Narrative Writing Unit
Grade 8 ELA, MacDonald Middle School

Unit Goal:
Over an extended time frame, students will write a personal narrative to develop real experiences using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Table of Contents:

Daily Lesson Plans:

Pg. 3       Day 1: Silencing the Watcher
Pg. 4       Day 2: Elements of the Personal Narrative
Pg. 5       Day 3: The Importance of Focus
Pg. 6       Day 4: The Importance of an Effective Lead
Pg. 7       Day 5: Dialogue Tags and Punctuation
Pg. 8       Day 6: Show Don’t Tell
Pg. 9       Day 7: Evaluating Model Essays
Pg. 10      Days 8 & 9: Handwrite Draft
Pg. 11      Day 10: Peer Revision Conferences
Pg. 12      Day 11 & 12: Typing the Second Draft
Pg. 13      Day 13: Revisions - Sensory Details
Pg. 14      Day 14: Revisions – Rock Activity
Pg. 15      Day 15: Revisions - Precise Language & Transition Words
Pg. 17      Days 16 & 17: Type – Final Revisions/Edits

Handouts:

Pg. 18      Hunting is Not Those Heads on the Wall
Pg. 20      Personal Narrative Notes
| Pg. 22 | The Importance of Focus                        |
| Pg. 25 | The Importance of an Effective Lead           |
| Pg. 30 | Effective Use of Dialogue                    |
| Pg. 36 | Show, Don't Tell & Group Activity Cards      |
| Pg. 46 | Personal Narrative Examples                  |
| Pg. 55 | Tips for Drafting the Personal Narrative     |
| Pg. 56 | Personal Narrative Peer Check                |
| Pg. 57 | Revising Your Personal Narrative: Adding Sensory Details |
| Pg. 60 | A Trio of Revising Activities               |
| Pg. 65 | Personal Narrative Rubric                    |
Day 1

Title: Silencing the Watcher

Objective: Annotate article and answer questions, citing textual evidence.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Materials: Handout – “Hunting is Not Those Heads on the Wall”

Instructional Sequence:

1. Introduce narrative unit by posing the question, “We’ve read many short stories and novels this year in English class. Think of one technique that an author used to make his or her story interesting.” Allow time for partners to share their ideas, and then invite students to share with the larger group. Bridge these ideas to the narrative writing unit by telling students that they will now be the authors and will tell a story from their own life in an interesting and engaging way.

2. Next, explain the concept of freewriting to the students: a prewriting exercise in which you write continuously for a set period of time, disregarding spelling and grammar, in order to generate ideas on a topic. Then, ask them to freewrite for five minutes on the prompt: “When I write I…” After completing, ask them to keep it off to the side for use later in the hour.

3. Distribute the handout “Hunting is Not Those Heads on the Wall”. Read the text aloud once. Then have students read it again quietly, annotating the text as they read. (This assumes that students have already been taught annotation symbols, but if they have not, these symbols can be taught/used: underline important ideas, double underline the most important ideas, put a triangle around unknown words, circle important vocabulary, and put a question mark by things you don’t understand or where you have questions.

4. After annotating, have students reply to the questions 1-3 on the back. This can be completed as individuals, or scaffolded by allowing pairs to do it or completing as a whole group with teacher guidance.

5. Then, direct students to go back and read their freewrites from the beginning of class, reflect on their “watchers”, and then respond to question 4.

Assessment: Completion of “Hunting is Not Those Heads on the Wall” handout with appropriate annotation and correct question responses that use textual evidence for support.
Day 2

Title: Elements of the Personal Narrative

Objective: Use the characteristics of a personal narrative to brainstorm topics.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Materials: Handout – Personal Narrative Notes

Instructional Sequence:

1. Have students take out their completed handout from yesterday, “Hunting is Not Those Heads on the Wall”. Review and discuss the answers to questions 1-3, emphasizing that they should silence their “Watchers” as they begin prewriting their personal narratives.

2. Next, display the personal narrative notes and have students copy down the first section: what is a personal narrative? Then, display the question: how is a personal narrative similar to and different from an autobiography? Allow partners to discuss, then call on students to give input to the whole group. Guide the discussion to reflect that personal narratives are also true stories told from personal experience, but that it focuses on one specific memory instead of a lifetime of experiences.

3. Continue copying the notes, directing students to finish the section on the characteristics of an effective personal narrative, stopping as needed to explain and discuss. Then, display the second question for partners to discuss: what similarities do you notice between these two topics - characteristics of effective personal narratives and the literary techniques used to tell short stories. Allow time for partners to share their ideas, and then invite students to share with the larger group.

4. Finally, display directions: create a list of ten life events on which you might like to write a personal narrative. Give quiet time for completion of the list. Ask students to keep their completed lists for tomorrow.

Assessment: Completion of list with ten topics appropriate for a personal narrative.
Day 3

Title: The Importance of Focus

Objective: Write about a personal experience with focus.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Materials: Handout – The Importance of Focus

Instructional Sequence:

1. Have students take out their lists from yesterday and check them for completion. Then, have students do the give one/get one activity with three different partners: get up from seat, circulate room to find a partner, give one idea from list, get one idea from another list and write it down. Then, ask students to share good topic ideas that they got from others.

2. Next, distribute the cloze notes sheet and display “The Importance of Focus”. Direct students to copy the notes, stopping as needed to explain and discuss.

3. Then, read the direction and the sample paragraph for the Maggy activity. Have students complete it individually, share with their partners, and then discuss as a whole group.

4. Finally, read the directions for the assignment. Display an online timer for three minutes and have students put down their heads and relive the memory. Review the guidelines for freewriting, display a 10 minute timer, and complete the freewrite. If time allows, students may share with a peer of their choice.

Assessment: Completion of freewrite on a topic with appropriate focus.
Day 4

**Title:** The Importance of an Effective Lead

**Objective:** Draft two leads for a personal narrative that use different methods.

**Standards:**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.a Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

**Materials:** Handout – The Importance of an Effective Lead

**Instructional Sequence:**

1. Begin the class by posing the discussion question to student pairs, “Why is it important to begin a narrative in an interesting way?” Allow time for discussion, then discuss as a whole group.

2. Next, distribute the cloze notes sheet and display “The Importance of an Effective Lead” notes. Direct students to copy the notes, stopping as needed to explain and discuss.

3. Then, have student volunteers read the different types of leads and their examples. Direct students to put a star next to the ones they like the best, choosing a minimum of two. After this, direct student pairs to complete 1-4 on determining the type of lead. Call on students to share their answers, ensuring that they’ve correctly marked: 1. quote; 2. action; 3. description; 4. dialogue.

4. Finally, read the directions for the assignment. Direct students to refer to their brainstorming lists, and ensure that they know to try two different types of leads.

**Assessment:** Completion of two effective leads that use different methods.
Day 5

**Title:** Effective Use of Dialogue

**Objective:** Correctly punctuate dialogue and vary tag usage.

**Standards:**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**Materials:** Handout – Effective Use of Dialogue

**Instructional Sequence:**

1. Begin class by having students take out their leads from yesterday. Direct them to choose one lead, read it to a partner, and then the partner guesses which type of lead was used. If their answers are different, they should discuss and come to a decision on the correct type of lead. Then, partners should switch roles and repeat.

2. Next, distribute the handout entitled “Effective Use of Dialogue” notes. Direct students to copy the notes, stopping as needed to explain and discuss. Also go over the rules for punctuation and the examples of formatted/unformatted dialogue. The teacher may wish to increase student engagement is this part by having partners read these to each other or by using choral responses.

3. Proceed to the punctuation practice – part 1. The teacher should model several for the students, then let student pairs complete some together, and then allow for individual completion followed by reviewing the correct answers.

4. Finally, do the tag revision section together. First review the examples of dialogue tags in the speech bubble. Then, complete the exercise by starting with teacher modeling, then doing them as partner work, and finally giving several for independent practice. If time allows, go over possible answers together to provide immediate feedback, or allow students to share with a small group.

**Assessment:** Observation of participation in the dialogue punctuation practice and tag revision activities.
Day 6

Title: Show, Don’t Tell

Objective: Write descriptive details that show rather than tell.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3d Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

Materials: Handout – Show, Don’t Tell & Group Activity Cards

Instructional Sequence:

1. Begin by asking students to vote on which of the following is a more interesting story about your morning: “I had a bad morning” or “First the cat knocked over my coffee, then my car wouldn’t start, and to top it all off, a traffic jam almost made me late for school”. Ask the students why the second version was better, and then connect this to how details that show the reader what you experienced are more effective descriptions than simple telling statements.

2. Next, distribute the packet entitled “Show, Don’t Tell”. Direct students to copy the notes, stopping as needed to explain and discuss. Then read over the examples, and proceed to the practice. Model the first two practice sentences, then have student pairs complete three and four. Finally, give the three remaining sentences for independent practice, asking students to share examples after completion.

3. Then, review the instructions for the team activity, distribute the cards, and have the students complete. Signal them at regular intervals to switch papers.

4. Finally, read the directions for the assignment. Direct students to refer to their brainstorming lists, and ensure that they understand the directions. Assign it for homework, or begin in class if time allows.

Assessment: Completion of writing prompt with details that focus on showing instead of telling.
Day 7

Title: Evaluating Model Essays

Objective: Evaluate the quality of example narratives using the rubric.

Standards:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Materials: Handout – Personal Narrative Examples

Instructional Sequence:

1. Distribute the personal narrative example packets. Direct the students to turn to the second page, then read over the requirements outlined on the rubric. Point out those items that have been discussed in the prewriting exercises, and those that will be a focus in revisions (sensory language and word choice in the description section). Also, demonstrate how to calculate the weighted categories.

2. Then, have partners read the first example, “My Memoir”, and score it with the rubric. Direct them to provide an example from the text in the comment boxes that provides evidence for the score given. After they have completed (approximately 15 minutes), display the teacher version of the rubric. Read through the scores, explaining the rational for each one, and direct students to compare their scores. Invite students to discuss where they had similarities/differences and why.

3. Next, have students individually read the second example, “Brownie the Horse”, and repeat the process of filling out the rubric, providing evidence for scores, and comparing to the teacher rubric.

4. Finally, have students do the following quickwrite as an exit ticket: “What characteristics does a quality personal narrative possess?”

Assessment: Correctly cite at least two indicators of quality narrative writing in the quickwrite.
Days 8 & 9

Title: Drafting the Personal Narrative

Objective: Write a rough draft of your personal narrative.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3a Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Materials: Handout – Tips for Drafting the Personal Narrative

Instructional Sequence:

1. Begin the class by giving student partners these two questions to answer: 1. What does it mean for a personal narrative to be focused, and 2. How should you begin a personal narrative? Elicit answers from students, and discuss how leads and focus are two important items that they will need to keep in mind while drafting their narratives.

2. Next, distribute the handout – “Tips for Drafting the Personal Narrative”. Read over the reminders and directions for completing the draft.

3. The rest of this and the subsequent class period should be given as quiet work time. As students finish, have a teacher-student conference in which the draft is checked for focus, content (lead, set the context, chronological sequence of events, conclusion), and appropriate narrative technique (first person and present tense).

4. If students do not finish the draft in the two class periods, it should be assigned as homework and checked on day 10 while peer revision conferences are taking place.

Assessment: Completion of a rough draft with correct focus, content, and narrative technique.
Day 10

Title: Peer Revision Conferences

Objective: Improve the personal narrative rough draft through peer revision conferences.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Materials: Handout – Personal Narrative Peer Check

Instructional Sequence:

1. Direct students to get out their personal narrative rough drafts and distribut the handout – “Personal Narrative Peer Check”. Read through the directions and categories on the peer check form, and discuss the importance of providing honest, constructive feedback. Have student volunteers give examples and non-examples of constructive feedback.

2. Next, have students exchange papers, and then quietly read and respond in writing by filling out the handout. After a set period of time (approximately 15 minutes), have student pairs discuss feedback.

3. Time allowing, students should repeat the process with a different partner.

4. Finally, have students fill out a sticky note with a “What Stuck?” theme, naming at least one change that they need to make in order to improve their personal narrative.

5. Assign further revisions as needed for homework. Students should be ready to type a second draft during the next class period.

Assessment: Name at least one reasonable revision on the “What Stuck” writing.
Days 11 & 12

Title: Typing the Second Draft

Objective: Make a typed second draft of the personal narrative.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Materials: Laptops

Instructional Sequence:

1. Direct students to get out their personal narrative rough drafts and assign laptops.

2. Model the formatting process on the overhead, having students follow along: right justify name, date, and hour; bold and center the title; indent, left justify, and double space the first paragraph.

3. Give students work time to type directly from their handwritten drafts. Circulate the room to check formatting and answer questions as needed.

4. After completing their typing, students should print their second drafts. Direct them to bring them to class the following day for use in revision activities.

Assessment: Completing the typed second draft.
Day 13

Title: Revisions – Sensory Details

Objective: Revise your narrative by adding sensory details.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3d Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Materials: Handout – Revising Your Personal Narrative: Adding Sensory Details; 30 sets of highlighters – each containing a yellow, orange, green, pink, and blue highlighter

Instructional Sequence:

1. Ask student partners to respond to the question, “What is the difference between revising and editing?” Call on students to share their ideas, guiding them toward the conclusion that revisions are changes to the content and organization of a paper, while editing involves proofreading for errors. Finally, teach students the ARMS acronym for revising: adding, removing, moving around, and starting over.

2. Distribute the handout, “Revising Your Personal Narrative: Adding Sensory Details” and a set of highlighters to each student. Read the model paragraph aloud, and then ask student pairs to color code each sentence for the appropriate sensory detail. Some sentences contain more than one type of sensory detail, so each sentence may contain more than one coor. Then, display a clean copy of the paragraph on the document camera, cold call students to share their color for each sentence, discuss, and mark up the paragraph on the overhead.

3. Next, complete the 2nd page of the handout by directing students to quietly observe the classroom for one minute. Then, partners should work together to compose a sentence for each sense. Allow several volunteers to give examples for each sense.

4. Now students should apply their knowledge to their personal narrative. Students should get out their drafts and choose one small moment to expand with sensory details. Direct them to fill out the brainstorming chart on the final page of the handout, and then revise their draft to include these sensory details. Students will likely need to finish their revisions as homework.

Assessment: Addition of five sensory details to the personal narrative draft.
Day 14

Title: Revisions – Rock Activity

Objective: Revise your narrative by adding descriptive details.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3d Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Materials: sets of three similar rocks for each group (about 8 sets for groups of 4)

Instructional Sequence:

1. First, have students get out their drafts from yesterday and share their sensory detail revision with their partners.

2. Divide students into groups of four and distribute a set of three similar rocks to each group. Direct the group to choose one rock, designate a recorder, and then give them five minutes to write a paragraph describing the rock they chose.

3. Next, place three similar rocks on the document camera, and number them 1, 2, and 3. The teacher should secretly choose one to describe and model a descriptive paragraph, including intricate details about shape, color, texture, and other pertinent sensory details. After completing the paragraph, have students vote for which one was described by holding up one, two, or three fingers.

4. Tell groups that their objective to revise their original descriptive paragraph with such careful detail that another group could guess which of the three was described. Give five to ten minutes for revisions, then have them trade their rocks and paragraphs with the neighboring group. They should guess which rock was described, underline the details that helped them identify it, and then share guesses.

5. Finally, students need to apply this technique to their personal narrative draft. Direct them to get out their typed draft, choose a specific object in the paper, and expand the object’s description. Revisions may need to be finished as homework.

Assessment: Addition of five sensory details to the personal narrative draft.
Day 15

Title: Revisions – Precise Language & Transition Words

Objective: Revise your narrative by adding transition words and precise verbs and adjectives.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3c Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3d Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Materials: Handout – A Trio of Revising Activities, class set of thesauri

Instructional Sequence:

1. First, have students get out their drafts from yesterday and share their sensory detail revisions with their partners.

2. Then, distribute the handout “A Trio of Revising Activities” and work through each section. For the transition words, have student individually complete the sequencing activity, compare answers with their partner, and then discuss the answers with the whole group. Then, complete the partner talk and share with the large group. Finally, have students quietly complete the application by adding three transition words from the list to their personal narrative draft.

3. Next complete the “Curing Gottitus” section by discussing the importance of vivid verbs, modeling the first few questions, having student pairs do a few and share, and having students finish up the remaining questions independently. Discuss their choices, then give quiet time to revise three verbs in their drafts, using the thesaurus as needed.

4. Finally, finish the vivid adjectives revision activities. Read the example paragraphs aloud and have students complete their paragraphs independently. Have student partners share their choices, and then volunteers can share with the whole group. Give time to revise three adjectives in their narrative draft, using the thesaurus as needed.

5. If additional time remains, encourage students to use any of the revising techniques to further improve their draft.
**Assessment:** Addition of three transition words and revising three verbs and adjectives for preciseness in the personal narrative draft.
Days 16 & 17

Title: Making a Final Copy of Your Personal Narrative

Objective: Type revisions and edit into your personal narrative to make a final copy.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Materials: Laptops, Handout - Personal Narrative Rubric

Instructional Sequence:

1. Distribute the rubric and review all grading requirements.

2. Direct students to get out their personal narrative drafts and assign laptops.

3. Students should use time to type in their handwritten revisions, proofread their work independently and/or with a peer, and make final changes. Circulate the room to check formatting and answer questions as needed.

4. At the end of the second day, students must hand in their final packet: rubric, final copy, typed second draft, and handwritten first draft.

Assessment: Completion of the personal narrative essay – to be evaluated with the rubric.
Hunting is Not Those Heads on the Wall

Some of you might want to be writers or might simply love to write, doing it not only without complaint but for the sheer pleasure of hearing yourself on the page. Maybe you’ve always felt that way. Maybe you’ve spent Saturday afternoons composing stories and writing them down and reading them to your best friend. Maybe you’ve faithfully kept a journal for years. Maybe you got A’s in English, and maybe you even liked The Scarlet Letter.

A few years back, I would have hated you for being like that. I envied people who made writing seem so easy and fun, because it was just the opposite for me. As a child, I composed stories in my head—that’s something we all do when we’re young—but I didn’t like to write them down. To write them down was to put them to death. For years, I tried to keep a journal, but the entries quickly grew shorter and shorter and finally dwindled to nothing. I hated high school English and high school English hated me. I clung to my C’s for dear life.

In short, writing was a painfully slow process for me and remained so for many years. I recalled that pain when I first did this exercise. I wrote about my obsession with neat drafts and IBM selectric typewriters, and how I’d wanted to write beautiful prose right out of the gate. I wrote about the white, glaring, pupilless eyes of a blank page, daring me to write the first word.

Several years ago, I read an essay by the writer, Amiri Baraka, titled “Hunting Is Not Those Heads on the Wall.” I return to the piece time and again as I struggle to write and to teach writing. Baraka argues that how we bring art into being is far more important than the thing itself. The painting, the poem, the article, or the story—the “artifacts” that remain after the artist has completed the act of creation—are only “shadowy replicas” of the thought that made them.

“Thought is more important than art,” he writes. “Art is one of the many products of thought. An impressive one, perhaps the most impressive one, but to revere art, and have no understanding of the process that forces it into existence, is finally not even to understand what art is.”

The truth of Baraka’s words became clear to me one night while talking to a good friend about our families. We were talking in the loose and unstructured way that friends do (contrary to the way I used to write), and I realized that after an hour of this, we had both stumbled on significant insights about her relationship with her father and mine with my mother. We had not tried to be insightful, but we had unwittingly created the conditions that made it possible. We had no preconceived notions about the outcome of our conversation. Rather, we were willing to say things that were not completely figured out, and shared delight in the act of talking frankly to each other.

Not long after that I began to pay more attention to the way I go about writing and less to what I want to turn out—to the process rather than the artifact. I realized that if my writing could be as free and easy as that conversation with my friend, it would yield more sunlight and surprise, too. And it could be rewarding, rather than slow and painful.

Beginning with the four words, “When I write, I…” may have started you thinking about your writing process. Maybe your journal entry was a celebration of a lifetime of writing poems on the backs of telephone bills, or more like mine: a long scribbled sigh about how hard it is sometimes.

Whether you find writing a constant joy or a constant struggle, it is useful to see yourself as two writers instead of one—a critic and a child—who must learn to get along but often don’t. Even though you love writing, you are apt to hear the loud voice of your internal critic—your “Watcher at the Gates,” as novelist Gail Godwin calls it—always daring you to fail. In many of the exercises that follow, we’ll ask you to silence that Watcher to give the child a chance to dream, to imagine, to surprise you with what it knows, transforming the blank page from an adversary into a playground of possibility.

Answer the questions below in complete sentences:

1. Why did the author say that beginning to write felt like the “white, glaring, pupilless eyes of a blank page” glaring at him? Put a star in the margin next to the place in the text that helped you answer this question.

2. What did the article “Hunting Is Not Those Heads on the Wall” help the author realize about writing? Put a square in the margin next to the place in the text that helped you answer this question.

3. The author suggests that writers ought to silence their “Watcher” in order to do their best work. What does this mean? Put a smiley face in the margin next to the place in the text that helped you answer this question.

4. Look back at your freewrite. How does your “Watcher” try to close the door of inspiration? One way to stop your “Watcher” from making it difficult to get any writing done is to write it a letter. Write quickly, filling up the space below:

   Dear Watcher...
Personal Narrative Notes

- What is a personal narrative?
  - A true story of something that happened in your life
  - A single memory told in detail
  - An experience that you can reflect on and draw meaning from

- What are the characteristics of an effective personal narrative?
  - Beginning:
    - Captures the reader's interest
    - Starts in the midst of the action
    - Establishing a context and point of view
    - Introducing the characters and setting
  - Sequence of events:
    - Focuses exclusively on one experience
    - Organizes an event sequence that unfolds logically
    - Uses chronological order and flashback as needed
    - Distinguishes important events from unimportant ones, building to the most important moment of the story
    - Uses signal words: first, next, suddenly, as soon as, finally, etc.
  - Narrative techniques:
    - Uses dialogue between characters
    - Uses precise descriptive words and phrases
    - Uses sensory language
    - Narration is reflective and reports internal thoughts
  - Includes a conclusion that reflects on the importance of the experience.
  - Demonstrates good command of the conventions of standard written English.
Personal Narrative Notes

• What is a ______________ ____________?
  o A ______________ story of something that happened in your life
  o A ______________ ____________ told in detail
  o An experience that you can ____________ on and draw ____________ from

• What are the characteristics of an effective personal narrative?
  o ____________:
    ▪ Captures the reader’s ____________
    ▪ Starts in the midst of the ____________
    ▪ Establishing a ____________ and point of view
    ▪ Introducing the ____________ and ____________
  o ____________ of events:
    ▪ Focuses exclusively on ____________ experience
    ▪ Organizes an event ____________ that unfolds logically
    ▪ Uses ____________ order and flashback as needed
    ▪ ____________ important events from unimportant ones, building
      to the most important moment of the story
    ▪ Uses ____________ words: first, next, suddenly, as soon as, finally, etc.
  o Narrative ____________:
    ▪ Uses ____________ between characters
    ▪ Uses precise ____________ words and phrases
    ▪ Uses ____________ language
    ▪Narration is ____________ and reports internal thoughts
  o Includes a ____________ that reflects on the importance of the
    experience.
  o Demonstrates good command of the ____________ of standard written
    English.
The Importance of Focus

What is focus?

- Staying on **topic**

- Writing within the **boundaries** of the piece

- **Clearly** expressing thoughts and ideas

- Analogies:
  
  - A **camera** – You have to focus the shot so that the subject of the picture isn’t **blurry**.
  
  - A **dart board** – You have to focus your eye and shoot **straight** if you want to hit the bull’s eye.

How do I stay focused when writing my personal narrative?

- Write about **one memory** only, not many memories.

- If the event is long or occurred over several days, select **one part** of the event to retell **in detail**.

- Center in on the **specific emotion** you would like to recreate, and choose words and images that reinforce that emotion.

- Introduce the **people** early, and give **background** information in the first paragraph or two so that the reader understands the **significance** of the event to you and the **circumstances** leading up to the memory.

- As you conclude, write a few statements of **reflection** so that the reader can understand what you learned or how you were **affected** as a result of this **experience**.
The Importance of Focus

What is focus?

• Staying on __________
• Writing within the ___________________ of the piece
• ____________ expressing thoughts and ideas
• Analogies:
  o A ____________ – You have to focus the shot so that the subject of the picture isn’t ____________.
  o A __________________ – You have to focus your eye and shoot ____________ if you want to hit the bull’s eye.

How do I stay focused when writing my personal narrative?

• Write about __________________ only, not many memories.

• If the event is long or occurred over several days, select ____________ of the event to retell ________________.

• Center in on the __________________ you would like to recreate, and choose words and images that reinforce that emotion.

• Introduce the ____________ early, and give __________________ information in the first paragraph or two so that the reader understands the __________________ of the event to you and the __________________ leading up to the memory.

• As you conclude, write a few statements of _______________ so that the reader can understand what you learned or how you were ____________ as a result of this __________________.
How Many Topics – Maggy Activity

The paragraph below really needs to be focused! A personal narrative is not the story of your life, nor is it a story that covers several years at a time. It is one memory that preferably covers one moment in time. You will be taking a magnifying glass to this moment and re-telling the details so that the reader feels like he or she is going through the experience right now.

Read the following paragraph, and see if you can break it apart into smaller topics. How many possible topics can you come up with?

I remember the day my mom got a dog. It was named Maggy. We got her in New Hampshire. She was a red Doberman. Then we moved back to East Boothbay and she was so hyper she went to the bathroom all over the house! I remember when I was on the lawn and there was a rope that was attached to two trees and Maggy’s leash was on that. She would chase her own leash. Maggy was too hyper for us. We couldn’t find a home for her and we were more patient with her than I think anybody else could have been. So we had to get her put to sleep a couple of days ago. I love her very much, and I miss her.


Possible Topics:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Assignment:
- Choose one memory from your brainstorming list.
- Think about focus: choose one part of the event to retell in detail.
- Think about your memory for several minutes, reliving it in your mind, but without writing.
- Finally, get a piece of lined paper and write as much as you can remember about this focused event. Freely write for 10 minutes, without worrying about paragraphs, dialogue, mechanics, etc.
The Importance of an Effective Lead

What’s a lead?

- A lead is the **opening** to a piece of writing.

- Sometimes a lead will cover **several** sentences and may even span a few paragraphs.

- A lead “**leads**” the reader into the story.

Why is it important to have an effective lead?

- The way a writer opens the piece has a critical **impact** on the reader’s willingness to **continue** reading the story.

- A lead should “**hook**” the reader into wanting to read **more**.
  
  - Think of fishing: You “hook” the fish by putting on some good **bait** so that the fish is attracted to the line and will **bite**.

  - In the same way, good writers know how to give good **bait** so that the reader is **attracted** to the writing and will want to **keep** reading.
The Importance of an Effective Lead

What's a lead?

- A lead is the ____________ to a piece of writing.

- Sometimes a lead will cover ____________ sentences and may even span a few paragraphs.

- A lead "__________" the reader into the story.

Why is it important to have an effective lead?

- The way a writer opens the piece has a critical __________ on the reader's willingness to __________ reading the story.

- A lead should "__________" the reader into wanting to read ________.
  
  - Think of fishing: You “hook” the fish by putting on some good ______ so that the fish is attracted to the line and will ________.
  
  - In the same way, good writers know how to give good bait so that the reader is ____________ to the writing and will want to ________ reading.
Sample Leads

Dialogue
"The earth shook like a bowl of jelly," exclaimed the woman as she stood by her devastated home after the earthquake.

Descriptive
The ground trembled, houses shook, and trees swayed back and forth as the earthquake shook the city of San Francisco.

Action/Anecdote
My heart raced as I hurried down the hall to English class. I bumped into the mean librarian on the way, and she dropped all the books she was carrying in her hands. I wanted to help her, but I couldn’t stop. I couldn’t be late for class.

Summary Stating the Facts
The death toll is yet unknown, but the amount of damage caused by the earthquake that struck San Francisco is estimated in the millions of dollars.

Question
What caused such a devastating fire? Firemen are now investigating the cause of the fire that burned hundreds of homes in the Oakland Hills area yesterday.

Quotation
Earnest Hemingway once wrote, “The only thing that could spoil a day was people,” and that’s exactly what spoiled mine the day I walked through the woods to Sam Lewis Park.
Determine the Kind of Lead

Label each lead, choosing the best answer after considering the lead as a whole.

1. American philosopher and writer Henry David Thoreau said of the bluebird, “This bird carries the sky on its back.” This gentle, beautiful bird is a favorite among bird watchers.

   Kind of lead: __________________________

2. “Tal stretched out his hand and pulled himself up onto the next out-thrust spike of the Tower. He stopped there to get his breath and looked down the Red Tower, down the twinkling lights that outlined the main buildings of the Castle. They were far below, a height that made Tal dizzy. He quickly looked back up.”
   (The Seventh Tower: The Fall by Garth Nix)

   Kind of Lead: __________________________

3. “A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm, too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees – willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter’s flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool.”
   (Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck)

   Kind of Lead: __________________________

4. “‘Wake up!’
   ‘Delia...please wake up now...’
   Voices ripped through the thick fuzzy blanket of sleep that I’d drawn over my head.”
   (Let Me Tell You How I Died by Sinclair Smith)

   Kind of Lead: __________________________
Assignment: Choose two topics from your brainstorming list. Draft a possible lead for each idea, using two different kinds of leads.

1. Topic: __________________________________________

   Kind of lead: __________________________________________

   Draft:
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. Topic: __________________________________________

   Kind of lead: __________________________________________

   Draft:
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
Effective Use of Dialogue

Intro:

- Dialogue is a **conversation** on paper.
- A story is more **believable** when characters talk to each other.
- Certain **rules** need to be followed when using dialogue so the reader doesn’t get **confused**.

Rules:

- Use **quotation marks** (" ") around the words that a person speaks.
- Start a **new line** each time a **different** character begins speaking.
- Introduce or follow dialogue with a **tag** (e.g., *said, replied, commented, remarked*) along with the speaker’s **name**.
- Include **details** that further explain why characters are saying what they say.

Punctuating the Dialogue:

- Most of the time, **punctuation** goes **before** the quotation marks.
  - If a tag follows the dialogue, include a comma before your closing quotation mark. Example: “Hey, give me that,” **demanded Tom**.
  - If the tag is before the dialogue, put a comma before the opening quotation mark as a way to introduce the quote. When the dialogue is the end of a sentence and you do not have a dialogue tag at the end, put a period inside the closing quotation mark. Example: **Tom demanded**, “Hey, give me that.”
  - If the dialogue is a question and there’s no tag at the end, put a question mark inside the closing quotation mark. Example: **Tom asked**, “Hey, would you give me that?”
  - Same thing goes with an exclamation mark. Example: **Tom shouted**, “Hey, give me that!”
Effective Use of Dialogue

Intro:

- Dialogue is a ________________ on paper.
- A story is more ________________ when characters talk to each other.
- Certain __________ need to be followed when using dialogue so the reader doesn’t get ________________.

Rules:

- Use ________________ (" ") around the words that a person speaks.
- Start a ________________ each time a ________________ character begins speaking.
- Introduce or follow dialogue with a _______ (e.g., said, replied, commented, remarked) along with the speaker’s ____________.
- Include ________________ that further explain why characters are saying what they say.

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  - If the dialogue is a question and there’s no tag at the end, put a question mark inside the closing quotation mark. Example: **Tom asked**, “Hey, would you give me that?”
  - Same thing goes with an exclamation mark. Example: **Tom shouted**, “Hey, give me that!”
If the dialogue interrupts the sentence, use commas to off-set the quotation marks. Example: Tom said, “Hey, give me that,” even though Mary didn’t have anything to give him.

If the dialogue interrupts the sentence but the dialogue includes a question, use a question mark and continue the sentence without capitalizing anything. Example: Tom asked, “Hey, would you give me that?” even though Mary didn’t have anything to give him.

Example of Un-Formatted Dialogue:

Lisa and Karen decided to go to the store to buy food for the cookout. What do you think we should buy? I don’t know. Well what about this? Gee, I don’t know if it would go with all the other food people are bringing. Well it sounds good to me. Okay. Let’s get them. The two girls went to the checkout line.

Example of Formatted Dialogue:

Lisa and Karen decided to go to the store to buy food for the cookout. As they entered the store, Lisa asked, “What do you think we should buy?”

“I don’t know,” said Karen in a puzzled voice.

“Well, what about this?” replied Lisa, as she held up a bunch of bananas.

“Gee, I don’t know if they would go with all the other food people are bringing. Well, bananas sound good to me,” Karen remarked.

“Okay. Let’s get them,” replied Lisa. The two girls went to the checkout line.

Punctuation Practice – Part 1 - Punctuation
Add all the necessary punctuation marks to the following conversation.

1. Come back here yelled Roger as he ran down the street chasing Betty
2. You can’t catch me replied Betty because I can run faster than you
3. Roger replied Why do you think that I’m the one who won all the track medals
4. You might think you’re fast, but I’m fast, too I used to race my brothers growing up I always used to win
5. Is there any way I can get you to slow down. I think we can work this out if you let me take you to lunch sometime.

6. Roger, you know that we are friends, but I'm not sure I want to take it to the next level. This is why I'm running away from you.

7. I told you that I would catch up with you. Said Roger as he approached Betty's side. See. I'm faster than you.

8. I need time to think this all through. Said Betty. I'm not sure I want to have lunch with you. I'm too tired now.

**Punctuation Practice – Part 2 – Tag Revision**

Revise the dialogue tags in the following passage from Wilson Rawls' *Summer of the Monkeys*.

“I never gave it much thought,” Grandpa said, “but after I read this letter, I got to thinking—practically all tame animals have names. Take your old milking cow, her name is Sally Gooden. Your Dad's two mules are named Fred and George. My buggy mares are named Molly and Birdie.”

“I know, Grandpa,” I said, “but that monkey’s not tame. He’s as wild as a hoot owl.”

Grandpa frowned and said, “I don’t believe that monkey is as wild as you think he is. Once an animal has been tamed, he doesn’t forget it.”

“What’s the monkey’s name, Grandpa?” I asked.

“According to what this trainer said in his letter, they call him Jimbo,” Grandpa said.

“Jimbo!” I said, laughing out loud. “Whoever heard of a name like that?”

“Anyhow,” Grandpa said, “that’s his name.”

“Grandpa,” I asked, “what good’s it going to do us, knowing his name?”

“It might do a lot of good,” Grandpa said. “This trainer says that if you could make friends with that monkey, he would probably do anything you wanted him to do.”

“Make friends with him!” I said. “Grandpa, I don’t think that trainer knows what he’s talking about. Why, you couldn’t make friends with that monkey in a hundred years.”
“I don’t know,” Grandpa said. “The trainer seems to think you could, and he should 12. know. He says to offer him something to eat, call him by name, and talk to him. It might be worth a try. After all, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose.”

“Nothing to lose!” I said. “Grandpa, if I got close enough to that monkey to offer 13. him something to eat, I could lose my arm. He’s got teeth like a pitchfork.”

“Oh, I don’t think you have to worry about that,” Grandpa said. “From what you’ve 14. told me, he’s about the only monkey in the bunch that hasn’t tried to bite you.”

Thinking back to everything that had happened, I realized that Grandpa was right.

“By golly, Grandpa, you’re right,” I said. “That Jimbo monkey hasn’t tried to bite 15. either Rowdy or me, but he sure doesn’t mind sicking those little monkeys onto a fellow.”

**Examples of Dialogue Tags:**

remarked proclaimed reflected agreed added

inquired declared laughed shouted hollered pointed out replied

remarked stated exclaimed blurted cried objected commented

muttered explained
Answer Key

Add all the necessary punctuation marks to the following conversation.

1. “Come back here!” yelled Roger as he ran down the street chasing Betty.
2. “You can’t catch me,” replied Betty, “because I can run faster than you.”
3. Roger replied, “Why do you think that? I’m the one who won all the track medals.”
4. “You might think you’re fast, but I’m fast, too. I used to race my brothers growing up. I always used to win.”
5. “Is there any way I can get you to slow down? I think we can work this out if you let me take you to lunch sometime.”
6. “Roger, you know that we are friends, but I’m not sure I want to take it to the next level. This is why I’m running away from you.”
7. “I told you that I would catch up with you,” said Roger as he approached Betty’s side. “See? I’m faster than you.”
8. “I need time to think this all through,” said Betty. “I’m not sure I want to have lunch with you. I’m too tired now.”
Show, Don’t Tell!

What is the technique of “show, don’t tell”?  

- Instead of telling about what happens in a story, you show the reader what is happening by using **descriptive** words and phrases that **paint a picture** of the events.
  
- “Showing instead of telling” allows the reader to **experience** your writing more **authentically** so that they **feel** like they are in your **moment**, not an **outsider**.

How do you “show” instead of “tell”?  

- Instead of telling the reader that it was a rainy day, for example, show that it is raining by describing the scene.
  
  - **Telling** = It’s a **rainy** day.
  - **Showing** = Rain **dashed** against the **windows**.
  - **Showing** = Rain drops **splashed** in the **puddles** on the street.
  
- By showing instead of telling, the reader will **enjoy** the experience of your story more than if you just said, “It’s raining,” for instance.

**Note:**

- Sometimes a writer may choose to tell instead of show. Save your “telling” times for when you are **intentionally** trying to **distance** the reader from the emotion of your story or if you are trying to create a **contrast** of settings or perspectives.

- For the purpose of writing a personal narrative, concentrate on using the “show, don’t tell” technique as much as you can since this is one of the components of your piece that will be evaluated.
Show, Don’t Tell!

What is the technique of “show, don’t tell”?

- Instead of telling about what happens in a story, you show the reader what is happening by using ___________ words and phrases that ___________ of the events.

- “Showing instead of telling” allows the reader to ___________ your writing more ___________ so that they ___________ like they are in your ___________, not an ___________.

How do you “show” instead of “tell”?

- Instead of telling the reader that it was a rainy day, for example, show that it is raining by describing the scene.
  - **Telling** = It’s a _______ day.
  - **Showing** = Rain _______ against the _______.
  - **Showing** = Rain drops _______ in the _______ on the street.

- By showing instead of telling, the reader will _______ the experience of your story more than if you just said, “It’s raining,” for instance.

Note:

- Sometimes a writer may choose to tell instead of show. Save your “telling” times for when you are _______ trying to _______ the reader from the emotion of your story or if you are trying to create a _______ of settings or perspectives.

- For the purpose of writing a personal narrative, concentrate on using the “show, don’t tell” technique as much as you can since this is one of the components of your piece that will be evaluated.
Show, Don’t Tell Examples

It’s a rainy day. *(How could you tell it was raining? What did you see?)*

Rain dashed against the windows.
Rain drops splashed in the puddles on the street.

The principal is angry. *(How could you tell he or she was angry? How did he or she look and sound?)*

The principal’s eyes flashed as he roared at the kids in the cafeteria.

Lucy is a happy girl. *(How could you tell she was happy? What did she do?)*

Lucy skips down the sidewalk singing “Mary Had a Little Lamb” as she goes.

It was a pleasant day at the beach. *(What made you think it was pleasant? What did you feel and hear?)*

A cool breeze blew in from the ocean, and sea gulls cried overhead.

Cheetahs are pretty fast. *(How can you tell they are fast? What do you see?)*

The swift cheetah’s tawny, black-spotted coat catches your eye.
Show, Don’t Tell Practice

1. Tommy acted mad.

2. Sally feels sad.

3. The teacher is irritable.

4. The class was in an uproar.

5. King snakes suffocate their prey.

6. The empty house looked scary.

7. He’s a poor old man.
Show, Don't Tell Team Activity
Directions

The Task:

1. Each team receives a pack of cards. (at least enough cards in the pack per student in the team)

2. Each student draws a card from the pile and writes the sentence on his or her drafting sheet.

3. Students rewrite the vague sentence in a way that "shows" the scene instead of just telling about it.

4. Students then pass their paper to the teammate next to them.

5. Students rewrite the new sentence in front of them.

6. Pass the papers around until all teammates have had the chance to rewrite all original sentences from the team's cards. (Wait for the teacher signal each time before passing papers.)

7. Once students have received back their first paper, each student chooses the best sentence from his or her paper to share with the class.
Original sentence: ____________________________

Version 1: ____________________________

Version 2: ____________________________

Version 3: ____________________________

Version 4: ____________________________

Version 5: ____________________________

Version 6: ____________________________

Version 7: ____________________________

Version 8: ____________________________
Show, Don’t Tell Assignment

Choose one topic from your brainstorming list. Write a paragraph that describes the action or setting, using details that show instead of tell. Fill the lines below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teachers are unfair.</th>
<th>My father was really mad.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was a wonderful activity night.</td>
<td>She is such a slob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She’s the school’s best athlete.</td>
<td>This has been a bad winter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The old man is lonely.</td>
<td>The substitute teacher was strange.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My little brother is nosy.</td>
<td>He was embarrassed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>She was exhausted.</td>
<td>It was a friendly dog.</td>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>I loved that class.</td>
<td>She seems to be worried.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owning a pet is a nuisance.</td>
<td>My teacher is strict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were many interesting costumes at the party.</td>
<td>It looked like a haunted house.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The puppy is undisciplined.</td>
<td>Spring will soon be here.</td>
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<td>My mother bugs me.</td>
<td>This school has great school spirit.</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School lunches are unbelievably bad.</td>
<td>He was shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was a great game.</td>
<td>My sister doesn’t trust me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children were having fun.</td>
<td>School is so boring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s a beautiful day.</td>
<td>The people thought the lunch was good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Narrative Example #1

My Memoir

This is a story about when I was five, my mom would take me to see a horse down the street. We named the horse Brownie. I have no idea if that was its real name. That was the name we gave the horse. We named it Brownie because it was brown like a brownie.

I was so excited to see Brownie. Everyday, my mom and I would take a walk to see the horse. It would be standing by the fence most days. I would reach out my hand to pet its nose.

I miss Brownie. Brownie helped me to like animals from a young age. We moved to another house after that, so I only got to see Brownie for a short while.

My Memoir - Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
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## Personal Narrative Rubric – My Memo

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<th>4</th>
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<th>2</th>
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</table>
| **Introduction** | Includes all 3:  
- Grabs reader’s attention  
- Includes background info  
- Expresses the main idea/purpose | Includes 2 of the components listed to the left | Includes 1 of the components listed to the left | Intro paragraph includes none of the components listed to the left |
| _____ x 2 = _____ | | | | |
| **Content** | Includes all 4:  
- Story is focused  
- Includes dialogue: 2 lines minimum  
- Reports narrator's internal thoughts and feelings  
- Voice: 1st person & present tense | Includes 3 of the components listed to the left | Includes 2 of the components listed to the left | Includes 1 or none of the components listed to the left |
| _____ x 2 = _____ | | | | |
| **Organization** | Demonstrates all 4:  
- Begins with lead & sets the context  
- Events arranged in chronological order  
- Ends with conclusion  
- Uses transition words to clarify the sequence of events | Demonstrates 3 of the components to the left | Demonstrates 2 of the components to the left | Demonstrates 1 or none of the components to the left |
| _____ x 2 = _____ | | | | |
| **Description** | Details…  
- Show, don’t tell  
- Use sensory language  
- Use vivid descriptive details  
- Use precise word choice | Most of the details are… | Some of the details are… | A few or none of the details are… |
| _____ x 2 = _____ | | | | |
| **Conclusion** | Includes 1: the writer’s thoughts and/or feelings about the event, a reflection of the event’s significance, and/or an explanation of the lesson learned | X | Somewhat includes 1 of the components to the left | Includes none of the components to the left |
| _____ x 2 = _____ | | | | |
| **Conventions** | Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. | Few grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. Reader is not distracted by them. | Some grammatical spelling or punctuation errors. Reader has difficulty ignoring errors. | Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. Reader loses the message due to errors. |
| _____ x 1 = _____ | | | | |
| **Formatting** | All formatting requirements fulfilled: name/date/hour in the upper right hand corner; title centered, in bold, and directly before the body of the paper; body text is left justified and double-spaced; Times New Roman size 12. | One formatting error. | Two formatting errors. | Three or more formatting errors. |
| _____ x 1 = _____ | | | | |
| **Miscellaneous** | Both requirements met:  
- Length = 1-2 pages  
- Rubric attached | X | One of the miscellaneous requirements met. | X |
| _____ x 1 = _____ | | | | |

Total Score = _______ / 52

47
Personal Narrative Example #2
Brownie the Horse

"Look how shiny Brownie is!" I tell my mom, who is holding my hand as I look through the wire fence. As a five-year-old, I am thrilled by going every day to watch this solitary horse, who is satiny brown like how fresh-baked brownies look. We named the horse Brownie, and I feel like she is my own pet every time we visit because she comes over to sniff my hand and whinny a little once she recognizes me.

I reach out my hand to stroke Brownie's nose. "Oh! Soft like silk!" I tell my mom. I can smell the earthiness of Brownie, a mix between dirt and sun. The sweat droplets fall to the ground; I can tell that she had been running in the pasture before we arrived because she kicked the ground with her right hoof, ready to run again.

Brownie runs off, and her tail sweeps back and forth the way my mom sweeps our front porch. I watched her play on the lush pasture until I heard my mom say, "Time to go, sweetie."

"Okay, Mom."

"He'll be here tomorrow."

We only went a few more times after that because we ended up moving to a different house. Making friends with Brownie helped me to love animals from a young age. Going to visit that special horse was also a special time between my mom and me. I hold those times in my heart as more valuable than any toy I could have had because I knew that my mom loved me and that she helped me to love Brownie.
# Brownie the Horse - Comments

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<td>• Grabs reader’s attention</td>
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<td>Intro paragraph includes none of the components listed to the left</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Includes background info</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expresses the main ideas/purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Story is focused</td>
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<td>• Includes dialogue: 2 lines minimum</td>
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<td>• Reports narrator’s internal thoughts and feelings</td>
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<td>• Voice: 1st person &amp; present tense</td>
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<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates all 4:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Begins with lead &amp; sets the context</td>
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<td>• Events arranged in chronological order</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ends with conclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses transition words to clarify the sequence of events</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
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<td>Details...</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Show, don’t tell</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use sensory language</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use vivid descriptive details</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use precise word choice</td>
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<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes 1: the writer’s thoughts and/or feelings about the event, a reflection of the event’s significance, and/or an explanation of the lesson learned</td>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat includes 1 of the components to the left</td>
<td>Includes none of the components to the left</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formatting</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>All formatting requirements fulfilled: name/date/hour in the upper right hand corner; title centered, in bold, and directly before the body of the paper; body text is left justified and double-spaced; Times New Roman size 12.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Both requirements met: Length = 1-2 pages Rubric attached</td>
<td></td>
<td>One of the miscellaneous requirements met.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Score = ________ / 52
Comments about “My Memoir”

Good:
- Focuses on a particular memory that means something to the writer
- Writer explains the name of the horse
- Writer attempts to include emotion
- Writer attempts to explain the significance of the memory

Needs Improvement:
- The title is non-specific
- Missing an effective lead
- Too short
- No dialogue
- Not in present tense
- Missing sensory language
- Needs specific details
- Missing a sense of experience; needs more showing instead of telling
- Reflection is un-developed
### Personal Narrative Rubric – My Memoir

<table>
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<td>• Use vivid descriptive details</td>
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<td>• Voice: first person &amp; past tense</td>
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<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<td>Demonstrates all 4:</td>
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<td>• Details...</td>
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<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4 x 1 = 4</strong></td>
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<td>Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.</td>
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<td><strong>Formatting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3 x 1 = 3</strong></td>
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<td>All formatting requirements fulfilled:</td>
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<td><strong>2 x 1 = 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Both requirements met:</td>
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</table>

**Total Score = \( \frac{25}{52} \times 100 = 48\% = E \)**

52
Comments on “Brownie the Horse”

Good:

- Includes a title
- Opens with an attention-grabbing lead
- Uses present tense throughout
- Includes dialogue
- Includes sensory language (i.e. - satiny brown like fresh-baked brownies)
- Includes specific details (i.e. - Brownie runs off, and her tail sweeps back and forth the way my mom sweeps our front porch.)
- Last paragraph offers a reflection of the memory

Needs Improvement:

- Could be more focused on the first time or last time the writer saw the horse so that the significance of the moment is more developed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Introduction | Includes all 3:  
- Grabs reader's attention  
- Includes background info  
- Expresses the main ideas/purpose | Includes 2 of the components listed to the left | Includes 1 of the components listed to the left | Intro paragraph includes none of the components listed to the left |
| 4 x 2 = 8 |        |        |        |        |
| Content | Includes all 4:  
- Story is focused  
- Includes dialogue: 2 lines minimum  
- Reports narrator's internal thoughts and feelings  
- Voice: 1st person & present tense | Includes 3 of the components listed to the left | Includes 2 of the components listed to the left | Includes 1 or none of the components listed to the left |
| 4 x 2 = 8 |        |        |        |        |
| Organization | Demonstrates all 4:  
- Details  
- Use sensory language  
- Use vivid descriptive details  
- Use precise word choice | Demonstrates 3 of the components listed to the left | Demonstrates 2 of the components listed to the left | Demonstrates 1 or none of the components listed to the left |
| 3 x 2 = 6 |        |        |        |        |
| Description | Details...  
- Show, don't tell  
- Use sensory language  
- Use vivid descriptive details  
- Use precise word choice | Most of the details are... | Some of the details are... | A few or none of the details are... |
| 4 x 2 = 8 |        |        |        |        |
| Conclusion | Includes 1: the writer's thoughts and/or feelings about the event, a reflection of the event's significance, and/or an explanation of the lesson learned | X | Somewhat includes 1 of the components to the left | Includes none of the components to the left |
| 4 x 2 = 8 |        |        |        |        |
| Conventions | Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors | Few grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. Reader is not distracted by them | Some grammatical spelling or punctuation errors. Reader has difficulty ignoring errors. | Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. Reader loses the message due to errors. |
| 4 x 1 = 4 |        |        |        |        |
| Formatting | All formatting requirements fulfilled | One formatting error | Two formatting errors | Three or more formatting errors |
| 3 x 1 = 3 |        |        |        |        |
| Miscellaneous | Both requirements met:  
- Length = 1-2 pages  
- Rubric attached | X | One of the miscellaneous requirements met. | X |
| 4 x 1 = 4 |        |        |        |        |

Total Score = 49 / 52 = 94% = A
Tips for Drafting the Personal Narrative

The personal narrative retells a memory for the reader so that he or she experiences the emotions you felt during that event. To do this effectively, do the following:

- Use the pronoun “I” – first person. You are the main character, and you are describing the events from your perspective.
- The lead should attract the reader to your story.
- Give enough background information so that the reader understands the context of your memory.
- The action is vivid; the reader can picture it in his or her mind.
- The setting is clear; the reader feels like he or she is there with you.
- The characters have defined relationships.
- The dialogue sounds authentic.
- The writer is transparent about thoughts and feelings by reporting them throughout the narrative.
- The conclusion includes a reflection about how this memory is significant.

Draft requirements: Handwritten on lined paper, skip lines, approximately 2-4 pages.
Personal Narrative Peer Check

Rate each item: 4 is highest, 1 is lowest. Include a brief explanation of the rating you chose. Be prepared to discuss your ratings during the face-to-face peer conferencing session.

Writer’s name: ____________________________________________
Checker’s name: __________________________________________

1. The beginning of the piece grabs the reader’s attention. 4 3 2 1

2. The piece includes enough background information. 4 3 2 1

3. The events are arranged in chronological order. 4 3 2 1

4. The piece includes details that make the people, places, and events seem real. 4 3 2 1

5. The writer’s thoughts and feelings are included in the piece. 4 3 2 1

6. What did you like most about the piece?

7. What did you like the least about the piece?
Revising Your Personal Narrative:
Adding Sensory Details

Model Paragraph

Directions: Read the paragraph below about school hallways. Use your highlighters to mark details that pertain to each of the five senses.

Color Code:
Yellow - Visual Details – What do you see?
Orange - Auditory Details – What do you hear?
Green - Olfactory Details – What do you smell?
Pink - Taste Details – What do you taste? (Good place to use figurative language!)
Blue - Touch Details – What do you feel on your skin or touch with your hands?

Students are leaning up against the red lockers, taking a breather in between bells. Girls gab to each other and touch up their make-up. Boys holler down the hall to each other while the social studies teacher reprimands them using an annoying shrill voice that reminds me of my Aunt Millie with her shaky, nasal sound. The stench of Axe body spray permeates the air after the school hunk covers himself in it. I run my hands along the smooth, shiny lockers until I come to the rough brick. Someone bumps into me as I round the corner, and I find myself with a mouthful of my English book.
Sensory Details Partner Activity

**Topic:** English Class

**Directions:** Observe the classroom, brainstorming details about the five senses. Then, combine ideas with your partner to write a complete sentence relating to each sense.

1. See:
   
   
   
   

2. Hear:
   
   
   
   

3. Smell:
   
   
   
   

4. Taste:
   
   
   
   

5. Touch:
   
   
   
   

58
Adding Sensory Details to Your Narrative:  
Sensory Details Brainstorming Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you see?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sounds</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you hear?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smells</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you smell?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tastes</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you taste?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Textures</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you feel on your skin or touch?</td>
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</table>
A Trio of Revising Tools: 
*Adding Transition Words, Curing Gottitus, and Using Precise Adjectives*

**Part 1: Adding Transition Words**

- **Transition words are phrases or words that connect one idea to the next.** Different transition words have different functions. In the personal narrative, transition words can help make the sequence of events clear.

- **The Polar Bear Sequencing Activity:** *The following sentences are from the same paragraph, but are not in order. Number the sentences in the correct order that makes the most sense. Underline the key phrases and words that help you decide.*

  ______ Later, when hunting season is over and the weather turns very cold, the polar bears hibernate deep under the snow.

  ______ Unfortunately for the polar bears, seals hear very well, and usually the polar bears cannot sneak up on them.

  ______ They live in the Arctic, where their unusually thick fur and layer of blubber protect them from the icy winds and below-zero temperatures.

  ______ During their summer hunting season, polar bears creep across the snow, silent as cats, hoping to capture an unsuspecting seal—their favorite meal.

  ______ Polar bears are among the largest mammals on earth.

  ______ Polar bears are also kept warm by their black skin that absorbs sunlight.

- **Partner Talk:** Choose one of the following questions to discuss with your partner.
  - Why are transition words important in writing? Give at least one example from the polar bear activity to support your answer.
  - Why is it important to have clear antecedents for pronouns (like *it*) and for demonstrative adjectives (like *this/that*)? Give at least one example from the polar bear activity to support your answer.

- **Application:** Add at least three transition words/phrases to your personal narrative.
## Transitions Words

**To show time:**
- about
- meanwhile
- immediately
- today
- prior to
- in the meantime
- first
- later
- as soon as
- afterward
- until
- next
- during
- yesterday
- third
- after
- next week
- finally
- second
- tomorrow
- before
- when

**To compare two things (show similarities):**
- also
- like
- similarly
- likewise
- as
- in the same way

**To contrast things (show differences):**
- but
- yet
- although
- otherwise
- conversely
- in the meantime
- however
- counter to
- still
- even though
- as opposed
- nevertheless
- even so
- on the other hand
- on the contrary

**To emphasize a point:**
- again
- indeed
- truly
- in fact
- for this reason
- to repeat
- to emphasize
- with this in mind

**To clarify:**
- that is
- in other words
- put another way
- stated differently
- to clarify
- for instance

**To add information:**
- besides
- likewise
- moreover
- together with
- along with
- again
- and
- too
- finally
- as well
- another
- to illustrate
- next
- additionally
- in addition
- for instance
- also
- equally
- for example

**To show location:**
- above
- across
- against
- along
- alongside
- among
- around
- away from
- back of
- backside of
- beneath
- beside
- between
- beyond
- by
- in front of
- inside
- into
- near
- off
- on top of
- out
- outside
- over
- throughout
- to
- to the right
- under
- amid
- below
- down
- onto
- under

**To conclude or summarize:**
- as a result
- consequently
- due to
- after considering
- in short
- in conclusion
- accordingly
- therefore
- for this reason
- finally
- all in all
- thus
- in summary
- because of this
- it follows that
- so
Part 2: Curing Gottitus

- **Gottitus = An overuse of generic verbs, such as got.** Writing well requires the writer to choose words well, both in choosing vivid and exact words and avoiding repetition. This type of writing helps bring out your personality on your paper, also known as writing “style”.

- **Cure the Gottitus!** Revise each sentence by inserting a new verb. Do not reconstruct the sentence, and do not use a substitute verb more than once — that is, select a different one for each sentence to replace the dull verb emphasized in capital letters. Possible choices are listed in the word bank below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Bank</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bought</td>
<td>receive</td>
<td>caught</td>
<td>fell</td>
<td>convince</td>
<td>return</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>earn</td>
<td>arose</td>
<td>prepare</td>
<td>muster</td>
<td>make</td>
<td>fix</td>
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<tr>
<td>was</td>
<td>arrive</td>
<td>find</td>
<td>purchase</td>
<td>understand</td>
<td>check</td>
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<tr>
<td>enter</td>
<td>spill</td>
<td>win</td>
<td>solicit</td>
<td>obtain</td>
<td>dribble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ______________ He GOT UP at seven.
2. ______________ He GOT his own breakfast.
3. ______________ He GOT syrup on his vest.
4. ______________ He GOT TO school ten minutes late.
5. ______________ He GOT reprimanded from the principal.
6. ______________ He tried to GET what they were saying about him.
7. ______________ He GOT behind in his classes.
8. ______________ He tried to GET some other students to help him.
9. ______________ He could not GET any help.
10. ______________ He GOT ready to go out at noon.

- **Application:** Revise at least three verbs in your personal narrative, using a thesaurus as needed.
Part 3: Using Precise Adjectives
(also known as gooditis)

- **Gooditus** = An overuse of generic adjectives, such as good. You have spent a considerable amount of time revising your paper to include descriptive and sensory details. Make sure those details pop by using precise adjectives.

- **Precise Adjectives – An Example**

  **Generic Adjectives:** Carson told the pretty girl next to him in English class a joke. She thought it was good, so she gave a little laugh. Then, they both returned to completing their essays. Carson and the girl knew that they had to write well to get a good grade.

  **Precise Adjectives:** Carson told the gorgeous girl next to him in English class a joke. She thought it was amusing, so she gave a modest laugh. Then, they both returned to completing their essays. Carson and the girl knew that they had to write skillfully to get a satisfactory grade.

- **Your Turn – Revise the adjectives in bold to be more vivid and precise. Use a dictionary if needed.**

  **Generic Adjectives:** The Colemans bought a big new house. They painted the living room in bright colors and moved in some nice furniture. They replaced the old curtains and purchased a large coffee table. Now it looks good and they’re ready to begin enjoying their new home.

  **Your Improved Version:** The Colemans bought a __________ new house. They painted the living room in __________ colors and moved in some __________ furniture. They replaced the __________ curtains and purchased a __________ coffee table. Now it looks __________ and they’re ready to begin enjoying their new home.

- **Application:** Revise at least three adjectives in your personal narrative, using a thesaurus as needed.
Polar Bear Sequence Activity Answer Key: 6, 5, 2, 4, 1, 3

1  **Polar bears** (the antecedent for the “they” in the next sentence) are among the largest mammals on earth.

2  **They** (refers to the polar bears in the previous sentence) live in the Arctic, where their unusually thick fur and layer of blubber protect them from the icy winds and below-zero temperatures.

3  Polar bears are also (indicates that there were other things mentioned in the previous sentence, such as fur and blubber, that keep the polar bears warm) kept warm by their black skin that absorbs sunlight.

4  **During their summer hunting season** (This transition phrase indicates a change in discussion from how polar bears keep warm to how they hunt seal), **polar bears creep across the snow, silent as cats,** (discussion on this action is continued in the next sentence) **hoping to capture an unsuspecting seal—their favorite meal** (discussion on seals is continued in the next sentence).

5  **Unfortunately** (this transition word indicates subject material in the previous sentence that there is a negative commentary for in this sentence) for the polar bears, **seals** (suggest that seals were part of the subject matter in the previous sentence) **hear very well, and usually the polar bears cannot sneak up on them** (discussion on this action was first addressed in the previous sentence).

6  **Later, when hunting season is over** (suggests that hunting season was discussed in the previous sentences) and the weather turns very cold, the polar bears hibernate deep under the snow.
## Personal Narrative Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Includes all 3:</td>
<td>Includes 2 of the components listed to the left</td>
<td>Includes 1 of the components listed to the left</td>
<td>Intro paragraph includes none of the components listed to the left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 2 = ____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Includes all 4:</td>
<td>Includes 3 of the components listed to the left</td>
<td>Includes 2 of the components listed to the left</td>
<td>Includes 1 or none of the components listed to the left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 2 = ____</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates all 4:</td>
<td>Demonstrates 3 of the components to the left</td>
<td>Demonstrates 2 of the components to the left</td>
<td>Demonstrates 1 or none of the components to the left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 2 = ____</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Details...</td>
<td>Most of the details are...</td>
<td>Some of the details are...</td>
<td>A few or none of the details are...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 2 = ____</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>Includes 1: the writer’s thoughts and/or feelings about the event, a reflection of the event’s significance, and/or an explanation of the lesson learned</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Somewhat includes 1 of the components to the left</td>
<td>Includes none of the components to the left</td>
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<tr>
<td>x 2 = ____</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
<td>Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.</td>
<td>Few grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. Reader is not distracted by them.</td>
<td>Some grammatical spelling or punctuation errors. Reader has difficulty ignoring errors.</td>
<td>Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. Reader loses the message due to errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 1 = ____</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formatting</strong></td>
<td>All formatting requirements fulfilled: name/date/hour in the upper right hand corner; title centered, in bold, and directly before the body of the paper; body text is left justified and double-spaced; Times New Roman size 12.</td>
<td>One formatting error.</td>
<td>Two formatting errors.</td>
<td>Three or more formatting errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 1 = ____</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>Both requirements met: Length = 1-2 pages Rubric attached</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>One of the miscellaneous requirements met.</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>x 1 = ____</td>
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</table>

Total Score = ______ / 52