

Narrative Example Essays

Grades 5-6

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

Prompt for Essays 1-3: Write an essay about a memory that is important to you. Write the essay in narrative form. Help your reader feel the emotion you felt as you were living through this event.

Narrative Essay 1: The Storm

One time I was outside and it started raining and thundering and lightning and I was scared. The sky turned dark and the wind started blowing. Then I heard some rumbling a ways away. Then I saw a black cloud coming towards me. Suddenly I felt rain hit my face. It came so fast and I was so surprised. Boom!!! A loud clap of thunder! I ran in the house but the house was shaking. I didn't understand what was happening. The wind was really blowing and things were flying around the yard. The tree limbs were hitting the windows.

Annotation: This paragraph is a great start for a narrative essay. The writer has used great details ("rumblings," "clap of thunder," "things were flying around the yard"). The writer also included onomatopoeia ("Boom!!!"). Appealing to the reader's senses with these techniques makes the essay engaging. However, the narrative needs a beginning, middle, and end, and a sense of the storm event as a whole.

Narrative Essay 2: The Storm

One time I was playing in my woods behind my house and the sky started to turn dark and the wind started to blow. I looked over the trees and saw a big black cloud moving towards me. Then I heard the rumbling of thunder, but it was still far away. Suddenly, the rain started hitting my face! It didn't start with just a little rain. It was pouring! It came so fast and I was surprised. Then I saw lightning in the sky, and BOOM!!! A loud clap of thunder! I was scared! I didn't know what to do. Then I saw a little old shack and ran to it. It smelled awful, and it was mostly rotten, but it was better than nothing! But the walls were shaking and I didn't understand what was happening. The wind was blowing so hard and things were flying around outside. The trees were blowing so hard they were bending over. I just stood in the corner, shaking. I was cold and scared and shaky. Then the rain let up and my dad came and found me and I went home. I was safe!

Annotation: Even though the description of the storm is fairly strong, the essay leaves the reader disappointed because the ending is abrupt. Development of the story needs to be even, from the introduction to the conclusion. Likely scoring range: 13-18.

Narrative Essay 3: The Storm

It was the middle of the day in July, We were on vacation in the cabin on the lake where we went every year. My brothers and my dad were out fishing, and my mom had gone to the little store to get some tomatoes. I was supposed to make a salad for supper. I love helping Mama fix supper.

The air was starting to smell like rain. I thought I heard some rumbling out in the distance. I stepped out on the porch. My skin was attacked by goose bumps! It smelled like rain. I wasn't worried, because I love storms. Or at least, I used to. The heat was so thick that beads of sweat broke out on my face. My throat was dry. The rain-smelling air felt weird. The wind began to blow, and a towel drying on the porch suddenly started flapping. Then I saw a black cloud just across a field. The screen door started to bang, and the trees were bending in the wind.

I ran inside and started closing all the windows. I turned on the lights because it had gotten so dark inside. Rain started pouring down outside, and some of it was coming in past the flapping curtains. Then BOOM! A loud clap of thunder made me jump. That scared me. It was so close! Limbs were being slammed against the cabin making a horrible noise. I thought the windows would be busted by flying objects. I looked outside and saw lightning streak across the sky and then heard more thunder. The rain got louder and louder, and the air suddenly turned cold.

I grabbed the afgan from the couch and wrapped it around me. I wondered what to do. I was all alone, and the storm was worse than anything I had ever seen. Then the lights went out. Oh no! What now? Then I remembered from school that you were supposed to find a safe spot in case of bad storms, so I ran into the bathroom and got in the tub. Then I got out and ran to my room and got a pillow and a bottle of water from the kitchen. At the last minute I remembered to get the flashlight out of the drawer, and then went back and crawled back to the bathtub. I could hear things hitting the roof and the side of the cabin. I wondered if there would be anything left of the cabin, or of me! I was so scared. I pulled the afgan over my head and scooted down to the bottom of the tub with the pillow under me. I held on tight to the bottle of water -don't ask me why! I squeezed my eyes shut and tried to block out the noise of the thunder and rain and wind, but it was impossible.

After what seemed like hours, I suddenly heard my dad's voice shouting to me. I sat up and called back and then the door was flung open. Daddy came in, soaking wet, with rain still dripping down his face. He scooped me up and hugged me, and told me everything was okay. I just hugged him back as tight as I could. My brothers and mom came in then, and everyone started talking at once about the storm and how wild it was. There were trees down everywhere, and some were across roads.

That's why my mom couldn't get back from the store, and why it took them all so long to get home. The storm kept on for a while, but it didn't matter. I was safe!

Annotation: This narrative demonstrates great detail and description. The writer has built suspense by describing her emotions as well as the power of the storm. Detailing exactly what she did to make sure she was safe is also a way to engage the reader. The essay also has a clear introduction and a satisfying, logical conclusion.

Prompt for Essays 4-6: Write a story about a time that is special to you. Include details to help your reader understand the importance of this memory.

Narrative Essay 4: The Catch

I am not good at sports. I played baseball and I would play right feeld. When I bat I strike out all the time. I would not catch the ball. I caght the ball one time. I had my eyes closed. It landed in my glove. I made the other team get there thrid out. Myteam won and my dad was happy. The team and coche were happy. I felt good.

Annotation: This narrative is under-developed. It does not have enough details to engage the reader.

Narrative Essay 5: The Catch

I am not really very good at sports but I have played them all my life. When I was eight, I tried to play baseball. I wasn't very good. At that practice I was assigned to right field. That summer I played right field or sat on the bench in every game. We played twelve games and I struck out every time. I struck out again in the top of the ninth inning of our last game, my last at bat that summer. When the other team went in to bat, I was playing in right field again. The score was three to two. We were ahead. But if the other team scored two runs, they would win. The first batter got on base with a walk. The second and third batter struck out. The fourth batter hit a double. There were two men on base and two outs. When the next batter was up, I prayed that he wouldn't hit it to me. Then I saw my dad smiling at me. I heard the bat crack and then my dad yelling, "Look up!" I saw the ball coming at me. I reached my glove up and closed my eyes. I opened my glove and the ball landed in it. We won! Everyone patted me on the back and gave me high fives but I just wanted to see my dad. Then I saw my dad smile with pride. We didn't talk on the drive home. Instead, we just looked at the game ball and held each other's hands.

Annotation: The writer of this narrative has more detail, but reads like a list. There is more attempt at development ("I struck out again in the top of the ninth inning of our last game, my last at bat that summer"), but the story seems to move too fast for the reader to keep up. More development (explanations, details) would improve the essay.

Narrative Essay 6: The Catch

Although I am not much of an athlete, I have tried playing different sports all my life. I tried playing baseball for the first time when I was eight years old. I thought it would be cool because my dad loves baseball and it would give us something to share. My dad had to travel a lot for his job, so we didn't have much time during the week together. But he had been a first baseman all through high school and college, and so I knew he'd love going to my games, and then we could talk about them afterwards. When he was home, he could practice with me. At my first practice on the city little league team, I learned really quickly that I wasn't very good. I couldn't hit the ball no matter how the pitcher pitched it. I almost never caught the ball, either. I was pretty hopeless. Midway through that first practice, my coach introduced me to the position that I would play for the rest of the season. That place was right field. I guess he thought that I could do the least harm there. During that whole season, I either played right field or I sat on the bench. If a ball came my way, I would have to chase it, since I just couldn't seem to catch one. As for batting, we played twelve games and I struck out every time. I didn't even foul-tip a pitch! The only way I ever got on base was if the pitcher walked me. Fortunately or unfortunately, my team only had 12 members, so I played more than my team mates would have liked. It's not that I didn't practice. No matter how many times my dad pitched the ball to me during our practices, I just couldn't seem to hit it. He was very patient, showing me again and again how to stand with my feet apart, how to stack my hands on the bat, and how to swing hard across the plate, but I knew he didn't quite understand. We also practiced with him hitting the ball to me so I could catch it. I wasn't much good at that, either. Usually, I just ended up doing a lot of chasing that ball all over our yard.

Nearing the conclusion of our twelfth and final game, in the top of the ninth inning, I struck out on three straight pitches, making the third out. As the teams traded places, I found myself once again in right field. The score was three to two. So far, we were ahead, but no thanks to me, and it all depended on what happened while the other team was a bat. The first batter on the other team got on base with a walk. The second and third batters struck out. The fourth batter hit a double. Now the tying run was on third and the winning run was on second with two outs. I prayed that the batter wouldn't hit it to me. As I prayed, I looked over and saw my dad smiling at me. As I made eye contact with my dad, I heard the crack of the bat. My dad yelled, "Look up!" and as I did I saw the ball coming straight at me. I back-peddled, reaching my glove up high in the sky, as far as I could read. I squeezed my eyes closed, opened my glove, and the ball landed in it,

sealing a victory for my team. As I ran in from my right-field position, my coach and teammates bombarded me with hugs and high fives. But it was not with them that I wished to share my excitement. I wanted to share this moment with my dad. As I walked off the field, I saw my dad with a tear in his eye and a wide smile filled with pride. We didn't talk on the drive home. Instead, we just looked at the game ball and held each other's hands.

Annotation: Notice how much more development this essay has. The reader is pulled into the story with the comment that playing baseball seemed like something the author could share with his dad. From there, the reader is carefully led through the events and emotions that occurred during the author's baseball experience, especially during and after the last game. This story also appeals since it is something with which most readers can identify – the joy of a parent's pride.

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>