

Fourth Grade Writing Lesson #1/ Narrative Prompt

Summary

Students will produce a narrative about a personal experience, with a focus on the trait of organization. The text should have an inviting introduction and satisfying conclusion.

Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 4

[Writing Standard 3](#)

Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 4

[Writing Standard 10](#)

Time Frame

3 class periods of 45 minutes each

Materials

Teacher Materials:

Books dealing with best/worst experiences

- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*
, Judith Viorst
 - *Thank You, Mr. Falker*
, Patricia Polacco
 - *The Bee Tree*
, Patricia Polacco
 - *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse*
, Kevin Henkes
 - *Chrysanthemum*
, Kevin Henkes
- Graphic organizer (story map)

Instructional Procedures

Read one or several of the suggested titles and model, thinking aloud. Pause throughout the reading to model personal thinking about similar experiences. Invite students to make connections also.

Demonstrate, using the graphic organizer, the organization of the book read in step 1.

Model writing a best or worst experience by filling in experiences on the graphic organizer.

Show students the writing prompt for this lesson. Have them complete the graphic organizer for their own best/worst story.

Give students time to draft their stories.

Craft story leads and conclusions by sharing both good and poor examples. Have students write two new leads and conclusions for their stories and then pick their favorite.

Give students time to revise and edit.

Writing Prompt: We all have good and bad days. Think of a time you had a really good or bad day. Think about what happened, how you felt, and why you still remember it. Write about your experience.

EXAMPLE #1

[The Deadly Penny](#) (pdf)

IDEAS AND CONTENT: [4]

The writer holds the reader's attention and is writing from experience. Ideas are reasonably clear, although they may lack detail.

ORGANIZATION: [4]

The title is original. The organization flows, but the paper lacks a satisfying conclusion.

VOICE: [5]

The writing is honest, personal and engaging. The tone of the writing is appropriate and holds the reader's interest.

WORD CHOICE: [3]

The writer makes attempts at colorful language. More precise wording could be used in a couple of places. It appears that the writer selected the first words that came into mind.

SENTENCE FLUENCY: [3]

The writer gets the job done in a routine fashion. Sentence beginnings need more variety and energy.

CONVENTIONS: [3]

The writer attempts the use of quotations but does not always punctuate them properly. Otherwise, spelling and punctuation are generally correct.

EXAMPLE #2

[The Wet Pants](#) (pdf)

IDEAS AND CONTENT: [5]

This paper is clear and focused and gives accurate details. The reader's questions are anticipated and answered.

ORGANIZATION: [4]

The organization flows smoothly. The ending is satisfying, but paper could use a more compelling beginning.

VOICE: [5]

The writer takes risk throughout the piece. The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer.

WORD CHOICE: [3]

The writer attempts to use some colorful language, but the paper lacks memorable words and phrases. The writing could benefit from more active verbs.

SENTENCE FLUENCY: [4]

This paper has an easy flow and rhythm. It could use more purposeful and varied sentence beginnings.

CONVENTIONS: [5]

The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions.

EXAMPLE #3

[The Day](#) (pdf)

IDEAS AND CONTENT: [3]

The paper includes supporting details, but not enough to flesh out the story. Some unnecessary details are included that detract from the writing.

ORGANIZATION: [3]

Most sequencing is logical, but the introduction doesn't transition well into subsequent paragraphs. The lead and conclusion are fairly strong, however.

VOICE: [3]

The voice is pleasant but not compelling. There are moments when the voice shines, but generally it is a "safe" attempt.

WORD CHOICE: [4]

The writer uses some strong verb choices. (Examples: murmuring, dashed, mumbled.) The writer also attempts to select words appropriately, as in "My annoying little brother Randall comes to school with my friends..."

SENTENCE FLUENCY: [4]

The writer incorporates a variety of sentence beginnings and sentence lengths.

CONVENTIONS: [4]

There are a few errors. The writer experiments with some complex conventions and punctuation, such as quotations and ellipses.

AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:

Details relevant to the story

Improved transitions between paragraphs

EXAMPLE #4

[My Good Day](#) (pdf)

IDEAS AND CONTENT: [4]

There is general development of an idea, but not much support in fleshing out the beginning of the story. Stronger support in the middle and end of the paper is needed.

ORGANIZATION: [4]

The organization is clear, if not predictable.

VOICE: [3]

There are only a few moments when the personality of the writer really shines. Otherwise, the voice is not very engaging.

WORD CHOICE: [3]

Word choice is adequate, but does not stand out. Passive verbs are often used.

SENTENCE FLUENCY: [3]

Too many sentences are short and choppy, although some variety is evident.

CONVENTIONS: [5]

The writer has a good grasp of writing conventions.

AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:

Add stronger details, especially in the introduction.

Vary sentence lengths.

Select active, lively verbs.

Extensions

For review of sequencing.

Have students practice sequencing by cutting up short, well organized text. Text can be taken from one of the suggested titles but should not exceed six or seven lines. Have students organize the strips in logical sequence. (Reference: *Creating Writers* by Vicki Spandell, p. 162.)

Adding voice to language. Read snippets of familiar children's authors. Have students guess who the author is.

Authors

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