

# Narrative Example Essays

## Grades 11-12

*Essay scores are produced for the following grade ranges: 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, and 11-12. Thus an eleventh grade essay is compared to models for both eleventh and twelfth grades.*

**Prompt for Essays 1-3:** *Now that you have read the article and watched the video on wormholes, write a narrative about time travel using wormholes. Your story should include clearly-defined characters, plot, and setting. Use techniques such as dialogue and description to further develop your story. Finally, be sure to include evidence from both the article and the video, as well as appropriate knowledge you have gained on your own.*

### **Narrative Essay 1: The Black Hole**

I was captain of a mission to go to Mars. It was supposed to be research. My crew was just me and two other people. Katrina was the med officer and mechanic and Michael was the tech expert.

I was sleeping in my cabin when I felt something pulling on me. I looked at the radar to see a huge rotating something in the distance. Michael and Katrina came in too, wondering what was happening.

It was a black hole. There were a thousand questions going through my mind. Then the rocket started heading toward the object, it was going faster - like being on a roller coaster.

“What should we do?” said Katrina. “I think I know what to do. For the past few years, when I was still training, I was working on a plan that allowed light speed travel,” Michael said.

We had been practicing how to work the control station. Since we didn’t want the engine to bust, we slowed the rocket down so it would probably take a few days to get back.

I took some time to think about it, and what he said did make sense. But I was scared. What if it didn’t work?

“Fine, we’ll do it!” I told him.

The project seemed to be going ok since he finished only one month after we started. Finally, we looked over everything carefully and turned on the engine.

Three! Two! One! The engine started and we were off. Now it was time to test the light speed. He said that it was time, and flipped the switch.

Then I went to check on the engine and make sure nothing was going wrong. When I was doing that, I realized something. Michael had turned on the blue switch but he told us that he would mark the light speed one with red so nothing would get mixed up. He turned it on, and when he did, I felt the change. I hit the wall and slumped down. I got back up to help up Michael. When I saw the planet I knew right away that it was Earth. Whew.

*Annotation: This essay lacks the kind of development that engages the reader and feels complete. The sequence of events is list-like, though the dialogue helps to break it up.*

## **Narrative Essay 2: The Black Hole**

It started a few months ago when I was made captain of a mission to get the strange material that was found on Mars. It was supposed to be sota like bombs. My crew was just me and two other people. Katrina was the medical officer and mechanic and Michael was the techn expert. He's kind of a crazy- scientist. We had been practicing how to work the control station. It was really annoying to do all this but we had to practice for the real thing. I just didn't know it would be so scary.

Since we didn't want the engine to bust, we slowed the rocket down so it would probably take a few days to get back.

I was resting when I felt something pulling on me. I looked at the radar to see a huge rotating in the distance. Michael and Katrina came in too, wondering what was happening.

It was a black hole. Would I ever see my family again? There was a thousand questions going through my mind. Then the rocket started heading toward the object, It was going faster and faster; like being on a roller coaster. The difference was that it was a thousand times faster and a whole lot scaryer.

I noticed that my body was getting taller and skinnier. The clock was skipping months at a time. The distance meter was showing that we had already travelled a hundred million miles! That's impossible! I started running towards the control station when the file cabinet fell right on top of me and the world went black...

I woke up to see that we were on land. I was relieved at first until I realized that Michael and Katrina were not there. Please, let them not be dead, I thought! I looked over to the wreck that once had been our ship and saw two figures below a thick, burnt piece of metal that had once been the roof of the control station. I rushed over.

Luckily, we found some half-burnt ragged towels to wrap around the cuts with duct tape, which hiding underneath a bag. The blood eventually stopped, but it was still really, really painful! Every time I moved an inch, my muscles would make a tearing sound.

"Let's take a look in the emergency box, and see what we have to deal with." I said. As I was getting up, I took a look at our surroundings. There were no signs of life.

We took out the materials inside the emergency box, which hadn't been destroyed.

"What should we do?" said Katrina. I think I know what to do. For the past few years, when I was still training, I was working on a plan that allowed light speed travel." Michael said.

I took some time to think about it, and what he said did make sense.

"Fine we'll do it!" I told him.

The project seemed to be going ok since he finished only one month after we started. It was at least three months before we got the rocket ready.

Finally, we examined everything and turned on the engine. Three! Two! One! The engine came to started and we were off into space. Now it was time to test the light speed. . He said that it was time, and just suddenly flipped the switch.

"We tried." I said. "Oh, well."

The next day, I went to check on the engine and make sure nothing was going wrong. As I was doing that, I realized something. Michael had turned on the blue switch but he told us that he would mark the light speed one with red so nothing would get confused. he turned it on, and when he did, I felt the change. I hit the wall and slumped down. I got back up to help up Michael. I could see a ball of fire that was glowing bright. Then I saw the same planets that I had spent a year studying and reading about. I would never forget those 8 spheres circling around the Sun. When I saw the planet with water and seven continents floating on top, I knew right away that it was Earth. We were back!

*Annotation: This essay could be improved by fleshing out the characters a little more. Some attempt has been made to do so, but the author should take more time to make them distinct. The lack of development also means that the reader is not very concerned about the outcome of the story because the sense of suspense is not strong.*

### **Narrative Essay 3: The Black Hole**

BOOM! Our rocket shook as the explosion made the ship spiral out of control and change course, heading us in the wrong direction! The controls weren't working and Michael, our technician, was nowhere to be seen! It all started a few months ago when my officer in command appointed me the captain of a mission to get the strange material that the scientists on Mars had discovered. It was supposed to have the effect of a 1000 plutonium bombs! Plutonium is a really explosive substance that was used in the making of the atom bomb in World War 2.

To clarify, I am Randy Cobalt Jr., and it was my dream ever since I was a little kid to experience the wonders of the universe.

My crew consisted of two members other than me. Katrina was the medical officer and mechanic while Michael was the technology expert. He's kind of a crazy-scientist and experiments with many machines, to make them more efficient. We three had been practicing endlessly on how to work the control station ever since we got the mission. It was really annoying to do all this but we had to practice for the real experience. I just didn't know that the real experience would be as horrifying as what was happening now. It gave a whole new meaning for "lost". *Why had this happened to us, of all people*, I thought? I couldn't afford to fail my first mission.

"Where is Michael!?" I yelled to Katrina over the deafening sound of the alarm.

"I think he's in the engine room!" she answered.

*What is he up to now? He probably tried to upgrade the engine system like he told me about yesterday! He messed up again!* I thought angrily as I went to the engine room. When I got there, I saw him lying unconscious on the floor with swollen head and scrape on his arm. He must have knocked into a support column.

I immediately called to Katrina who rushed in. After taking his temperature, she injected an anesthetic to numb the pain. She washed his wounds and used her expertise to stitch the cut back together.

"Are you okay?" I asked and got a slight nod. "What happened back there? Did the engine bust?"

"I was trying to see if the engine could go any faster." He replied in a small weak voice "It didn't turn out as I expected it to."

“Didn’t I tell you to stop doing your ridiculous experiments? How many times do I have to explain to you that safety is first! I’m going to have to report you when we get back, and if you endanger anybody one more time, you will be permanently taken off the team!” I yelled. It was harsh but why should it matter? I had to think about the safety of others. I couldn’t risk the health of the people I was in charge of! If they got hurt under my command, it would change my mental state.

Katrina helped Michael getting up, and after a bit of uneasiness, he was able to pull the rocket into control; but we were far off track by then. Since we didn’t want the engine to bust, we slowed the rocket, so it would probably take a few days to get back.

I was resting in the control station when I felt the tugging sensation. I looked at the radar to see a huge rotating vortex in the distance. Michael and Katrina came in too, wondering what was happening. I didn’t answer because I couldn’t see anything ahead of me. It was pitch black.

There was only one explanation. It was a black hole. My eyes widened in fear and my heart leaped a mile. Would I ever see my family again? Was I going to feel pain? There were a thousand questions going through my mind as we approached our imminent doom. Before I knew it, the rocket started heading toward the object, unable to pull out of its grasp. It was going faster and faster by the second; like being on a roller coaster as it came down a steep, steep, slope. The difference was that it was a thousand times faster and about a million times scarier.

As I fretted over the future, I noticed that my body was strangely getting taller and skinnier. The digital clock was skipping months at a time. The distance meter was showing that we had already travelled a hundred million miles! That’s impossible! I started running towards the control station when the file cabinet fell right on top of me and the world went black...

I woke up to see that we were on land. We hadn’t been ripped to shreds by the black hole! I was relieved at first until I realized that Michael and Katrina weren’t anywhere to be seen. *Please, let them not be dead*, I thought! I looked over to the wreck that once had been our majestic ship and saw two figures lying below a thick, burnt piece of metal that had once been the roof of the control station. I rushed over, and after lots of grunting and groaning with pain, managed pushed the brute off. I couldn’t find anything else that would do the job, so I spilled some of the cold water from my canteen on them. It was blazing hot so I knew that some coolness would get their body activated.

“AH! We’re going to die!” Michael screamed as soon as he got splashed, but Katrina didn’t respond at all. What was I supposed to do? I wasn’t a doctor! She was really bruised but for some reason, she didn’t have any major cuts on her body, just scratches here and there. What a miracle!

On the other hand, I was oozing blood. I hadn’t noticed that I was bleeding really badly until Michael screamed at me, saying that I was going to die of blood loss. Michael also was in pretty bad shape with bruises on his legs and arms and a big cut coming down from his forehead to his chin. The worst part was that the medical kit could not be found! We searched and searched for it, but eventually quit after our legs couldn’t stand anymore. Luckily, we found some half-burnt ragged towels to wrap around the cuts with duct tape, which hiding underneath a bag. The blood eventually stopped, but it was still really, really painful! Every time I moved an inch, my muscles would make a tearing sound.

It was sundown before I was able to function again without having a breakdown. Michael had found the emergency box which was a heavy, metal cabinet that held water, food, medical materials, and tools to build\rebuild needed materials. I don’t know how we missed this immense trunk when we looked for the medical kit, but it was definitely a life saver.

I used a little bit of the foul tasting liquid in the emergency box to wake up Katrina. It was supposed to give a burst to the body so that it can get the parts up and moving. It worked on Katrina because a few seconds after I poured it in her mouth, she jumped up into the air like she'd been doing gymnastics her whole life. After everybody had took some time to get their thoughts in control and deal with the fact that we were stuck here, a group meeting was held.

"For right now, let's take a look in the emergency box, and see what we have to deal with." I said, as the others looked glumly into space. As I was getting up, I took a look at our surroundings. All I could see for miles and miles was hot, sunburned sand and dust particles flying through the air. There were no signs of life, and it didn't look like we were going to come across a lake anywhere near here. The other odd thing was that the sun seemed to setting in the west, as my space watch - has lots of neat gizmos- showed. How queer. We took out the materials inside the emergency box, which thankfully hadn't been destroyed, and did a quick run-through. If we rationed the food and water, we would have enough to last us for two months, which worried me because we probably weren't going to get out here anytime soon.

The world was spinning by the time I was through counting, which made me feel really dizzy and tired. We decided to get some sleep and figure out the plan the next day. Michael and I set up the tents which were located in our emergency box while Katrina set up dinner. Just to make it clear, the emergency box was not for outer space use, and was to be used only if we crashed onto a planet, which is why everything in there was set up based on that. The food was actually a powder inside containers, and only needed water to turn into a warm, hot meal. The tents were also not that hard to set up because they only needed a little bit of heat to expand into a cozy room.

After camp was prepared, we came to the inflatable table to have a meal of mushroom stew. We ate in silence, still shocked by the situation we were in. Were we going to get out of this alive?

The next day, we awoke and ate a breakfast of oatmeal, which I really hate by the way. After our "yummy" meal, we came together to discuss a plan.

"What should we do?" asked Katrina in a scared baby voice.

"I was looking to see if any of the instruments were working and found the odometer still in good condition. It showed that we had gone almost 700 billion miles!" I replied.

"What? That's not even possible? Only way that could happen is through time travel, which I'm pretty sure is not possible. How are we ever going to get back?" exclaimed Katrina.

"I think I know what to do. For the past few years, when I was still an astronaut in training, I was working on a plan that allowed light speed travel." Michael said with a little spark in his eye.

I knew that spark. It meant that he was reverting to his wacky self which got us to this dilemma in the first place.

"I'm sorry Michael, but I can't trust you because of the incident that got us here." I said.

"But nothing can go wrong. If we manage to rebuild our rocket, it would still take like 1 billion years to go back to earth and that's if we don't go light speed. If we do manage to build a light speed engine, but it fails, it will still take a billion years to get back. Either way, we'll be stuck, so the best we can hope for is doing this project." he replied with a little bit of annoyance. I took some time to think about it, and what he had said did make sense.

“Fine we’ll do it!” I exclaimed back.

He showed us the plans and assigned us each something to do. He would start working on the engine while Katrina and I used the electric tools inside the emergency box to start repairing the rocket. It was hard work especially with the super-hot sun draining energy from us. We couldn’t drink too much water because we wanted it to last for a really long time. There wasn’t a good chance that we would find fresh water supplies out here in the middle of nowhere, either.

Michael’s project seemed to be going well since he finished only one month after we started. The rest of the time, he was making adjustments and helping us out. It was at least three months before we got the rocket suitable to withstand light speed, and be comfortable enough for us to live in. There was no way we could restore the rocket to its original size and shape; so we made adjustments and reduced it to a third of how it was. It wasn’t cramped but was not the most comfortable place, either.

On the final day, we examined everything and turned on the engine. Three! Two! One! The engine came to life and we were off into space. Now it was time to test the light speed. Katrina stayed back at the control station while I went to the engine room to check with Michael on how we were doing. He said that it was time, and just suddenly, out of excitement, flipped the switch.

I don’t know why, but I actually expected the rocket to rumble and time to slow down as he turned it on. The fact is, nothing happened. I went back to the control station and saw that we were still going normal speed.

“We tried.” I said in a depressed tone. “Oh, well.”

It was a terrifying feeling as everybody just stared off through the glass window hoping for something to happen. Michael seemed the worst out of us three. His eyes were sunken and his head was drooping so much it looked like it was about to fall off. He somberly walked off to his room while Katrina and I sat down, exhausted.

The next day, I went to check on the engine and make sure that nothing was going wrong. As I was doing that, I realized something. Michael had turned on the blue switch but he told us that he would mark the light speed one with red so nothing would get confused. I felt a glimmer of hope and soon my feet were running to Michael’s room. After telling him, I went to Katrina, and told her to take control of the rocket while Michael and I went to try the other switch. When I got back to the engine room, Michael was there, quivering with anticipation. It was an intense moment as he turned it on, and when he did, I felt the change immediately. It was exactly as I thought might happen. The rocket was rumbling and groaning while Michael and I were flying through the air in slow motion. I hit the wall and slumped down, but it wasn’t a hard hit. I got back up and managed to help up Michael, who was dizzy.

We made our way back to the control station and saw Katrina staring in amazement at the sight ahead. I could see a huge ball of fire that was glowing intensely bright. Around it, I saw the same planets that I had spent a year studying and reading about. I would never forget those 8 spheres circling around the Sun. When I saw the planet with glistening with water and seven continents floating on top, I knew right away that it was our beloved Earth. We were back!

*Annotation: In this essay, the writer has added more detail to the trip and thus gives the reader more understanding of the danger the characters face. Dialogue supports the sense of fear and despair. Further development could focus on the three characters, making their personalities even more distinct.*

**Prompt for Essays 4:** *Now that we have studied short stories by such authors as Poe and O. Henry, write one of your own. Using narrative techniques, build suspense or a sense of mystery to engage the reader. Your plot should be built carefully, with a logical, if surprising, resolution.*

#### **Narrative Essay 4: The Mirror**

Arrogance is weakness disguised as strength. I would have thought this was well known to all, but it seems not all can see past the veil of false courage to the utter arrogance and supremacy that lies beneath. Listen closely to the story for which I am about to appraise upon you, for it is a story that shall make weary all those who have thought they have the right to exploit the faults of others because they have forgotten their own.

It didn't matter that he was hated and feared by most of them, for he was loved by the people that mattered. To those people he was brave and amazing and dashing. Even those who despised him, also admired him. For he was with that crowd. You know them. The one that people part like water for, as if they were surrounded by a bubble that separated them from the likes of ordinary folk. The one that everyone wants to be like and wants to like them. The crowd of the people who mattered. All others were insignificant in comparison to them. No one else would have thought this, had it not been that they thought it, for if they thought it then it must be true. If they thought it, then it was. All others were part of a group. But them, they were the group.

So it is true that he was popular. And when one is admired by all, it is only a matter of time before it goes to one's head. He prided himself in the belief that he had no fears. Even as a child, when he was dared to cross the spooky town graveyard, he didn't hesitate, for he had never had anything to fear from the material world. Why should he? The world had never done bad to him before. No, it was the psychological trauma he avoided. He was sure that he knew the world, well his world anyway. What he didn't trust was his head, his emotions. But of course no one cared about whether or not he could look into the eyes of the people he had hurt, no, they wanted to know if he would camp out in the forest at night with no tent or if he would dare to let a poisonous spider crawl down his arm. As his popularity grew, so did his ignorance. He began to think of himself as superior to all others. Not one regret plagued his mind when he knocked the books out of the banker's hands as he walked by, or shouted "Four- eyes!" at the town librarian. But no one felt his lack of care as much as small Sam. Sam, he terrorized. Whenever he saw him in town he caught him and pushed him, knocked his things away, called him names, and laughed at him. Not much thought was given to Sammy's feelings. He never thought of what he may be doing to Sam. Of course he didn't, he was wrapped up in his own superiority to notice such trivial things as the feelings of others. People began to avoid him at all costs. They skirted away from him when he walked by and left the building in a rush when he opened the door. Even his crowd, for it had become his crowd, made excuses when he suggested they do something and ended their conversations with him quickly before bowing their heads, which they seldom did, and walking swiftly away.

One day, the coldest day, in December, the popular man who really wasn't popular strut up to a boy named Charlie in his crowd and began to eagerly describe a fun way to pass the time he had just thought of. He explained "It's called Hop-Dog. We go onto the roof of the dog pound at night and lower each other in, one by one. Whoever can hop over the mutts the fastest without waking them up wins!". Desperate to leave the direction the conversation was going in, Charlie quickly blurted "Yah sounds fun." He cleared his throat and continued "Hey, I have a new dare for you if your man enough to take it on". Charlie knew right away that he had caught the other persons attention when he saw the glint in his eye. Thinking quickly he said too enthusiastically "Go to the witch's house and knock on the door. You have to wait for an answer before you come running back." Charlie's dare was answered by a cold, calculating smile.

A hag is the most acceptable way to describe the old, mad women, that was known around town as “the witch”. Outside of town, on the verge of the woods, there existed a cabin whose old wooden bones were decaying before the cabin was even built. This was where the witch resided and where no one ever dared step foot. No one saw her much, she was only spotted on the rare occasion that she came to town to buy food and the occasional oddity such as a strange herb, a broken shell, or a ,hopefully, glass eyeball. Odd and unexplainable happenings often follow her visits; out of season cold spells, blooms of mushrooms covering the ground, out of the ordinary gatherings of swamp flies, and the disappearance of small pets from the households of the towns people. She was immediately shunned by those too old to believe horror stories and feared by children too young to know any better.

He was never afraid of the witch. The term used to describe her had the very opposite effect on him as it did on others; it made him chuckle at the ridiculousness of it. As soon as the fatal dare had left the lips of Charlie, he turned on his heel and strode towards the edge of town. He slipped between two buildings and broke into a run as he was met by the stark grass and far off trees that was the outside of town. The field that separated the town and the woods went by in a blur and before he knew it, he was a stone throw from the front steps of the gray cabin. His stomach rolled, though not out of fear, out of disgust. His gag at the sight of the mildewing wood of the southern side of the house was much louder then he meant it. It was then that he realized the noises of the forest had abruptly cut off upon his arrival. Thinking nothing of it he laughed. In doing so, he had shut his eyelids for the briefest of seconds. When they opened he jumped and almost fell backward off the porch steps. The ancient door to the cabin was right in front of his face. It seemed that he had moved from five feet in front of the dirty cabin to the porch. Remembering walking up the steps was not something he could have claimed, but ,as he usually does with these type of things, he shrugged it off and took a step forward to knock on the door. He jumped when, as his foot hit the porch, a sharp creak sounded, like a siren going off. He relaxed as he realized that the sound was merely the old wood responding to his step and wondered idly, in the back of his mind why there had been no creak when he moved onto the porch. Extending his foot once again he braced for the wailing of the wood. He was surprised when, as his foot made impact with the porch, there was no sound whatsoever. The shock that was covering his face was quickly replaced by a grimace as he looked up at the grimy, dirt-covered door. When he finally knocked on the door, he made sure that the least amount of his skin touched the door as possible. The resonating knock seemed to echo in the cabin, and he listened intently for any signs of life within the small house. The smallest of sounds could be heard in the back of the house. A quiet bump, and then another.

Slow. Agonizingly slow. These are the words that first popped into his head to describe the tempo of the muffled thumps as they increased in volume. So slow and spaced were the quiet bumps that he began to hear a ringing in his ears from listening so intently and feel a knot growing in his back muscles from his increased tension. Time seemed to slow exponentially as he waited for the period of silence that elapsed between each thump to become shorter. After what seemed like hours, the thumps finally began to shape into the sound of footsteps. He began to wonder why it took so many steps to get to the door in such a small house, but his ponderings were quickly erased from his mind as the sound of the footsteps stopped suddenly on the other side of the door. The look that contorted his face as the rusty knob on the door began to wobble could only be described as some sort of mixture between worry and eagerness. The door knob slowly, slowly turned about its place twice then stopped. With a creak much like that of the prolonged caw of a heart broken raven, the door crept open revealing a sliver of darkness that slowly gained until it was large enough to show the outline of a person. He dragged in a ragged breath as the witch took a step forward into the light.

The hair of the hag radiated around her in a halo of gray, dirty tangles that housed many forms of debris and leaves. Her skin glowed in a brown haze covered in blotches. She was shrouded by a long black and brown robe that fell to the floor in dirty, ripped piles. Her hands were hidden from view, but he could imagine them curling into sharp claws. She had plump cheeks that stood out against her sharp, hooked nose. Her eyes were pale blue, so pale that it was almost white. He could have sworn her pupils were slits like those of a feral cat. Her chin was sharp, much like her nose, save for the fact that it hooked upward instead of inward. Her face was strangely pale compared to the skin on the rest of her body, but it was covered with the same disfigured blotches. The way she smiled at him could be described as prettily, if it wasn't for her sharp, pointed teeth.

The man's face drained of color as he saw her, but, ever trying to be the fearless, arrogant person he was, he stood his ground and stood straight. He wouldn't have been able to arch his spine anyhow, it was locked in fright. His biggest mistake, was looking her in the eye. How she could have inspired such terror in him of all people, he could not say. The only thought his brain would allow was that he needed to get out of here and he needed to get out of here now, but he couldn't move a muscle.

The piercing gaze of those horrible pale eyes somehow held him in place. Her sharp teeth again stood out to him as she opened her mouth to speak. His mouth gapped like the lips of a catfish as it attempts to swallow a dragonfly. The voice of the witch was the most beautiful he had ever had the pleasure, or terror, of hearing. The wonderful symphony of bells that slid smoothly out of her sharp fangs seemed to dance in the air before swirling around him and floating into his ears. It was a moment before he registered that she had spoken words, and another before he was able to discern what she had said. He replayed the words in his mind which was difficult enough without also having to struggle not to be pulled into the mystic music of her voice again. "Oh, you have a very dull mind haven't you. It is filled to the brim with thoughts only of yourself. Can't have that now can we?" were the words he was able to pull from the song that filled his mind. He tried to clear away the fog that the music had induced upon his brain, to no avail. Irritation was not possible, even though he gave it his best shot. Wonder, confusion, and terror were waging a war within his mind and the fog that had settled into his brain wasn't helping in the slightest. Suddenly he heard a snap and everything in his mind was erased except for the emotions that commonly accompanied fear.

He sat up, not remembering haven fallen, and looked around. The cabin was dark and uninhabited again and he was slouched five feet away from it, exactly where he was before the dreaded incident. Fear. Panic. Confusion. He frowned. He had been trying to think and when he probed his head, that was all that had come up. He once again glanced up. Shadows danced everywhere and he flinched and jumped to his feet as one came to close. It felt as though someone had cranked the volume of the world to a max. Every noise was followed by an explosion of fear within his mind. A swallows call sounded like a blood curtailing scream. The snap of a twig as a squirrel crossed the forest floor was a gunshot. Before his very eyes the squirrel turned into a large, fanged animal that he was sure intended to tear him limb from limb. Turning quickly around he ran blindly into the sudden, swallowing darkness in a direction he hoped was towards town. As he sprinted he ran into a large spider web that hung down from a tree branch and he shuddered as he felt dozens of tiny legs run up and down his back. Shaking as he ran to try and rid himself of the arachnids led to him tripping over a non-existent log. The world spun around him as he pushed himself up and continued running blindly in the general direction of the town.

He somehow managed to squeeze between the two buildings without running into them, but as he slid further, the space started getting smaller. He turned to go back from the way he had came, but the opening that had once been there was now gone. Panic flooded his mind as he pushed farther and farther as the walls got tighter and tighter. He bent over in relief and shut his eyes as he finally managed to push through the death trap. His relief was short lived he realized as he looked up at the town. The buildings looked like they had been ransacked and all the people seemed to have been kidnapped. Fog floated around the buildings and strange noises oozed out of the houses. His suspicions of the citizen's demise were confirmed as he ran around the town searching for any life. All he found was more shadows and all he heard were more strange noises that had no source. He stumbled into a corner and lowered his shaking head into his hands. And there it was. Just a tiny spark, but if he really concentrated it became a small flame. Anger. A small red burning in the recesses of his dark fear. Before the flame could go out, he grabbed it and anchored himself onto it. Zeroing in on the anger allowed him a small escape from the fear and he let this small escape fuel him. He stood up and jogged through the buildings, counting each footfall to help him focus on the burning. The anger slowly revealed itself as rage against the person who caused this mess. It felt as if he had been dealing with this fear for hours and also like minutes. He couldn't take it anymore.

The blooming of a plan was taking place in his mind. It was a very small one, but it was a plan nevertheless. Really he was impressed that he had been able to push back the raging fear enough to allow anything to form. His plan was simple; go to the cabin, get the witch. As soon as the plan was set in his brain, he changed the direction of his jogging towards the outskirts of town, skirting the two buildings that were the

route he normally takes entirely. The road that led out of town wasn't as close to the wretched cabin as he wanted, but he most definitely wasn't going anywhere near the death hole he took into the town. He jogged evenly with his eyes slits to see as little of his surroundings as possible. The road winded around the outside of town before it took a sharp turn in the opposite direction of the cabin. Without any break in pace he left the road and continued steadily in the direction of the cabin. He repeated his plan over and over again in the small part of his mind that he still had control of as he ran through the field. Go to the cabin, get the witch. Go to the cabin, get the witch. Eventually he came to the edge of the trees where the cabin was hidden in shadow. His control began to slip as he saw the shadows that surrounded the terror inducing hell house. The shadows danced at his feet as he sprinted onto to porch. Creaks exploded all around him but he ignored them and pushed on the door with what strength he had left. Surprisingly it opened and he ran inside. Without looking at his surroundings, he turned and slammed the door behind him. A suffocating silence followed the slam.

The room was dark but somehow he could see. It's not as if there was anything to see in the room. The wide plain room was devoid of all furniture. It had plain white walls that didn't make the room seem any brighter. He took deep breathes to slow his raging heart. Just as the wild pace of his heart had begun to slow down, he heard a wild noise behind him that made it pick up its previous tempo. He jumped around and saw Charlie, the boy from his group standing and laughing. Laughing at him. As he watched Charlie doubled over with laughter and pointed at him. He shrieked and turned around as he heard more booming laughter smashed against his eardrums. Two more members of his popular group were standing there laughing at him. His frantic reaction only seemed to amuse them more and there laughter increased in volume. He again heard noise behind him and turned to see more of his "friends" laughing. As more people he knew popped up around him, the laughter was joined by taunts and name calling. People began to crowd around him, poking and prodding him, until there was no room to breathe.

His breath whooshed out of him as someone elbowed his stomach and he yelped as someone's shoulder dug into his back. He needed out. A quick search for any opening in the horde of limbs and heads revealed a tiny gape in people that led to a doorway. He noted that there was light streaming out from under the door, before he began the desperate struggle of pushing through the people. Familiar faces flashed by him, all of the contorted into sneers. He could see nothing but bodies, yet he continued to push through them, elbowing and shoving people out of the way. When he finally managed to struggle to the door, he yanked it open and, pushing back the people that tried to follow him, he streamed inside and pulled the door shut. As soon as the door clicked into place, the laughter and yelling ceased. Reluctant to turn around, he leaned against the door and panted, trying to catch his breath. When he no longer felt that he may pass out, he slowly turned his head.

The first thing he noticed was the small bulb of light that was hanging from the ceiling. The bulb swung slightly back and forth like a pendulum that drove death closer with each swing. The radiance of light it omitted followed it as it swung left and right. When the bulb swayed left, shadows were cast on the right side of the room. When the bulb swung right, shadows fell across the left side of the room. He shuddered and slowly tilted his head down to look straight ahead. What he saw surprised him more than anything else he had seen on this horrific day, for everything else had been of the scary nature. What he saw in front of him was small Sammy. The kid he never left alone. The one thing he didn't expect to see in this madhouse. He breathed a tired sigh of relief and slumped his rigid shoulders. The black cat with pale blue eyes that was twirling around Sam's legs, did not attract his attention. He took a step forward and so did Sam. Cautiously he reached out to Sam, ready to pull back at the slightest hint of danger. Sam did the same. His eyes widened in horror as his clammy fingers touched the cold, hard glass of the mirror just as Sam's did.

*Annotation: Notice how the author of this short story took her time to build the suspense and horror. Almost from the beginning, the reader feels the tone of the story. The characters are believable, again having been built carefully through both direct description and their actions. Word choice is strong, with imagery that supports the suspense.*

*For more examples of student essays, see the Common Core State Standards Initiative site, which includes samples of actual student essays for all three writing genres and for all grades. Each essay includes helpful notes and explanations. The first set of essays is from an on-demand writing assignment. The second set shows a range of writing, usually with one or more short essays and one or more longer ones.  
Link: <http://achievethecore.org/page/505/common-core-narrative-writing>*