

**Due September 9**

A personal narrative is a story about a person’s unique life experiences. They can be about big life changing moments or daily experiences. It is not a diary entry. Your narrative must have the characteristics of a good story. So please pick an experience that has a definite beginning, a climax, and an end. Stories that show you have learned or grown from your experience are especially nice to read.

Your first step for today is to brainstorm. Think back through your life’s stories. Jot down four ideas here:

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Read back over your list and put a star by the one you want to develop into a personal narrative essay that is 1 - 2 typed pages.

You will need to complete the following this week:

**September 3 - the Narrative Brainstorming sheet (this needs to be turned in for a grade)**

**September 5 - the “Plot Mountain” worksheet; this should look familiar as we started one in class (this should be turned in for a grade)**

**September 6 - the Personal Narrative Example “The Tempting Totem Pole” (turn this in for a grade)**

# Narrative Brainstorming

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



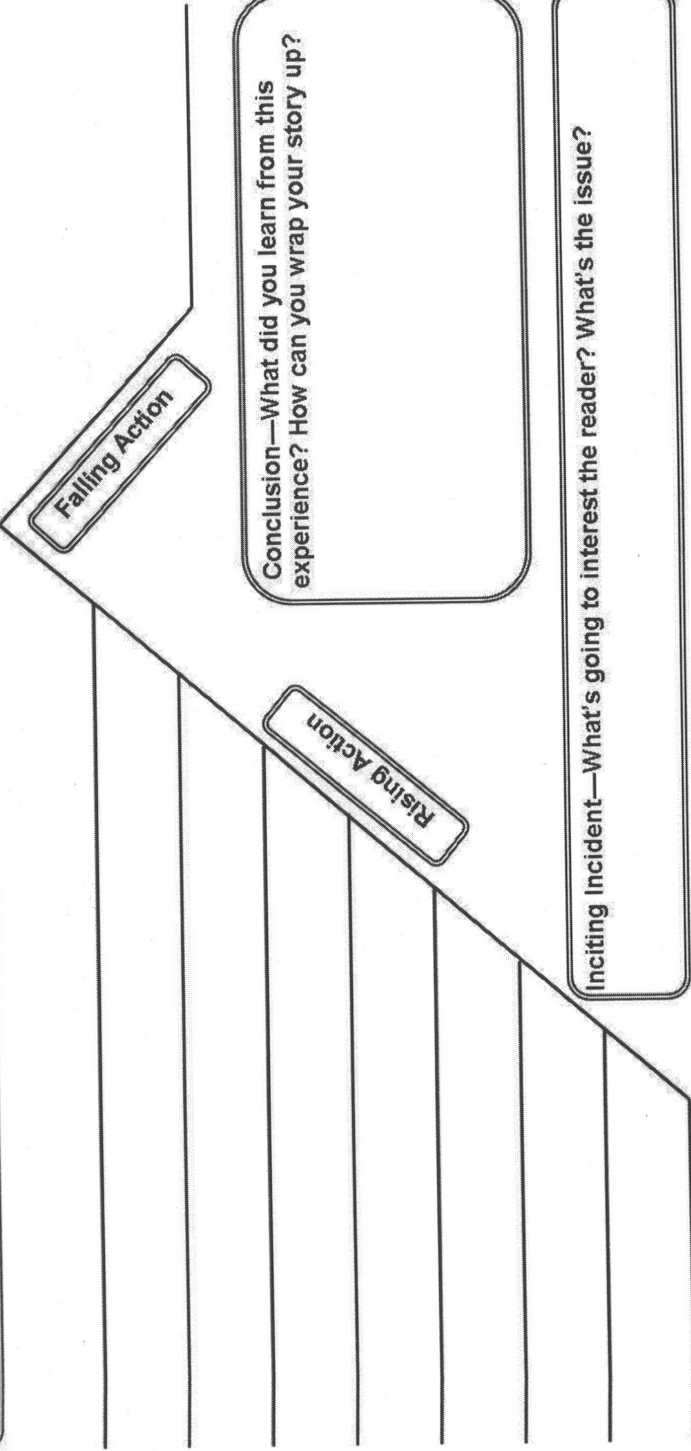
|  |
|--|
| What Happened?   |
| Why / How Did It Happen?                                   |
| When / Where Did It Happen?                                |
| Why Is This Event Important To You? Why is it significant? |
| Title / Catchy Opening Sentence Ideas                      |



plot structure

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Climax—What's the point of your writing? What's the most exciting moment?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Inciting Incident—What's going to interest the reader? What's the issue?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Introduction (Think of something to really grab the reader's attention.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Personal Narrative – Example

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph and then answer the questions below. While you're reading, try to notice how the author builds to a climax, uses descriptive language and has a clear conclusion.

## The Tempting Totem Pole

My grandparent's house was a magical place for me when I was a little girl. There was an amazing loft where I could spy down on my brothers, a smelly chicken coop to visit every morning to check for fresh eggs, a wonderful swing in a gigantic, old maple tree and a tall, black totem pole on the front steps. The totem pole had always fascinated me and I loved to stare into the blank eyes of the thunderbird at the top and wonder what he was thinking. I enjoyed running my small hands over the chiseled black wood and marveling that the carver had included details such as eyes, wings and even feathers. However, it was the thunderbird's nose that intrigued me the most. His long black beak stuck out from the totem pole and had two carved nostrils at the curved end. The nostrils were curious black holes that tempted me. One day I cautiously poked my finger into the thunderbird's nostril, not sure how far it would go. Suddenly, my little finger felt a sharp sting and I screamed as I yanked my finger out. Not only had I poked my finger into the nose of the thunderbird, but also right into the back end of a bumble bee. Whenever I see the stately totem, now on my parents' front steps, I remember what a painful and embarrassing way it was for me to learn to "keep my fingers to myself".

1. What is another way the author could have begun the paragraph?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What sentence is the climax or high point of interest in the story?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Choose three words from the paragraph that you think were helpful in expressing an idea.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Why were these words helpful?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What did you like about the paragraph?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What could the writer have done to improve the paragraph?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Due September 16

This week you will continue to work on your personal narrative. You will write a complete rough draft of your personal narrative. Remember the essay should be 1 - 2 pages types. Your essay should invite the reader along with you on your story.

You will want to show rather than tell.

For example:

Telling sentence: It was so cold.

Showing sentence: The bitter wind whipped the snow into a mad furry turning my cheeks bright red.

Telling sentence: The little child was so sad to say goodbye to his friend.

Showing sentence: Big tears fell from the young boy's blue eyes and his bottom lip began to quiver as he waved goodbye to his dear friend.

Please read the papers that follow.

Please read the rubric carefully to see how you will be evaluated and ultimately graded on this assignment.

In class, you will need to have **two** copies of your personal narrative and a copy of the papers that follow.

# Helpful Hints for Writing Success



## Hook Your Reader / Show Don't Tell

- Set the scene with your words instead of telling the reader the situation right away.
  - Avoid - It was my first day of high school and I was nervous.
  - Try—My palms were sweaty and my heart pounded in my chest. I took a deep breath, stepped into Garfield High and began my high-school career.
- Start with a quote or dialogue to create some interest.
  - Try—"Did you hear that?" Sam asked in a panic as we heard a strange thump coming from outside our tent.
- Begin your writing at an exciting moment.
  - Try—"Ahhhh!!" My stomach dropped and I could taste my lunch in my throat as the roller coaster screamed around a bend. I could not believe that Suzanne had talked me into this!

## Have a Point to Your Writing—Lead to a Climax

- There needs to be a climax or point to your writing.
  - Writing about a trip to an amusement park can be interesting, however there needs to be some tension or conflict in order to keep your reader engaged. Write about how you overcame your fear of roller coasters, how you lost your little sister, how you won the biggest prize at the arcade, a challenging time in your life...
- Don't give the reader too many details. Stick to the main idea and really work to bring those ideas out of your writing.
  - Does the reader need to know how old you were? The weather? Who you were with? What day it was? Only include details that are going to enhance your writing. Too many details will take away from the real purpose of your writing.

## Edit, Edit & Edit Again!

- Read your work to yourself slowly and out loud. You'll be able to pick up on errors more easily this way.
- Listen to yourself read and check to see if your writing flows smoothly.
- Are your sentences different types and lengths? Have you used vivid verbs and figurative language?
- Have several people read your writing and provide feedback on both spelling and grammar as well as the content.
- Assess your own work with the rubric. Where do you think you are on the rubric? How can you improve your writing? Who could help you?

## Clear and Concise Conclusion

- Just like an introduction a conclusion needs to be well thought out. Wrap up your writing with a short and clear ending.
  - Avoid— That was the best day ever at the amusement park, I can't wait to go again.
  - Try—I left the amusement park stronger and more confident, knowing I could conquer anything if I could survive the death-defying "Thunder Curl Coaster".



# Personal Narrative – Peer Editing

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Switch your writing with a partner and edit each other's work using the checklist or use it to check your own writing.**

- Is there an interesting / catchy title? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does the first sentence grab your attention? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there details about what happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there details on why it happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there details on why it is important? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there details on where / when it happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there interesting and vivid verbs? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are all the words spelled correctly? (Circle errors) \_\_\_\_\_
- Do all the sentences relate to the main idea? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are the sentences varied in length and start with different words? \_\_\_\_\_

I really liked: \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to know more about: \_\_\_\_\_

To improve your paragraph you need to: \_\_\_\_\_

## Peer / Self Assessment—Evaluate the personal narrative using the rubric below.

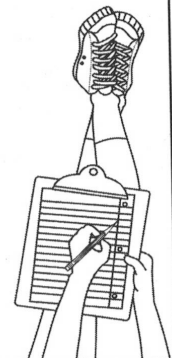
|                               | <b>Not Quite Yet</b><br>2 points  | <b>Good Start</b><br>3 points  | <b>You did it!</b><br>4 points  | <b>Wow!</b><br>5 points  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Content</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I presented some ideas; but they may be illogical or inappropriate</li> <li>• I have poorly connected ideas</li> <li>• I am missing key details</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I presented a series of related ideas</li> <li>• I have generally accurate details and explanations</li> <li>• Some parts may not link to the main idea</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a clear purpose</li> <li>• My paragraph builds to a climax</li> <li>• My details are thoughtful and relate to the main idea.</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a purpose &amp; tried to deal with complex issues</li> <li>• My paragraph builds to a climax</li> <li>• I have engaging details and explanations with thought, reflection</li> </ul> |
| <b>Style</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of my sentences are short and choppy or long and awkward</li> <li>• I used basic, simple language</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have some sentence variety and used complex sentences</li> <li>• I used everyday, conversational language</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I used a variety of sentence types and lengths</li> <li>• My language is clear, appropriate, and varied</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My writing flows smoothly and I used sentence types and lengths effectively</li> <li>• My language is clear, varied and mature</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Form</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have little to no introduction.</li> <li>• I sometimes shifted abruptly from one idea to another</li> <li>• I have little to no conclusion.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a basic introduction that explains the situation</li> <li>• My Ideas are together but may be listed rather than developed</li> <li>• I have a weak conclusion</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have an interesting introduction</li> <li>• I have a logical sequence and my transitions connect ideas clearly</li> <li>• I have a conclusion</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have an engaging introduction.</li> <li>• I have a smooth and logical sequence and transitions</li> <li>• I have a creative and engaging conclusion</li> </ul>                            |
| <b>Spelling &amp; Grammar</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are frequent errors in simple words or sentences</li> <li>• I have frequent run-on's and fragments</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are some noticeable errors in basic words and sentences</li> <li>• I have some run-on's or fragments</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There may be some noticeable errors in difficult language</li> <li>• Most sentences are correct; some errors</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have very few errors.</li> <li>• I have occasional errors in complicated sentences</li> </ul>   |

# Personal Narrative Rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

|                               | <b>Not Quite Yet</b><br>2 points   | <b>Good Start</b><br>3 points   | <b>You did it!</b><br>4 points   | <b>Wow!</b><br>5 points   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Content</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presented some ideas; but they may be illogical or inappropriate</li> <li>There are poorly connected ideas</li> <li>May be missing key details</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presented a series of related ideas</li> <li>Generally accurate details and explanations</li> <li>Some parts may not link to the main idea</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a clear purpose</li> <li>The paragraph builds to a climax</li> <li>The details are thoughtful and relate to the main idea.</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a purpose &amp; an attempt to deal with complex issues</li> <li>The paragraph builds to an engaging climax</li> <li>There are engaging details and explanations with thought, reflection</li> </ul> |
| <b>Style</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of the sentences are short and choppy or long and awkward</li> <li>There is basic, simple language</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is some sentence variety and used complex sentences</li> <li>There is everyday, conversational language</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a variety of sentence types and lengths</li> <li>The language is clear, appropriate, and varied</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writing flows smoothly and there is a variety of sentence types and lengths.</li> <li>The language is clear, varied and mature</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Form</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little to no introduction.</li> <li>Sometimes shifted abruptly from one idea to another</li> <li>There is little to no conclusion.</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a basic introduction that explains the situation</li> <li>The Ideas are together but may be listed rather than developed</li> <li>There is a weak conclusion</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an interesting introduction</li> <li>There is a logical sequence and transitions connect ideas clearly</li> <li>There is a conclusion</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an engaging introduction.</li> <li>There is a smooth and logical sequence and transitions</li> <li>There is a creative and engaging conclusion</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Spelling &amp; Grammar</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are frequent errors in simple words or sentences</li> <li>There are frequent run-on's and fragments</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are some noticeable errors in basic words and sentences</li> <li>There are some run-on's or fragments</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There may be some noticeable errors in difficult language</li> <li>Most sentences are correct; some errors</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are very few errors.</li> <li>There may be occasional errors in complicated sentences</li> </ul>   |

Comments:





## September 23

This week you are going to write your final draft of your personal narrative. Here are some tips to help:

1. You should remember how we worked in class on developing a dynamic start to an essay. Have you tried making your introduction stronger?
2. Carefully examine your essay and see where you can replace telling sentences with showing sentences. Remember, the reader of the essay should feel as if she is right there next to you as your story unfolds.
3. Look at your verbs. Strong writers use more action verbs to draw the reader in and to keep the story moving. Can you change a verb or two to strong action verbs?
4. While adjectives and adverbs add a great deal to your writing, be careful to not add too many. Adjectives and adverbs are a lot like spices when you are cooking. Too much or too many can spell ruin.
5. Read your draft aloud. Are there any places where you stumble? That might mean you have an awkward phrase or a sentence that is misplaced. Be aware of your own writing.
6. Email me your draft using Google Docs to [cotillionclubsmv@gmail.com](mailto:cotillionclubsmv@gmail.com). I can comment and edit your essay if you ask for help!