

# Lesson 3: Writing Personal Narratives

## Grade 6 English Language Arts

**LESSON DESCRIPTION:** The teacher will read two or three poems about childhood memories. Students will write freestyle drafts and do a weekend web. After the TV Turn-off students will write an essay about what they have learned. They will create a power point based on their essays or have their essays videotaped while they are reading them.

**FOCUS QUESTIONS:** How can writing help one reflect on an experience? What steps are needed to produce a personal narrative? What is the impact of having an audience on one's writing?

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will:

- improve their writing skills.
- improve their communication skills including speaking.
- develop skills at brainstorming ideas, creating drafts and developing interesting introductory paragraphs.
- set a purpose, consider audience and develop focused ideas in writing their essay.

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

### • ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- \* **CCSS.6.W.1** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences using effective technique, descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- \* **CCSS.6.L.1** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking
- \* **CCSS.6.L.2** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- \* **CCSS.6.L.3** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing.
- \* **CCSS.6.SL.4** Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- \* **CCSS.6.SL.5** Include multimedia components (e.g. graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

**LENGTH OF LESSON:** Three to five lessons lasting 50 minutes.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Each student will need a writing notepad.
- Video camera and tapes
- Computers
- Power Point software OR PhotoStory 3 for PC

**INVOLVING FAMILIES/COMMUNITIES:** A parent may be able to assist with creating electronic presentations of the essays. Show these at a parents' night or on local television.

## PROCEDURES

### **Activity 1: Anticipatory Set - Students will write one freestyle draft about a childhood memory.**

1. Read two or three poems about childhood memories to the students.
2. After the students have listened to the poems ask them to write at the top of a piece of paper, a word or phrase from one of the poems that “jumped out” at them.
3. Tell the students to write for ten to fifteen minutes about a memory related to the word or phrase. (You may want to model this for them.) Tell them this should not be a poem but to use sentences. Emphasize that this is a draft and they do not need to worry about spelling or punctuation. The purpose is to get their ideas down on paper as quickly as possible.
4. Have students volunteer to read what they have written to the class.
5. This can be turned into a polished piece of writing. (optional)

**Teacher’s Note:** The best writing is when students write what they know. It’s important to help students identify memories they can write about.

### **Activity 2: Students will do a weekend web and brainstorm a list of activities they did instead of watching TV. They will identify one activity and write a freestyle draft. Students will revise the narrative and develop an interesting introductory paragraph.**

1. The teacher should demonstrate writing a weekend web using his/her own experiences. Note- Students are always interested in the personal lives of their teachers. This lesson should, ideally, be done after they have started the TV Turn-Off. Ask the students to write “weekend” in the middle of a piece of paper and then write all of the activities they did over the weekend that did not involve media.
2. Have students select one of the activities and write a “freestyle draft” for ten to fifteen minutes. Encourage them to be as specific and descriptive as possible.
3. Have students volunteer to read what they have written to the class.
4. Hand out the paper with the Lead Chart on different ways to begin a narrative or story. Read the examples from the chart as well as other examples from books or articles.
5. Tell students to take the draft of their weekend activity without TV and write a new beginning that starts with dialogue or a quotation. Let them write for ten minutes and then ask them to pick one of the other three types of introductory paragraphs and write another beginning using that format.

6. Have students pair up and read what they have written to each other. They should give feedback as to which lead or opening they prefer.
7. Students should work on revising their writing to include a more interesting introduction.

**Activity 3: After the “Take the Challenge” Media Reduction program is over students write an essay about what they have learned and the impact on them personally.**

1. After the “Take the Challenge” is over, have students fill out the first graphic organizer on what they learned and the impact it had on them and other students.
2. Have students complete the second graphic organizer to identify their own experiences with “Take the Challenge”. Remind students that the best writing is when they write about what they know. (This step is optional.)
3. **Tell Students:** Each year children are spending more and more time watching TV. There are very few students in this country who have accomplished what you have done. We need you to help educate younger children and our community about what you have learned. We need you to write an essay about “Take the Challenge” that will be shared with elementary students and their teachers. Include what you have learned and the impact on you. You can use either of the graphic organizers to help you write the essay. Take 15 minutes to write a freestyle draft.
4. Have students read their drafts to a partner. Ask the students to listen for a personal experience they would like to hear more about. Have students revise their drafts and add more detail. Remind them that their personal experiences will help make their writing more interesting. Also encourage them to include an interesting introductory paragraph.
5. Have students read their essays to the rest of the class.

**Teacher’s Note:** When students write a paper about what they have learned and how it may change their behavior, such as watching less TV and being more active, they will be more likely to follow through. Reading the paper aloud to others will also increase the likelihood of changing their behavior.

**Activity 4: Students will create a Power Point based on their essays or they can be videotaped reading their essays. The Power Points and videos can be shared with other students, teachers, schools, parents and school boards.**

If video equipment is not available PhotoStory 3 for PCs or PowerPoint is a good option.

## The Swing

Robert Louis Stevenson, 1913

HOW do you like to go up in a swing,  
Up in the air so blue?  
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing  
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,  
Till I can see so wide,  
Rivers and trees and cattle and all  
Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,  
Down on the roof so brown—  
Up in the air I go flying again,  
Up in the air and down!

## "Lost,"

by Carl Sandburg, 1982

Desolate and lone  
All night long on the lake  
Where fog trails and mist creeps,  
The whistle of a boat  
Calls and cries unendingly,  
Like some lost child  
In tears and trouble  
Hunting the harbor's breast  
And the harbor's eyes.

Extension- Sandburg addresses a common childhood anxiety, that of getting lost. By having the boat call and cry, though, he makes it a little easier to read about, perhaps. Children might enjoy writing, addressing a sensitive subject, but with a nonhuman having to experience it. (Optional)

## Raymond

By Paul Janeczko, 1982

Hair the color of pencil shavings,  
eyes as dark as a night river,  
best friend  
since fifth grade  
when he seemed to stop  
growing.

Large enough  
to blacken Danny Webb's eye  
when he said,  
"Hiya, pipsqueak,"  
the first day of eighth grade,

small enough  
to get into the movies as a kid.

At the Top Hat Cafe,  
gave me one play  
on his juke box quarters.

For three nights,  
trusted me  
with the false teeth  
(uppers only)  
he found on a park bench.

In The Tattoo Emporium,  
let me help him  
pick out the  
eagle-holding-thunderbolt  
he'd claim for his chest  
the day he turned eighteen.

## Bingo

By Paul Janeczko, 1990

Saturday night  
Dad washed, I dried  
the supper dishes  
while Mom armed herself  
for Early Bird bingo at seven  
in the church basement:  
her lucky piece  
(a smooth quarter she'd won the first time out),  
seat cushion,  
and a White Owls box of pink plastic markers.

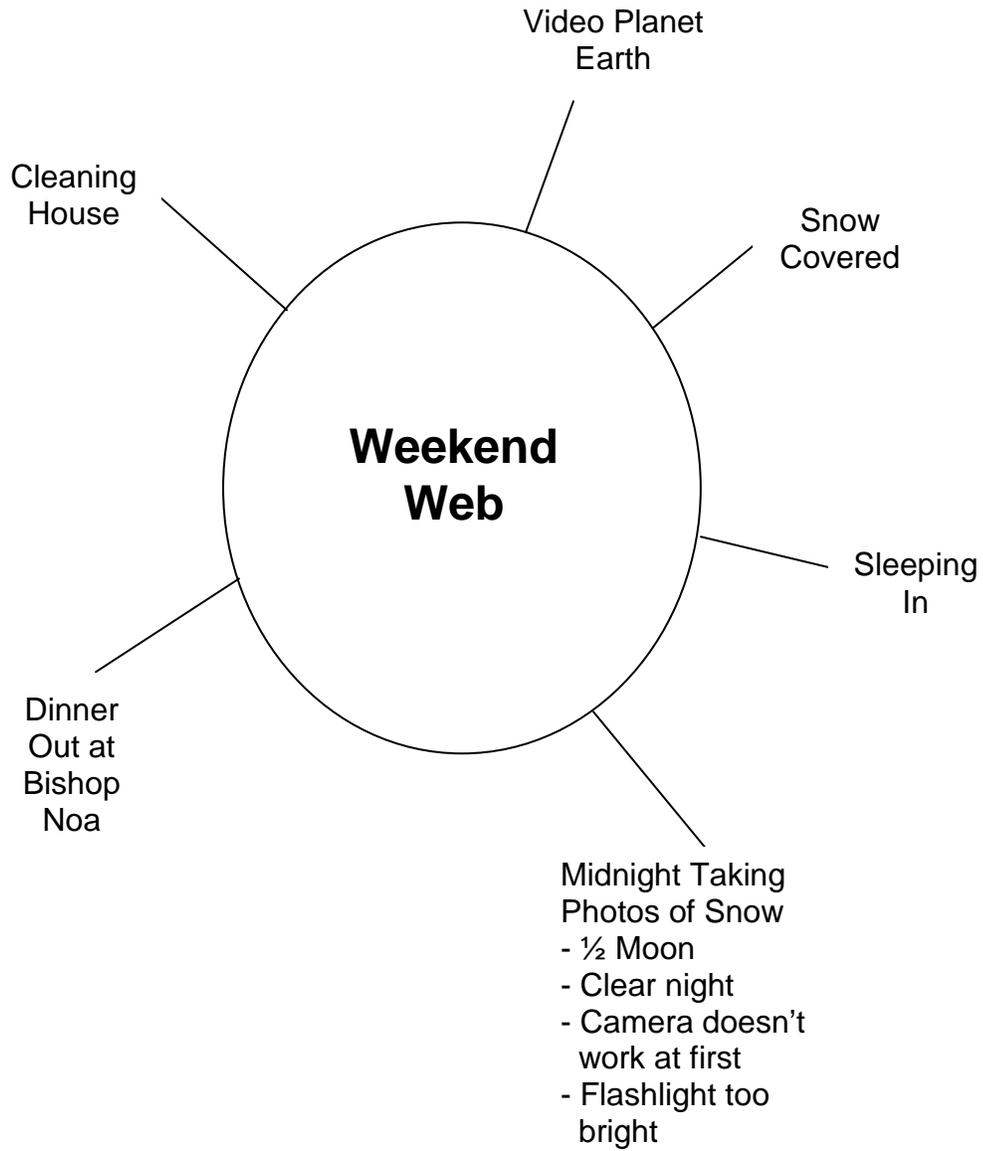
Dad read the paper  
watched TV with me  
until Mom returned,  
announcing her triumph with a door slam  
and a shout  
"I was hot!"

Flinging her hat,  
twirling out of her jacket,  
she pulled dollar bills  
from her pockets  
before setting them free  
to flutter like fat spring snow.

"Ninety-two dollars!" she squealed  
as Dad hugged her off the floor.  
"Ninety-two dollars!"

In bed I listened to  
mumbled voices  
planning to spend the money--  
on groceries  
school clothes  
a leaky radiator--  
and wished she'd buy  
a shiny red dress  
long white gloves  
and clickety-click high heels.

# Sample



## LEADS

**TYPICAL:**

A description of event, setting, or characters.

It was a day at the end of June, 1984. My whole family, including my mom, dad, brother, and me, were at our camp at Rangeley Lake. We arrived the night before at 10:00 so it was dark when we got there and unpacked. The next morning when I was eating breakfast my dad started yelling for me from down at the dock at the top of his lungs about a car in the lake.

**ACTION:**

A character doing something.

I ran down to our dock as fast as my legs could carry me, my feet pounding away on the old wood, hurrying me toward the sound of my dad’s panicked voice. “Scott!” he hollered again. “Coming, dad!” I gasped, and picked up my speed.

**DIALOGUE:**

A character or characters saying something.

“Scott! Get down here on the double!” my father hollered. “You’re not going to believe this,” dad’s voice urged me. I gulped down my milk, pushed away from the table and bolted out the door, slamming the broken screen door behind me.

**REACTION:**

A character thinking about something.

I couldn’t imagine what my father could be hollering about already at 7:00 in the morning. I thought hard and fast about what I might have done to get him so riled up. Had he found out about the way I’d talked to my mother the night before, when we got to camp and she’d asked me to help unpack the car? Before I could consider another possibility, my dad’s voice shattered my thoughts. “Scott! Move it! You’re not going to believe this!”

Adapted from “In the Middle, Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents” by N. Atwell

NEED:

NEED:

**Take the Challenge**  
Benefits to You or Others

BENEFITS:

BENEFITS:

Example:

Example:

Example:

Example:

Concluding statement about your future actions:

Concluding statement - recommendations for younger students: