

# Sample Writing Topics

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

## Narrative

1. Think about a time in your life that involved ONE of the following: discovery, surprise, OR survival. TELL THE STORY of what happened.
2. You can probably remember at least one time when you did something for someone else that made you feel proud of yourself. Think about what you did and how you felt about it. TELL WHAT HAPPENED.
3. Remember a time when you faced a challenge. You may recall a difficult problem, competition or task you had to face. Recreate that situation. TELL WHAT HAPPENED and how you met or failed to meet the challenge.

### How to Write a Personal Narrative

In a personal narrative, you re-create an incident that happened (or could have happened) to you over a short period of time. This incident could be an emotional experience, a silly or serious event, or a frightening encounter. Be sure to include enough specific details to make the incident come alive for your readers. If you can't remember everything, fill in the gaps with details that seem right. (From *Writers Inc: A student handbook for writing and learning*, by Patrick Sebranek. Pg 147)

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

**Grade 6: Narrative (Example of a “High” paper)**

**Title: “Mother’s Day Pancake Breakfast”**

**Topic:** Have you ever made someone happy—or given someone a good surprise? **Tell a true story** about a time when your actions had a positive effect on someone else.

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

**Ideas and Content: 5** The writing is **clear, focused and interesting**. The writer has provided **relevant, carefully selected details, which create a thorough, balanced explanation of the topic**. **The writing makes connections and shares insights**. (“So I made perfect pancakes to put in place of the blackened toast. Ok now, what does mom like on her pancakes? Strawberries and cream. I got the strawberries and the whipped cream out of the refrigerator. I mounded on the sweet fluffy cream.”)

**Organization: 5** The organization is **strong and moves the reader through the text** while telling the story of making the pancakes. The **introduction is inviting and the ending gives a satisfying sense of closure**. Details fit in the process where placed.

**Voice: 6** The writer has chosen a **voice appropriate for the topic** and purpose of telling a narrative story. There is an **exceptional sense of “writing to be read.”** The writing is **expressive, showing originality and liveliness**. (“I snuck downstairs, quiet as a church mouse, so as not to awaken my mom. If she walked through the door I would be burnt toast! Ahhh! The toast was burning!”)

**Word Choice: 5** The words **convey the intended message in a interesting and natural way**, creating **clear images**. The expressions are **fresh and vivid**. Words are **thoughtfully placed for impact**. (“I cut myself with the razor sharp blade that I found in the kitchen drawer,” “I could almost taste the magical smell drifting in the air; of the delectable pancakes.”)

**Sentence Fluency: 5** The writing has an **easy flow and rhythm**. Sentences are **carefully crafted, with strong and varied structure that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable**. (Note: occasional punctuation errors should not affect the sentence fluency score.)

**Conventions: 5** This essay scores a low 5 in conventions. The **writing demonstrates a strong control of standard writing conventions**. **Errors are so few and so minor that they do not impede readability**. There is **little need for editing**, especially in the areas of spelling and punctuation.

The smell was enchanting, filling the room faster than the speed of light. The white, fluffy, whipped cream was flooding over the golden, brown pancakes. The time I made breakfast for my mom was very special.

I snuck downstairs, quiet as a church mouse, so as not to awaken my mom. If she walked through the door, I would be burnt toast! Ahhh! The toast was burning. It was as black as coal being wheeled out of the mine. Oh, dang! I broke the toaster. What now? I didn't have a clue as to what to make to replace toast. Pancakes! That's it! So I made perfect pancakes to put in place of the blackened toast. Ok now, what does Mom like on her pancakes? Strawberries and cream. I got the strawberries and the whipped cream out of the refrigerator. I mounded on the sweet fluffy cream. Next I needed to cut up the strawberries. Ouch! I cut myself with the razor sharp blade that I found in the kitchen drawer. What was that?! I heard somebody stumble out of bed. The lights clicked on in the bathroom. My dad slowly shuffled out. I heaved a sigh of relief. He looked at me like I shouldn't be up that early in the morning, after all it was only 7:00, but then he remembered that it was my mom's birthday.

"I'll go quietly watch T.V.," he said as he walked through the squeaky doorway.

I got bandage to wrap around my injured finger, then I started up again on my quest to make the perfect breakfast.

I was done. I could almost taste the magical

Smell drifting in the air, of the delectable pancakes I nearly bit my tongue off, trying to keep from eating my mother's special surprise.

I got the breakfast tray, and placed her breakfast, some extra toppings, and a just-bloomed, pink rose on it. I tiptoed in to my mother's silent room, and I quietly shut the door. I guess I wasn't very quiet, because Mom jumped at the sound.

I saw her relax and lay back down on the soft pillow, when she realized it was just me.

"Bon Appetite!" I exclaimed.

She loved the pancakes, and even chuckled when I told her about the incident with the toaster. I thought that was the best birthday present I had ever given her, and next year when I have to top that, I might as well just give her the moon!

## Personal Narrative

(example: This is a very moving narrative about a difficult experience. Sharing what she learned from this friendship makes an effective conclusion.)

### Giving Life

It was a hot summer day. My dad and I were getting ready to go out for a ride on the boat with my friend Katie and the dog. That's when the phone call came, the call that made that bright, beautiful day a cold, dark, gloomy one.

I had just put on my suit, shorts, and tank top, and packed my bag with sunscreen and everything else I would need for the day. I ran into my parents' room to find Dad. When I saw him on the phone, he was crying. I'd never seen my dad cry before. My heart sank. What possibly could have happened?

"Max, I'm so sorry," I heard him say. That's when it hit me. I knew that Suzie had died.

Max has been my dad's best friend for years. Suzie, his daughter, had a rare disease that mainly affected her body. Her brain was OK. She knew what was going on; she knew that she had problems and was different than other kids. Once she told her dad that she wished she could die and be born in a different body. Yet although she couldn't live a normal life, she was still happy.

When Suzie and I were little, we spent quite a bit of time together. As we grew up, we grew apart. She lived in New York, and I lived in the Midwest. When Suzie was ten she had to live in a hospital in Virginia. About eight months before she died, Max gave us her number at the hospital and we talked at least twice a week until the end. Suzie was always so excited to talk to us and wanted to know every detail about my life. She wanted to know everything I did and everything I ate. In a way, she lived through me.

After we found out about her death, we made our plans to go to New York for the funeral. When she was alive, I sent her a Beanie Baby and she sent one back to me. I had bought her another one but never had the chance to send it to her, so I took it to put in her casket.

Her funeral was very different than any funeral I'd ever been to. After they lowered her casket, each one of us put a shovelful of dirt over her. I remember crying so hard, I felt weak. My cheeks burned from the tears. My whole body was shaking as I picked up the shovel, but I'm glad I did it.

When Suzie and I first started calling one another, I thought it would be more of a burden on me, but I was completely wrong. I learned so much from her. She gave me more than I could ever give to her. I will never forget her or the talks we had. I now know that I must never take anything for granted, especially my health and the gift of life.