

Sample Writing Topics

Choose a topic from the list below. Remember to choose the topic you know the most about. Make your writing piece 1 to 2 pages in length, handwritten.

Narrative

1. Think of a time when something surprised you. Maybe it was a big surprise or a small surprise no one else noticed. TELL WHAT HAPPENED.
2. TELL A TRUE STORY about an experience that you have had with an animal.
3. TELL ABOUT a physical activity in which you have participated (for example: recess, games, dance, individual or team sports, skateboarding, bicycling or swimming).

How to Write a Personal Narrative

You're the main character in the story of your life. Narrative writing recounts a personal experience based on something which really happened (or might really have happened). All details work together in an integrated way to create a complete story with beginning, middle, and end.

First Thoughts: Think about the different chapters (or experiences) in the story of your life. Some of them might make you laugh; some might make you shudder. Then again, maybe some of them make you feel angry or happy or sad or excited. Any experience that has caused you to feel a strong emotion is a good subject for a personal narrative.

A Narrative:

- Has a clear order of events (beginning, middle, and end).
- Uses examples and experiences.
- May use direct or indirect dialogue.
- Uses a personal point of view.

- Prewriting:
 - Select a Subject – You’re looking for a memorable experience that happened over a short period of time.
 - Collect Your Thoughts – If the experience you select seems really clear in your mind, go right to your first draft. If you’re a little fuzzy about all of the details, try doing a cluster (or web) or making a list.
- Writing the First Draft:
 - Put yourself at the beginning of the experience (“There I stood” or “As I entered the room”) and continue to add details as they come to mind. Don’t worry about saying everything. You can fill in any gaps later when you revise.
- Revising:
 - Look over your first draft. Have you left out any important details, or put things in the wrong order? Ask someone else to review your writing as well (this is only an option for practice writing – you will not be able to have anyone review your writing for the test). Then make the necessary changes in your story.
- Editing and Proofreading:
 - Check for Errors – Make sure that your writing makes sense and reads smoothly. Then write a neat, error-free final draft and proofread it. Also check for correct spelling (you may use a dictionary) and punctuation.

For more examples of writing: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=525>

Grade 4: Narrative (Example of a “High” paper)

Title: “It May Sound Hard to Believe”

Topic: Have you ever been part of a live performance? Perhaps you were in a play, a puppet show, a dance recital, a school program, or a ball game. **Tell a true story** about your experience.

SCORES AND COMMENTARY (Phrases in bold are taken from the *Official Writing Scoring Guide*):

Ideas and Content: 5 The writing in this essay is **clear, focused and interesting**. The writer includes **relevant and carefully selected details** (“I kept running to the bathroom to make sure my voice was faultless.”). **Insights** are gained into the feelings and emotions of the writer as this singing experience is relived.

Organization: 6 The **order and structure** of this narrative **are compelling and move the reader through the text easily**. There is a **strong, inviting introduction**, and the conclusion gives a **satisfying sense of closure**.

Voice: 6 The writer seems **deeply committed to this topic and there is an exceptional sense of writing to be read**. The conclusion of this piece is particularly effective in communicating the writer’s commitment to the topic.

Word Choice: 5 The use of a variety of words **energizes the writing** (examples include “as loud as an airplane flying through the sky,” “desirable,” “faultless,” and “prime moment”). The word choice conveys the intended message **in an interesting, precise and natural way**.

Sentence Fluency: 5 The writing in this essay possesses a **flow and rhythm** which **makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable**. The writer shows control over both simple and more complex sentence structures. There is a noticeable **variation in sentence structures, lengths and beginnings that add interest to the text**.

Conventions: 5 **The writing demonstrates a strong control of standard writing conventions** for a student at the fourth grade level. End punctuation, capitalization, grammatical elements and spelling are all strong. To reach a 6, a wider range of conventions would need to be attempted.

It May Sound Hard to Believe

It felt like I was a famous singer, standing on top of that stage, hearing the clapping and roar of the audience. I swear it was as loud as an airplane flying through the sky. As soon as I hit that note everybody stood up and started clapping to the beat.

I was in second grade and had already developed a singing voice almost as desirable as the singer from the band called "Pink Martini." I know it may sound hard to believe but it's true. It was my first talent show and I was nervous as heck. I had butterflies in my stomach and I kept running to the bathroom to make sure my voice was faultless. I would sing a note and run back to the auditorium.

After waiting for about an hour I saw Melinda (one of the show monitors) hold up my number. Each person in the talent show had a number. When Melinda held up your number up you would get in line and wait until it was your

turn.

I got in line and waited. The act before me was pretty good but I was too nervous to pay attention. When that act was over the curtains shut. I went on to the stage and got in position. The other two girls who were singing with me got in position too.

The curtains opened and in a whisper I said, "1, 2, 3" then we began to sing. We sang a civil rights song from the movie "Selma Lord Selma." The song was called "Aint Gonna Let Nobody" well that's at least what we called it. We sang and sang. Finally the most important part of the song came. When I hit that note, that was the prime moment from the talent show.

Oh how I wish I could relive that one little moment, that one little moment of the clapping, the whistling, and screaming for an encore. Oh how I wish that just for one second I could relive that day. Putting aside the butterflies in my stomach, or the trembling in my knees. I just wish I could.

Personal Narrative

Student Model

Fifth-grader Ethan moves the reader smoothly through his personal narrative with transition words like first, then, also, so far, and when.

Jet Bikes

Have you ever run a business from a playhouse? My friends and I have. It is a bike shop. We call it Jet Bikes.

One day my friend Trent asked me and my brother Jared if we wanted to build a bike shop out of his old playhouse. Jared and I said, "Yes." So we went to get permission from my mom to go to Trent's house and get started.

The first thing we did was get some things out of his garage. We got old, rusty bolts; new, shiny nuts; black tape; wrenches; half-empty cans of oil; and screws. Then we built a new roof for the playhouse. We also had to clean the dirt and leaves out of it.

So far we've only worked on our own bikes because not many people know about our shop. We had to fix Trent's chain a few times. We also had to fix his tire because it would go flat every five minutes. We changed the inner tube and also used some stuff called "No More Flats." Now it never goes flat!

When we are older, we plan on putting signs up around town and maybe even an ad in the newspaper. We will work on bikes as big as 20 speeds and as small as bikes with training wheels. We hope to have a lot of customers.

Do you think you'll ever come here with a bike for my friends and me to work on? I hope so because it would be fun to have some customers, and it might be fun for you to have kids fix your bike!

Personal Narrative

Student Model

Fifth-grader Kelli begins this personal narrative with a question that captures the reader's interest.

The Day I Took the Spotlight

Wouldn't it be superb to have one moment when you took the spotlight, to have everybody clapping for you and cheering loudly? I have had that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—the day I took the spotlight!

Sometime in February, my teacher told us all about the Woodmen of America speech contest. The topic was “people who have overcome obstacles in their lives.” I thought my great-grandma Lorraine Parsley, who has had recurring cancer 13 times and is still living, would be perfect. She has overcome a lot of obstacles in her life.

A couple weeks later, the class gave their presentations. My teacher had to pick three to five students to go on to the next level. I was one of them! Then the top five from each of the three fifth-grade classes competed. The top seven would be the finalists; again, I was one of them! The top seven worked really hard. We had until March 15, 2001, to practice.

March 15 rolled around. Before I knew it, I was in our school gym with people all around, including the judges, listening to every word I said. I was the sixth to present. I was soon done; what a relief! I knew the top seven got ribbons, certificates, and pins; but I still wanted that trophy.

After the seventh person finished, the judges made their final decisions. They announced the winners. The third-place winner was Aunum, the second-place winner was Sarah, and the first-place winner was Kelli! I had just won first place! I was ecstatic.

That was my once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The students in the audience were going wild clapping and cheering! That was a moment I will always remember, when I took the spotlight!