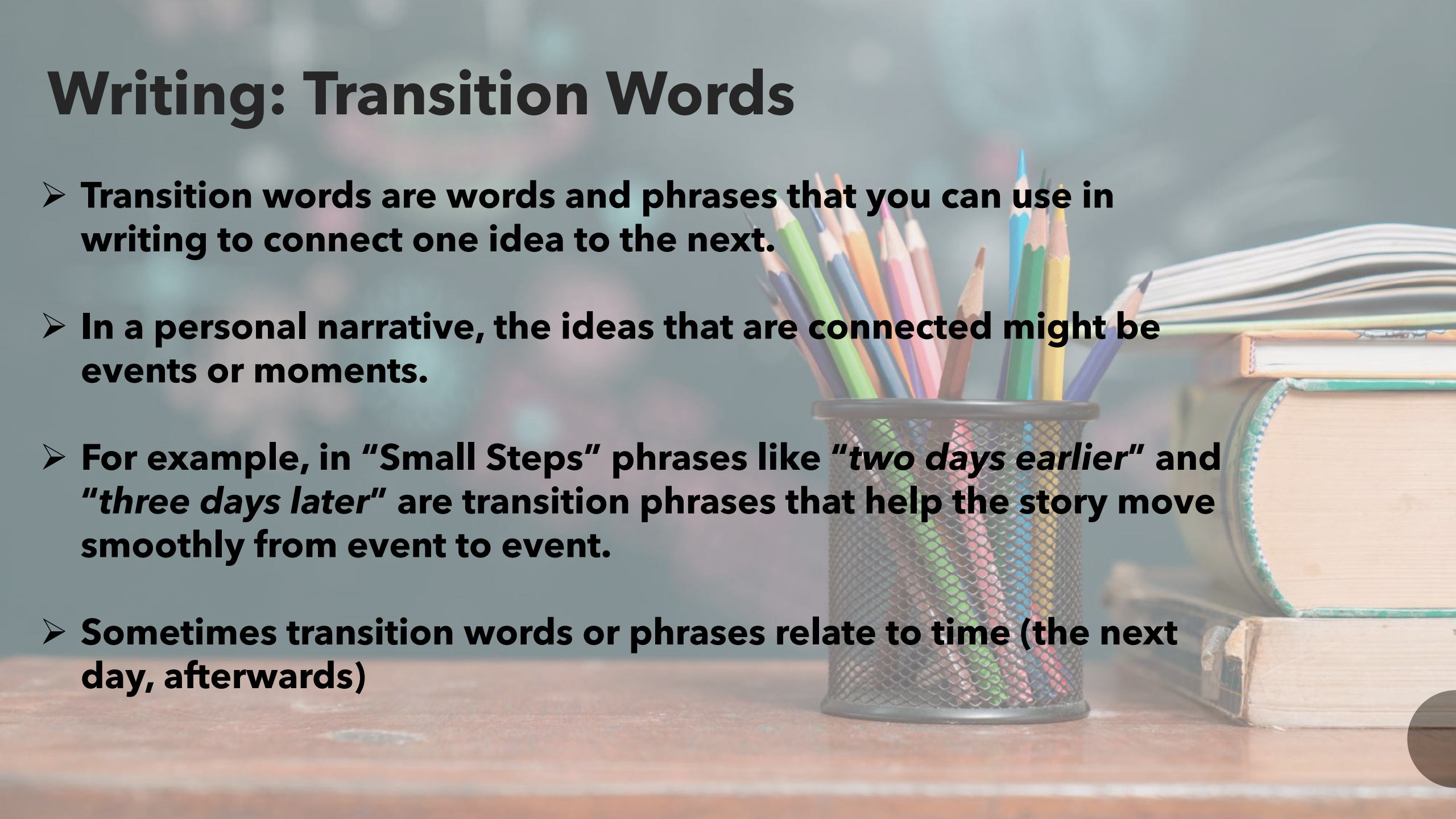


The Diagnosis (Part 2)

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Writing: Transition Words

- **Transition words are words and phrases that you can use in writing to connect one idea to the next.**
- **In a personal narrative, the ideas that are connected might be events or moments.**
- **For example, in "Small Steps" phrases like "*two days earlier*" and "*three days later*" are transition phrases that help the story move smoothly from event to event.**
- **Sometimes transition words or phrases relate to time (the next day, afterwards)**



Writing: Transition Words
Activity 7.3

1. Reread the following paragraph from "A Good Lie" and underline what you think are the transitional words and phrases. Look for words that create a sequence, or connect the ideas in a sentence to the previous sentence.

"It was a great party! Because it was almost Halloween, we told ghost stories in the dark, with flashlights. We ate candy and popcorn as we watched a spooky movie. At last, we fell asleep. Then, in the middle of the night I woke up, paralyzed with shame and fear. Horror of horrors—I had wet the bed!"

Writing: Transition Words
Activity 7.3

2. Transition Word Bank

Transition Words and Phrases Related to Time

Transition Words and Phrases Not Related to Time

Writing: Transition Words

"A Good Lie"

"A Good Lie"	
Main Characters	**Character Traits (2-3)**
Setting (Where)	**Setting (When)**
Events	
First,	
Next,	
Then,	
After that,	
Finally,	
Why is this memorable?	
How did this make the main character feel?	

Writing: Brainstorm Narrative Topics Activity 7.4

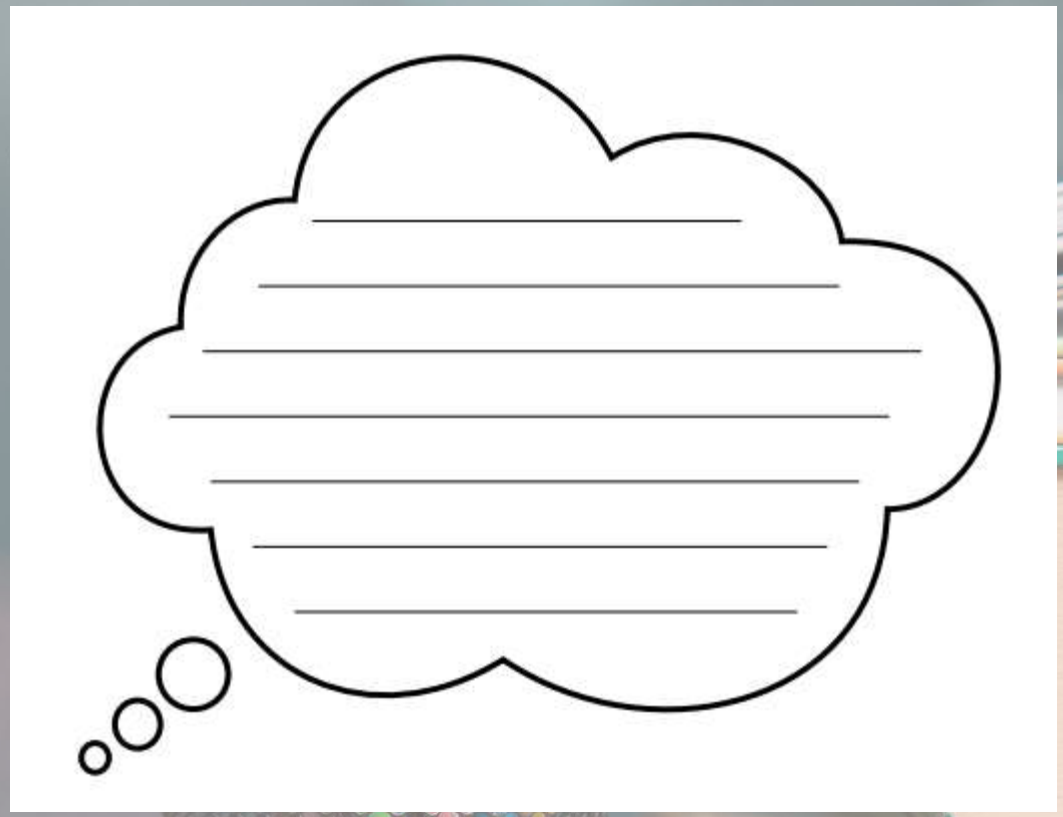
- **What have the personal narratives we've read so far been about?**

Writing: Brainstorm Narrative Topics Activity 7.4

- **What other topics or types of memories would make a good personal narrative?**

Writing: Brainstorm Narrative Topics Activity 7.4

- **Brainstorm three possible memories to write about for your personal narrative!**
- **Remember that it must be a true story that happened to you!**



Writing: Brainstorm Narrative Topics Activity 7.4

- **Which memory is the most interesting to you?**
- **Circle the memory you want to write about!**