

GRADE 4 WRITING STANDARD 2.1 -- NARRATIVE

VOCABULARY WORDS TO OWN: show specific sensory detail ideas observations memories series of events focus

WHAT IS IT?

- Your purpose is to *show* the reader an event or experience from your life using vivid, descriptive language and concrete sensory details that allow the reader to understand why it is important to you.

MAIN FEATURES: A good writer will...

1. Offer one important event or experience from beginning to end.
 - Craft a lively, creative opener.
 - Describe the setting in enough detail to help the reader understand the story.
 - Give a connected series of events that move the story along.
 - Show your ideas, observations, and memories through thoughtful, concrete, specific sensory details (sights, sounds, scents; feelings; how people talked, looked, and reacted.)
2. Show why this event or experience was important.

Use Transition Words To Show:

Time: later, finally
before, after
now, next, then

Cause/Effect:
because, since
so that, in order to
for this reason, so

Sequence:
now, since, during
before, while, after

Space: above
across, before, behind
here, near, next to

Order of Importance:
first, last, mainly, most
more, to begin with

Comparison: also, and
another, just as, like
similar, too

Contrast: although
however, in spite of
instead, still, yet, but
on the other hand

REMEMBER TO:

Organize

- read the writing task carefully and cover all its parts
- keep the focus of the entire narrative on the story you want to tell
- offer several well-organized, indented paragraphs

Communicate Clearly

- use confident, vivid, and interesting vocabulary
- speak appropriately for the intended audience
- use a variety of sentence types

Display Correctness

- display few, if any, errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, indentation and spelling

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Centers on one Event or Experience	<i>Dramatically</i> offers one <i>important</i> event or experience from beginning to end. <i>Purposefully</i> describes the setting in just enough detail to make sense to the reader. <i>Shows</i> the writer's ideas, observations, or memories through <i>thoughtful, concrete, specific sensory details</i> (sights, sounds, scents; feelings; how people talked, looked, and reacted.)	Offers one event or experience from beginning to end. Overall, this narrative <i>tells</i> more than shows and offers <i>general</i> rather than specific details. Important details or events may be missing, and some of those given may not be well-chosen.	Offers one event or experience. <i>Tells</i> more than shows and offers <i>few</i> sensory details. May confuse the reader because important details or transitions are missing. OR too many of the details given may not relate to the story. May seem like a poorly connected list of events.	Does not offer an event or experience from beginning to end. This narrative may be <i>very</i> short, incomplete, or confusing. It: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may offer more than one event • may jump from idea to idea • may give a list of unrelated ideas, observations, or memories
Significance	<i>Insightfully</i> states or implies the importance of this experience.	States or implies the importance of this experience.	The importance of this experience may be hard to understand.	The importance is hard to understand.
Organization	Covers <i>all</i> parts of the writing task. Focuses on the story throughout. Understands the purpose. Speaks to the topic. Shows awareness of the audience. Successfully includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a graceful beginning, well-paced middle, and satisfying ending • correct use of paragraphing 	Covers <i>all</i> parts of the writing task. Mostly focuses on the story. Mostly understands the purpose. Speaks to the topic. Shows awareness of the audience. Includes a beginning, middle, and end, but <i>sections may be out of balance</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may give too much detail to some parts and not enough to others • (or) may need more detail overall • (or) may focus on the setting or a person and skimp on the story • may begin abruptly • middle may drag or jump around • may end in a hurry 	Covers <i>part</i> of the writing task. The focus may wander from the story. May understand the purpose but <i>does not successfully achieve it</i> . Speaks to the topic given. May not show awareness of the audience. May include a beginning, middle, and end, but the whole is not well-organized: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may begin abruptly • may only list events or details • may ramble on and on, lose focus and include unimportant or unrelated details. • may lack an ending or end in a hurry 	Covers <i>only one part</i> of the writing task. Shows <i>no</i> understanding of the purpose. May not speak to the topic given. Shows no awareness of the audience. Shows <i>no</i> understanding of how to create a narrative with a clear beginning, middle and end. Ideas are not presented in an organized way.
Style	Uses a variety of sentence types and vivid, descriptive language.	Uses a variety of sentence types but mostly <i>commonplace</i> language.	Uses <i>little</i> sentence variety and <i>elementary</i> language.	Uses <i>no</i> sentence variety and <i>little</i> descriptive language.
Correctness	Contains few or no errors. These do not confuse the reader.	Contains <i>some</i> errors which do not confuse the reader.	Contains <i>several</i> errors which may confuse the reader.	Contains <i>serious</i> errors which confuse the reader.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THESE MATERIALS

If you have not already done so, please read the Foreword in Chapter Two to get an overview of the book's structure. The notes below outline a sequence of instruction that is not so much a single lesson as a carefully planned progression of instruction to model the writing process, let students experience that process, and develop a proficient piece of writing. When teaching **narrative writing**, a natural progression might be as follows:

1. Prior to beginning with your students, review the two first pages of Chapter 4. Preview the one page overview and the scoring guide. Look carefully at the "vocabulary words to own" and at the sequence of skills required. Do students understand the concepts? Is there evidence that students have the isolated skills to produce an entire piece? Since these pages have been fully aligned with both 1.0 and 2.0 standards writing, it can be assumed that full understanding of the components will lay the ground work for mastering the standard.
2. You may then wish to use one or more of the preskills sections in Chapter 3 to introduce, review, support and possibly teach the sub-skills that make up narrative writing. Pay particular attention to setting and character development. These make the difference between telling a story and showing a situation. Be certain that your students know what to do at the sentence and paragraph level.
3. Introduce and discuss the one-page description page and the scoring guide; to save paper in our classrooms, we duplicate both on a single sheet of paper (front and back) and move freely between them in this initial discussion. You will notice that the descriptive page offers "vocabulary words to own." Be sure students can define these before you begin. You will also see a side-bar containing transitional words. We have added this in response to a research finding that reports that when such words are made available to students, their writing does improve, particularly with regard to transitional devices and fluency.

The most important aspect of the process is the discussion of the scoring guide and its requirements. Be sure to address how narrative differs from, for example, a summary, letter, book report, etc. We spend an entire class period on this step, pulling out all our jokes, stand-up comedy, and teacher tricks to maintain attention. Really. This step is key. We provide goofy examples and challenge students to come up with examples of their own on the spot. We want to give them a firm basis for comparison. What are the differences in each trait between a three and a four? A two and a three? Familiarity with the guides is like giving students a road map for writing, and we want them to have that map *before* they get behind the wheel. Also, once students understand the guides, we can use them for grading. At the end of the process, when the finished narratives come to us for grading, we attach one to each narrative and highlight sections of each guide that apply. In this way, students get specific feedback on the most commonly repeated traits in a familiar format at little cost in teacher marking time, and we can spend more time on the important comments specific to individual papers. We don't mean to suggest that use of the guides in grading speeds up the process - it doesn't -- but it does allow us to offer more specific feedback than we may otherwise do in the limited grading time we can give each narrative.

4. As teachers we learned the value of scoring as a training device early in our careers, when we attended Advance Placement seminars, then just catching on. We have since come to appreciate the value of training students on sample narratives before they write. To continue the analogy of the

road map, scoring a model narrative lets them take a practice run. Students may imitate the models the first few times out, and that is fine. That is why you give them. In addition, while many students feel they cannot write a score level 4, most can do better than a score level 1, and many can top a score level 2. The models give them hope.

The writing samples in this chapter are repeated twice. First, for the teacher, they are presented in order from score 4 to score 1, with commentary provided for each narrative. Sometimes multiple narratives are given for a particular score level to illustrate the range of possible responses that still would merit the score. Secondly, the scoring sets offer the same narratives in mixed-up order and without commentary to facilitate "blind" scoring. We have used these narratives in numerous ways over the years. We once duplicated only one class set of the "scoring set." Students completed the group scoring process but did not mark the narratives, and the stack went into the closet at the end of the lesson to await next years' group. However, as students have increasingly come to appreciate the value of a good model -- and a poor one -- they have asked to be allowed to keep them or at least to borrow the set for awhile. Therefore, depending on the status of the ongoing "paper and duplicating wars," usually tied to funding, we try to make the models available.

In our classrooms, the process looks like this: Students are asked to form cooperative learning groups. Each student is then provided with one set of the model narratives and the scoring guide (some will have already lost theirs from the previous day's discussion.). They are instructed to score the narratives *silently*, committing themselves *in writing* to their scores on a separate sheet of paper. We do allow them to use a plus or minus but require them to come to a decision regarding score levels. That is, they may mark 2+ or 3- but not 2/3. We judge the quantity of scoring by the capabilities of the group. Weaker students may find value in scoring one narrative at a time with discussion between each one. Others will find such a pace a real snoozer and tell us so. Whatever you may choose to do, the goal is productive discussion, and that does require a reasonable pace, however it is accomplished.

When everyone has a score for the first assigned models, ask them to discuss their scores by group. We sometimes require the group to come to a score consensus. In this case, a spokesperson for each group then reports the score for each narrative to the class and defends it -- *from the scoring guide*. This is key. Students must be able to find *words on that paper* that upon which they have based their judgment. They may not just decide a score without analysis. We put it this way: In this exercise, *they* are the teachers. Just as they expect their teachers to justify a poor score on a narrative with objective data, so are *they*, as teachers, required to do so.

Alternatively, you may wish to allow each individual to place a "vote" for each narrative, placing tick-marks on a grid on the board or overhead. Discussion then centers on disagreements and on objective reasons for the vote. This approach appeals to students who enjoy arguing their points of view, as in honors and some remedial groups. Remember also that disagreement is inevitable; we fully expect that *you* will not agree with all of *our* score assessments, and that is fine! The value of the exercise lies more in process than in product. For the most part, however, we are impressed by the accuracy with which our students do see the models and the excellence of their reasoning. They may not yet be able to produce a score level 4 or even 3 narrative, but they *can* articulate what is done well in the models, and this becomes another building block for them as writers. Finally, we try to remember that contiguous scores are of less concern than scores where, say, one hold-out swears that a 3 should receive a 1 due to some fault in mechanics or a single line in the scoring guide. Here is the chance to demonstrate that, while one aspect here or there may be out of range, a holistic score seeks to reward what is done *well* over the *majority* of the narrative. (This, of course,

requires us to leave our "pet peeves" at the door and do the same in scoring, yes?) The process of group scoring and discussion can be accomplished in one class period but may also require a second depending on the quality of the discussion.

5. At this point, the color-mapping techniques discussed in chapter two may be useful. You may choose to present one or more pre-mapped narratives, map a sample narrative with the class, or, in the best of all worlds, ask students to do so.
6. Offer a prompt that asks students to pull an experience from their personal life (i.e., most frightening moment, most embarrassing moment, etc.) Shelley Harwayne's wonderful books remind us also that young writers are not particularly interested in topics that adults find appealing, but they are excellent observers of their world if adults offer them the chance to write about subjects they know. She gives the example of jumping in puddles, using the playground, getting into line for lunch, and other daily events that children face (and adults often do not see). The best personal narratives rarely involve the much-awaited party or event, unless something out of the ordinary happens on one of these. Good narrative writing more often involves well-described and very familiar events that are most likely common to many of our students.

While we are on the subject of prompt writing, you may have noted that the prompts used in the statewide writing test are vague, barely differentiated from the standards themselves. These stand in stark contrast to the carefully shaped prompts we have been accustomed to offering our students. We do not like them. We consider them quite poor. Teachers across the state have gone on record stating that the lack of specificity in the prompt was one cause of our students' lackluster scores. However, we believe that, if prompts like this represent reality for our students, then we should be training those students to face them even as we lobby to get the prompts improved. Let's pit the kids against a prompt that is so vague it looks like a reworded version of the Standard. Then let's be sure to train them in how to wrest meaning from them (see PFAT, chapter Two). If they can pull a decent narrative from a prompt like that, just imagine how they'll fly with a good prompt. Therefore, the prompts provided in this book reflect the state's current direction. When that direction changes, so will the prompts we offer.

Students are asked to plan narratives frequently in our classes. They know they will not be writing the narrative itself every time. We also do our best to give students choices of topics on important assignments. We do hand out advance organizers and require students to turn in a completed organizer with each final draft, with this caveat. Some student do not know what they think until they hear themselves say it. For them, planning is moot. They may get "some" useful information from a cluster or brainstorming session, but for the most part, they just have to sit down and start writing. That's okay with us, as long as they go back when finished to complete the advance organizer. This will help them analyze whether or not all the required elements have been addressed, a deconstructionist method, if you will.

7. Help students brainstorm events worthy of their narratives. Remind students that this is to be a *story*, and as such will need to have a beginning, problem, solution, and end. You may wish to use the three brainstorming pages later in this chapter once students do have a topic. Or you may wish to go on to the next suggestion.
8. When students have settled on an idea, ask them to sketch out the story to a neighbor or group. Give them two minutes to get out the main idea. This can be useful in getting kids unstuck.

9. Ask students to draw the setting for this event. Limit the time they are given, and challenge them to put in as many details as they can remember. Alternatively, ask them to do the same with a character important to the story's events.
10. Ask students to create a web or to fill in one of the preskills worksheets describing their five senses during the climax of this event. Be sure to include interior thought/feeling and the sense of touch.
11. Offer students a story starter and ask them to complete the first sentence. This will avoid the "I don't know how to start" issue. For example, you could give them one to three possibilities such as: "It seemed like a good idea at the time..." or "This day started out just fine. Little did I know when I woke up this morning that by this afternoon I would be ..."
12. Use the story map to chronicle the relevant events, sequence them, consider what the problem actually is, solve it, etc.
13. By this time, the story nearly writes itself. However, this is not to say that this will be your choice. You may wish to run students through this process two more times, then ask them to pick their most promising narrative to complete. When you do ask them to write, give them a limited amount of time to write and make it against the rules to put their pencils down for the first draft. They can always edit out what they don't like later.
14. When your students have written one or more narratives in the style, use the peer-scoring guides on the first drafts. Again, we make use of cooperative groups of 3-5 students. Each narrative is given a Peer Response Sheet. This sheet travels around the group with the narrative. Students begin with their own narratives in hand, and everyone passes to the left (or right). Each student then reads a narrative, circles two yes/no answers, fills in one sentence and turns the Peer Response Sheet over, where we have duplicated the scoring guide. Students underline salient sentences on the guide and may, if you wish, assign a score. Then all narratives shift left (right) again, and the process is repeated until everyone in the group has read all the narratives. In a group of 3-5, some sentences on the Peer Response Sheet will remain blank, since there are more sentences to fill in than there are group members. Spence Kagan reminds us that this is where the students should focus their attention. The areas which remain blank will show possible weaknesses in the narrative. In this way, no student has been asked to criticize, an important aspect of cooperative group work. The guides ask for personal responses only. Again, thank you, Spence.
15. Color-mapping is often useful at this point, too. By this time, students are usually ready to color-map on their own (see Chapter Two). We assign colors to items #2-6 on the "Show or Tell?" page in the preskills section. Since our class sets of colors only include four choices, we combine a characters words, thoughts, and feelings (#4 & #5) into one color. This will now let your students know where they have really used those skills and allow them to revise if they have not.
16. Most students are now as ready as they can be at this point in their development to choose their best work, revise, edit, and publish. Do not check rough drafts; just check that they are following the process. If they did the pre-writing, most will have successful rough drafts.
17. Peer edit recopied second drafts for correctness and content. You can circulate to check for content problems, unfinished work, etc. The final draft created after this step is the one you may choose to mark.

18. But what about mechanics and grammar? Don't they count? *Unequivocally, yes!* We believe they are not adequately addressed by *any* scoring guide. Mechanics need to be marked, not scored. In our own classrooms, we address them in the editing stage, and we mark them the old fashioned way: one error at a time. This is not to suggest that we mark every error every time. This is overwhelming to both students and to us. We hold students accountable to some criteria at all times: basic punctuation, spelling, basic usage. Then we add various aspects as we study them throughout the year.
19. Some teachers choose to ask students to make a recopied final draft with their corrections taken into account, and some choose to move on. Students do need to be given feedback via the scoring guide at whichever juncture the teacher steps in to comment. Depending on the students, it can be useful to ask them to score their own narratives or each others' narratives with the scoring guide and to justify their scoring as they did during the training sessions.

NOTE: If all of this seems like a great deal of trouble to teach a single writing type, it is, *the first time through*. After that, students quickly become familiar with the format, the techniques, and the similarities between the types. The process speeds up, particularly if our method -- or any systematic method -- is repeated from teacher to teacher and grade to grade. Uniformity of methodology simplifies the work for everyone.

The model essays that follow were completed by fourth grade students in one hour during class.

Prompt: Standard 2.1 Narrative

Directions:

First, put your first and last name, the name of your school, grade, and your teacher's name at the top of your paper. Your paper heading should look like this:

Last name, First name

School name

Grade

Teacher name

Next, read the task below carefully. If you need to do any webbing or brainstorming make sure it is on a separate piece of paper than your paragraphs. Write legibly on binder paper. You have one hour to finish your writing.

Task: Think about something fun you have done with your family or friends. At least one is probably memorable because of what happened or where you went. It may have been a huge family vacation, a special activity, or just something you did for an afternoon. Choose one experience you could describe to an adult. Think about where you were, how you got to your destination, who was with you, what you did, how you felt, and why you remember it.

Write a two to three paragraph story describing a experience.

Checklist for Your Writing

- Be sure you use words that describe a lot of details about the event so the adult reader can imagine it happening.
- Double check that you have a beginning, middle, and end.
- Read over your story looking for any mistakes in spelling or punctuation.

Sample Essays With Commentary

Narrative: Grade 4 Timed Response

Essay Illustrating Score Point 4

Some Stuff!

"We're going to see some stuff" my Mom said.

"Stuff?" I asked.

"Yes stuff" Mom said. "You'll see."

So my Dad and Mom and my younger brother and I all got in our car and started driving. My Mom was at the wheel. Pretty soon we had gone out of our neighborhood and onto the freeway and off into another neighborhood. I would have gotten lost because I didn't know any of the street names. In this neighborhood the trees were really really old. The branches almost met each other over our heads and it was like driving down a green tunnel. But there were also kids on skateboards, dogs running, people mowing their lawns. We even passed an ice cream truck. But Mom didn't stop. She didn't even slow down. Bummer!

After a long time, we came to a stop in front of a brown house with a big fence. It looked like nobody was at home. There was no one out front. I didn't want to get out of the car. But Mom said the stuff we had come for was here. She gave me a look and I got out of the car.

We all went up to the front door and my Dad rang the doorbell. It was a long wait before somebody came. It looked like my Mom and Dad knew the person who answered the door and so we all went in. They did a lot of talking but I just followed them through the living room, into the kitchen, and out to the patio. Then I saw the puppies. Six puppies. They were inside a big dogbed. They were yiping and snarling and panting. They were wrestling and tumbling all around. I looked at my Mom and she nodded her head, so I went to where the puppies were and sat down on the floor. The man said for me to let one sniff my hand and then I could touch it. So I did. One puppy came right up to me and started licking my finger. The man said it would be okay if I lifted her out and held her. So I did. I lifted the puppy up and she was so soft and warm and small and round. She had such big dark brown eyes and smelled so good. She looked like a baby Lassie. She had four white stockings and a white blaze on her chest. I put her in my lap and she settled into the nest of my legs.

"Looks like the two of you were made for each other," the man said. I looked at my Dad and he was smiling.

So that is how "Empress Victoria Regina" became a member of our family. That is how one day we all set out to see some stuff and came home with a Sheltie puppy I call "D-O-G." Get it? "D-o-gee."

This narrative *dramatically* shows one important event from beginning to end. After a lively opener, the setting is quickly established, and the body is given over to a thoughtful, specific, concrete description of the events leading up to a most important moment in this child's life: choosing a new family member. The language is wonderfully vivid.

The writer clearly has mastered the requirements of this style for grade 4 and addresses all parts of the writing task. The piece is well-focused, with the topic and audience clearly addressed. All details are relevant, and sentence structure shows admirable variety. There are few errors, none of which interfere with the reader's understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 4

That Certain Look

At first I was a little grumpy. Dad says I'm definitely not a morning person. Too bad for me. He is a morning person. So all the way to the bus he was singing goofy songs and telling jokes, just being Dad. By the time we got there, I was singing and joking too. I was getting really excited. Why? This was my first trip to summer camp. It was a whole week in the mountains.

We pulled into the parking lot, and the bus was there along with lots of people. Kids my age were standing around by piles of with sleeping bags and suitcases. My dad was over putting mine on the pile for the bus when I saw Sanhi (said like song-hee). She was short with dark long hair and a certain look in her eye as if to tell me "this is going to be way cool." I went over and said hi. And just like that, I met my best friend.

We sat together on the bus all the way to camp and got bunks next to each other. Camp was fun. The first three days we hiked up to a sparkeling waterfall and ate lunch there. There was horseback (which was not that great because all the horses did was walk.) It was really hot during the day, and we swam in the fresh, cool lake to cool off. You could not believe how cold it was at night.

Then, oh no! I got the flu. It was soooo not fair! There was a nurse there, and they took me to a little house just for sick kids, of which I was the only one. I felt like a complete whimp. I didn't care the first day because I had a fever and felt terrible, but then the fever went down a bit and it was just boring. That's when Sanhi showed up. She would stand outside and play charades until I guessed what she was saying. Then it was my turn. We got pretty good at it. The fever wouldn't go down any more that day, so my dad came to take me home. He got there during camp fire and I didn't even get to say good bye to Sanhi. I felt really bad.

I got well pretty soon, and before I knew it the first day of school was here. Dad was singing and joking in the car like always, I was grumpy like always. We pulled into the parking lot. I thought it was all just like always, and then I saw the back of someone who was short and had dark, long hair. She turned around, and we just stared at each other with grins that got bigger and bigger. It was Sanhi. And, yep, there was that certain look in her eye as if to tell me, "This year is going to be waaaay cool."

Like the previous narrative, this writer presents a strong story told from a lively, creative beginning to a satisfying conclusion. The setting and preliminary characterization are established in a few deft strokes. The majority of the narrative is given over to a series of events told in specific, concrete detail. Particularly sophisticated is the circular organization of the narrative, beginning and ending in the car with dad. If there is a weakness in this piece, it lies in the lack of vivid, mature vocabulary choices. However, the reader is given such a wonderful sense of this writer's personality that this criticism seems moot.

The writer clearly has mastered the requirements of this style for grade 4 and addresses all parts of the writing task. The piece is well-focused, with the topic and audience clearly addressed. All details are relevant, and sentence structure shows admirable variety. There are few errors, none of which interfere with the reader's understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 4 -- Low Range

Idaho

One day my family went to Idaho. We traveled over bumbly, rocky mountains to go there. We also went over some flat land for a long time. Idaho is very far away. Idaho is a modern farming state. In the care there were 7 people: Daddy, Mommy, Amanda (that's me), Abigail, Emily, Elizabeth, Andrew, and there's no more.

I felt very happy visiting Idaho because my Great Grandma and Grandpa live there. While in Idaho I was able to ride Star, one of their horses, by myself! I got to trot in circles around the pasture. It was funny talking while riding because my voice bounced too. I felt lucky. I only got to go because my Mom and Dad were not there.

I will always rember this because I got to see my Great Grandparents. Also because it was my first time riding a horse by myself. Idaho was the most fun place in the world. You should go sometime, believe me! I love it!

Although the overall impression of this piece is less like a story and more like an essay, the writer does achieve most elements of the score level 4 narrative. The importance of this event is well established, and the writer offers a clear sense of beginning, middle, and end. Even though the piece employs telling more than showing, there is some fine use of vivid sensory detail ("...bumbly, rocky mountains...trotting in circles ... my voice bounced too...") The writer also offers insight into her situation while relating her ideas and feelings about it: ("I felt lucky. I only got to go because my Mom and Dad were not there.")

The writer clearly understands the requirements of this style and addresses all parts of the writing task. The piece is well-focused, with the topic and audience clearly addressed. All details are relevant. Sentence structure shows admirable variety (note use of subordination.) There are few errors, none of which interfere with the reader's understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 3

My Favorite Vacation

My favorite vacation was when I went to Santa Cruz with my grandma and granpa. We did things like walking on the beach, eating the great food, and riding the rollercoasters. That is what my favorite vacation is.

When we were there we walked on the beach. The sand ran gradually between my toes. We walked on the beach at sunset, the sun looked so mellow. All of us really liked walking in the sand. That is what we did one night.

The food was great! I had a hot dog for lunch one day I think it was the best! I had a pretty good dinner too. For breakfast one day I had some great pancakes. I think the food was great!

I liked the roller coasters. One of them we rode six times! It was called "The Giant Dipper." That was my favorite one. There was a lot of rollercoasters there.

I treasured going to Santa Cruz. The things we did there were walking on the beach, ate the food, and rode the rollercoasters. I loved going to Santa Cruz. That is what my favorite vacation is.

Note: This piece does not follow the format of a narrative but rather that of an expository essay, as do several others subsequent to this one. Since this was probably a strategy encouraged by the students' teachers, our readers did not penalize the students.

However, Standard 2.1 is quite specific with regard to the requirement for a "sequence of events..." This is most commonly understood this to mean a story line, as observed in our high level score 4 essay. Additionally, the grade 5 narrative writing requirements -- plot, point of view, setting, and conflict-- also supports the view that, for purposes of grade 4, "narrative" may best be understood to mean "story" if we are to effectively scaffold skills from grades 4 to 5.

This piece clearly *tells* rather than *shows*. Although paragraph two has one excellent descriptive sentence (sand) and another descriptive phrase (mellow sun), the rest of the essay employs highly generalized description ("...favorite... pretty good ... great...") The importance of the trip is stated.

Other than as noted above, the writer addresses all parts of the writing task. The piece is strongly organized, with the topic and audience clearly addressed. All details are relevant, although repetition blunts the message. Sentence structure shows some variety, and the errors in conventions do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 3

My Birthday

At my birthday was a very good surprise. I was so tired on my birthday that I didn't relise eveything. When I walked out of my bedroom I triped on the valcoom. I fell flat on my face. When I was on my feet again (it took me awile) I saw the bike. I wokeup rightaway and started to examen it.

I heard t.v. going downstairs so I went down. I saw my brother watching an early epasoid of Catdog. So I satdown to watch. Little did I know my grandma, grandpa, my mom, and Shand (my brother) were planning a surprise birthday party. I started to smell breckfast so I went upstairs. My brother ran up befor me. When I got up there, there was not a sould to be found.

When I stood facing tword the kitchen, they jumped out and said surprise happy birhtday Corrina! I got all kinds of presents. I felt happy and excited.

This narrative offers one experience in a sequence of events from beginning to end. Although this writer *shows* more often than tells, details are not as well-chosen as in the score level 4, mixing relevant information (bike, surprise) with the irrelevant (vacuum, Catdog) and tending toward the general rather than specific. The writer implies the importance of the event, but does not state it insightfully.

The writer addresses all parts of the writing task with the topic and audience clearly addressed. The writer's voice is clearly established (Little did I know). A variety of sentence types are used, though the writer's difficulty with punctuation distracts from what should have been quotations. Errors in conventions do not interfere terribly with understanding, but there are many.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 3

I went to Disney Land for my family vacation. I liked their food, the rides, and their characters. It was fun.

The foods were great. We ate hot dogs, chips, French fries, and all kinds of other good foods. My favorite was the hot dogs. They were juicy and very delicious. You should try their foods.

Their rides were one of the best things there. I went on rollercoasters, swing rides, and all the other cool rides. My favorite rides are the rollercoasters. You should go on them. Their rides are fun, fabulous, and exciting.

They have some weird and normal characters. Some of those characters are Goofy, Minnie, Mickey, Cinderella, and Pluto. My favorite character is Minnie. She is funny. Characters are fun, fabulous, and great.

Disney Land is fun to go to. I liked their food, their rides, and their characters. Going to Disney Land for your family vacation is great.

This piece clearly *tells* rather than *shows*. Though the setting is established, the writer mostly relies on generalized lists ("...rollercoasters, swing rides, and all the other cool rides...") and a series of repeated and somewhat weak adjectives ("...fun, fabulous, and exciting..."). Details, where given, are too general for the reader to visualize the experience. The writer implies the importance of the event, but does not state it insightfully.

Other than as noted above, the writer addresses all parts of the writing task. The piece is strongly organized, with the topic and audience clearly addressed. All details are relevant, although repetition blunts the message. Though there is some variance in sentence length, most sentences are very simple and use simple vocabulary. The errors in conventions do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 2

It was Collin's birthday Party when we went their we played his playstation. I got their by car my mom was driving. Later we had pizza for dinner and soda for dessert we had cake.

We played a mystery game we were about to go tepe someone's house. Me and Jake were playing speed with cards. Then me, John, and Jake were playing with the star wars ships.

Then we watched a movie of The worlds funniest home video. Then we watched Mimic but it was kind of stupid I went to bed at 3:00 am in the morning so I only had a few hours of sleep I had to catch up on my sleep at home.

This writer seems to understand the purpose of this task, but the experience is presented as a poorly connected series of events rather than a coherent whole. The student seems removed from the importance of the memorable day and tells rather than shows.

The writer understands the purpose but does not achieve it. Topic and audience are appropriately addressed, but the whole lacks detail and focused elaboration. The writer uses very limited descriptive language. Errors in grammar and punctuation interfere with the readers understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 2

My Best Memory

I was at my house. My mom's boy friend bote me and my brother dertbikes. They go about 35 m.p.h. it was my first time riding one. I got on and poled the throttle bake and it went as fast as it goes. I didn't know you have to let go of the throttle befor you stop So I went almost down the road. But then Aron my mom's boyfriend told me to let go of the throttle So I did then I prest the braks and then I stop it was so fun when I got off I started crying but when I got in the house I was shacing. That was the best day of my life. My mom's boyfriend started laghing at me. But two day's later I was way beter. I know how to do a weily. I also know how to jump very very very high. I am good ar riding derte bikes kwow. I won't my mym to by me an 80 berte bike but she said it's to big for me. My derte bike rite know is a 50 but it is too small for me. My derte bike is called a Hondu. I don't know how to spell it rite. It was a blast. I will never know how to do the best trice. A lote of people were there. My brothers my mom my step brother and my mom's boyfriend. I Loved that day. Sometime I will be in a dert bike racing. That was my best memory.

The narrative begins abruptly with no attention to setting. The significance of the event is also ignored. The writer seems more focused on the bike than on telling the story of a memorable event. The writer tends to ramble and include unimportant details, offers little sense of organization, uses limited descriptive language and very little variety in sentence types. Numerous convention errors, especially in spelling and lack of punctuation, interfere with understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 2

My Lucky Fishing Trip

When I went camping in Arizona we set up camp, and we ate lunch. Then we went fishing and I caught a Large Mouth Bass. I was 19 inches and 2 _ pounds. We cooked it and we ate it for dinner.

We went fishing the next day and my dad caught a rainbow trout, that was 2 pounds 11 ounces. Then we went back to camp and ate lunch. We had a sandwich with ham, mayo, and mustard.

Then for dinner we ate the fish and boy was it good. We went to sleep and told scary stories. We woke up in the morning and ate breakfast. After breakfast we went to the lake and went fishing. We caught another bass and it was huge. It was 24 inches long, and 5 pounds 2 ounces.

While this writer offers an adequately developed series of events, it is difficult to understand the subject's importance. The narrative tells more than it shows, and details are poorly selected, mixing the important information with the unimportant (ham, mayo, and mustard).

The writer addresses only parts of the writing task, showing little understanding of the purpose. The story lacks setting and an ending. There is also very limited descriptive language (beyond measurements). Errors in conventions do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 1

There were slides, castles, one was high, and one was low. There were monkey bars. There were swings. And a glider. And there was a wall climbing rope in the park. And a bridge to get to the other side.

The writer does not offer an event or experience from beginning to end. The narrative lacks descriptive language and a sequence of events. The whole is very brief, incomplete, and confusing. The writer offers no insight into the subject's importance and leaves many questions unanswered.

This writer addresses only one part of the writing task and shows no awareness of purpose, topic, or audience. Ideas are not organized. The narrative is composed only of simple sentences, but the errors of convention do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 1

Midnight Halloween

On a midnight of creepy Halloween. My Haunted House looks scary and spooky at each Halloween. It's so dark, creepy, and cool inside.

And in neighborhoods it is so scary out there. All the houses were cool. But one spooky music.

Midnight is great for Halloween.

Boo!

Although descriptive language is used, this narrative leaves many questions unanswered and does not even hint at one event or story.

This writer addresses only one part of the writing task and shows no awareness of purpose, topic, or audience. The ideas are organized around a single descriptive idea and do not fulfill the requirements of the writing style and topic. Some creative language is present, and the errors in conventions do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 1

Water Manteaka Slides

On the way we went to Water Manteaka slides.

I saw rivers, lakes, and moutains.

The Lakes were not as big as I thot so.

When I got there I saw a white slide and green slides.

The events are brief and fragmented. The paper does not show understanding of what a narrative is or insight into an event. The writer leaves many unanswered questions. The writing lacks purpose, descriptive language, and sentence variety. It is difficult to read because of errors in conventions.

Sample Essays
Grade 4
Narrative -- Timed Response

----- **Essay J** -----

My Birthday

At my birthday was a very good surprise. I was so tired on my birthday that I didn't relise eveything. When I walked out of my bedroom I triped on the valcoom. I fell flat on my face. When I was on my feet again (it took me awile) I saw the bike. I wokeup rightaway and started to examen it.

I heard t.v. going downstairs so I went down. I saw my brother watching an early epasoid of Catdog. So I satdown to watch. Little did I know my grandma, grandpa, my mom, and Shand (my brother) were planning a surprise birthday party. I started to smell breckfast so I went upstairs. My brother ran up befor me. When I got up there, there was not a sould to be found.

When I stood facing tword the kitchen, they jumped out and said surprise happy birhtday Corrina! I got all kinds of presents. I felt happy and excited.

----- **Essay K** -----

There were slides, castles, one was high, and one was low. There were monkey bars. There were swings. And a glider. And there was a wall climbing rope in the park. And a bridge to get to the other side.

----- Essay L -----

That Certain Look

At first I was a little grumpy. Dad says I'm definitely not a morning person. Too bad for me. He *is* a morning person. So all the way to the bus he was singing goofy songs and telling jokes, just being Dad. By the time we got there, I was singing and joking too. I was getting really excited. Why? This was my first trip to summer camp. It was a whole week in the mountains.

We pulled into the parking lot, and the bus was there along with lots of people. Kids my age were standing around by piles of with sleeping bags and suitcases. My dad was over putting mine on the pile for the bus when I saw Sanhi (said like song-hee). She was short with dark long hair and a certain look in her eye as if to tell me "this is going to be way cool." I went over and said hi. And just like that, I met my best friend.

We sat together on the bus all the way to camp and got bunks next to each other. Camp was fun. The first three days we hiked up to a sparkeling waterfall and ate lunch there. There was horseback (which was not that great because all the horses did was walk.) It was really hot during the day, and we swam in the fresh, cool lake to cool off. You could not believe how cold it was at night.

Then, oh no! I got the flu. It was soooo not fair! There was a nurse there, and they took me to a little house just for sick kids, of which I was the only one. I felt like a complete whimp. I didn't care the first day because I had a fever and felt terrible, but then the fever went down a bit and it was just boring. That's when Sanhi showed up. She would stand outside and play charaddes until I guessed what she was saying. Then it was my turn. We got pretty good at it. The fever wouldn't go down any more that day, so my dad came to take me home. He got there during camp fire and I didn't even get to say good bye to Sanhi. I felt really bad.

I got well pretty soon, and before I knew it the first day of school was here. Dad was singing and joking in the car like always, I was grumpy like always. We pulled into the parking

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(continued:)

lot. I thought it was all just like always, and then I saw the back of someone who was short and had dark, long hair. She turned around, and we just stared at each other with grins that got bigger and bigger. It was Sanhi. And, yep, there was that certain look in her eye as if to tell me, "This year is going to be waaaay cool."

----- **Essay M** -----

My Favorite Vacation

My favorite vacation was when I went to Santa Cruz with my grandma and granpa. We did things like walking on the beach, eating the great food, and riding the rollercoasters. That is what my favorite vacation is.

When we were there we walked on the beach. The sand ran gradually between my toes. We walked on the beach at sunset, the sun looked so mellow. All of us really liked walking in the sand. That is what we did one night.

The food was great! I had a hot dog for lunch one day I think it was the best! I had a pretty good dinner too. For breakfast one day I had some great pancakes. I think the food was great!

I liked the roller coasters. One of them we rode six times! It was called "The Giant Dipper." That was my favorite one. There was a lot of rollercoasters there.

I treasured going to Santa Cruz. The things we did there were walked on the beach, ate the food, and rode the rollercoasters. I loved going to Santa Cruz. That is what my favorite vacation is.

----- Essay N -----

My Lucky Fishing Trip

When I went camping in Arizona we set up camp, and we ate lunch. Then we went fishing and I caught a Large Mouth Bass. I was 19 inches and 2 _ pounds. We cooked it and we ate it for dinner.

We went fishing the next day and my dad caught a rainbow trout, that was 2 pounds 11 ounces. Then we went back to camp and ate lunch. We had a sandwich with ham, mayo, and mustard.

Then for dinner we ate the fish and boy was it good. We went to sleep and told scary stories. We woke up in the morning and ate breakfast. After breakfast we went to the lake and went fishing. We caught another bass and it was huge. It was 24 inches long, and 5 pounds 2 ounces.

----- Essay O -----

Idaho

One day my family went to Idaho. We traveled over bumbly, rocky mountains to go there. We also went over some flat land for a long time. Idaho is very far away. Idaho is a modern farming state. In the care there were 7 people: Daddy, Mommy, Amanda (that's me), Abigail, Emily, Elizabeth, Andrew, and there's no more.

I felt very happy visiting Idaho because my Great Grandma and Grandpa live there. While in Idaho I was able to ride Star, one of their horses, by myself! I got to trot in circles around the pasture. It was funny talking while riding because my voice bounced too. I felt lucky. I only got to go because my Mom and Dad were not there.

I will always remember this because I got to see my Great Grandparents. Also because it was my first time riding a horse by myself. Idaho was the most fun place in the world. You should go sometime, believe me! I love it!

----- Essay P -----

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We played a mystery game we were about to go tepe someone's house. Me and Jake were playing speed with cards. Then me, John, and Jake were playing with the star wars ships.

Then we watched a movie of The worlds funniest home video. Then we watched Mimic but it was kind of stupid I went to bed at 3:00 am in the morning so I only had a few hours of sleep I had to catch up on my sleep at home.

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And in neighborhoods it is so scary out there. All the houses were cool. But one spooky music.

Midnight is great for Halloween.

Boo!

----- Essay R -----

I went to Disney Land for my family vacation. I liked their food, the rides, and their characters. It was fun.

The foods were great. We ate hot dogs, chips, French fries, and all kinds of other good foods. My favorite was the hot dogs. They were juicy and very delicious. You should try their foods.

Their rides were one of the best things there. I went on rollercoasters, swing rides, and all the other cool rides. My favorite rides are the rollercoasters. You should go on them. Their rides are fun, fabulous, and exciting.

They have some weird and normal characters. Some of those characters are Goofy, Minnie, Mickey, Cinderella, and Pluto. My favorite character is Minnie. She is funny. Characters are fun, fabulous, and great.

Disney Land is fun to go to. I liked their food, their rides, and their characters. Going to Disney Land for your family vacation is great.

----- Essay S -----

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I saw rivers, lakes, and moutains.

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----- Essay T -----

My Best Memory

I was at my house. My mom's boy friend bote me and my brother dertbikes. They go about 35 m.p.h. it was my first time riding one. I got on and poled the throttle bake and it went as fast as it goes. I didn't know you have to let go of the throttle befor you stop So I went almost down the road. But then Aron my mom's boyfriend told me to let go of the throttle So I did then I prest the braks and then I stop it was so fun when I got off I started crying but when I got in the house I was shacing. That was the best day of my life. My mom's boyfriend started laghing at me. But two day's later I was way beter. I know how to do a weily. I also know how to jump very very very high. I am good ar riding derte bikes kwow. I won't my mym to by me an 80 berte bike but she said it's to big for me. My derte bike nite know is a 50 but it is too small for me. My derte bike is called a Hondu. I don't know how to spell it rite. It was a blast. I will never know how to do the best trice. A lote of people were there. My brothers my mom my step brother and my mom's boyfriend. I Loved that day. Sometime I will be in a dert bike racing. That was my best memory.

----- Essay U -----

Some Stuff!

"We're going to see some stuff" my Mom said.

"Stuff?" I asked.

"Yes stuff" Mom said. "You'll see."

So my Dad and Mom and my younger brother and I all got in our car and started driving. My Mom was at the wheel. Pretty soon we had gone out of our neighborhood and onto the freeway and off into another neighborhood. I would have gotten lost because I didn't know any of the street names. In this neighborhood the trees were really really old. The branches almost met each other over our heads and it was like driving down a green tunnel. But there were also kids on skateboards, dogs running, people mowing their lawns. We even passed an ice cream truck. But Mom didn't stop. She didn't even slow down. Bummer!

After a long time, we came to a stop in front of a brown house with a big fence. It looked like nobody was at home. There was no one out front. I didn't want to get out of the car. But Mom said the stuff we had come for was here. She gave me a look and I got out of the car.

We all went up to the front door and my Dad rang the doorbell. It was a long wait before somebody came. It looked like my Mom and Dad knew the person who answered the door and so we all went in. They did a lot of talking but I just followed them through the living room, into the kitchen, and out to the patio. Then I saw the puppies. Six puppies. They were inside a big dogbed. They were yiping and snarling and panting. They were wrestling and tumbling all around. I looked at my Mom and she nodded her head, so I went to where the puppies were and sat down on the floor. The man said for me to let one sniff my hand and then I could touch it. So I did. One puppy came right up to me and started licking my finger. The man said it would be okay if I lifted her out and held her. So I did. I lifted the puppy up and

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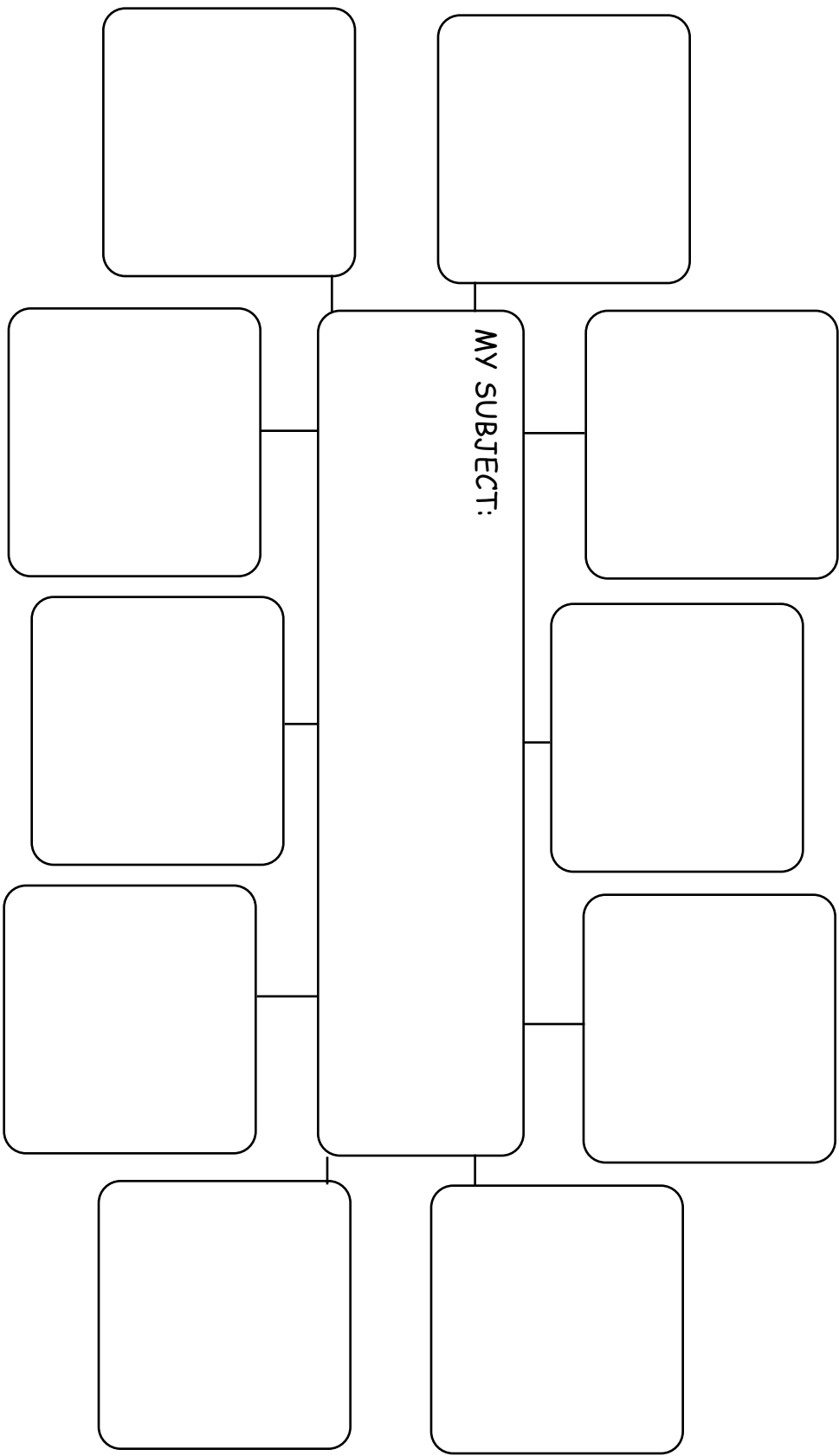
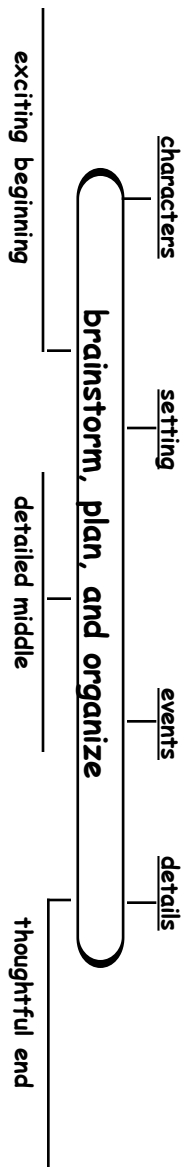
she was so soft and warm and small and round. She had such big dark brown eyes and smelled so good. She looked like a baby Lassie. She had four white stockings and a white blaze on her chest. I put her in my lap and she settled into the nest of my legs.

"Looks like the two of you were made for each other," the man said.

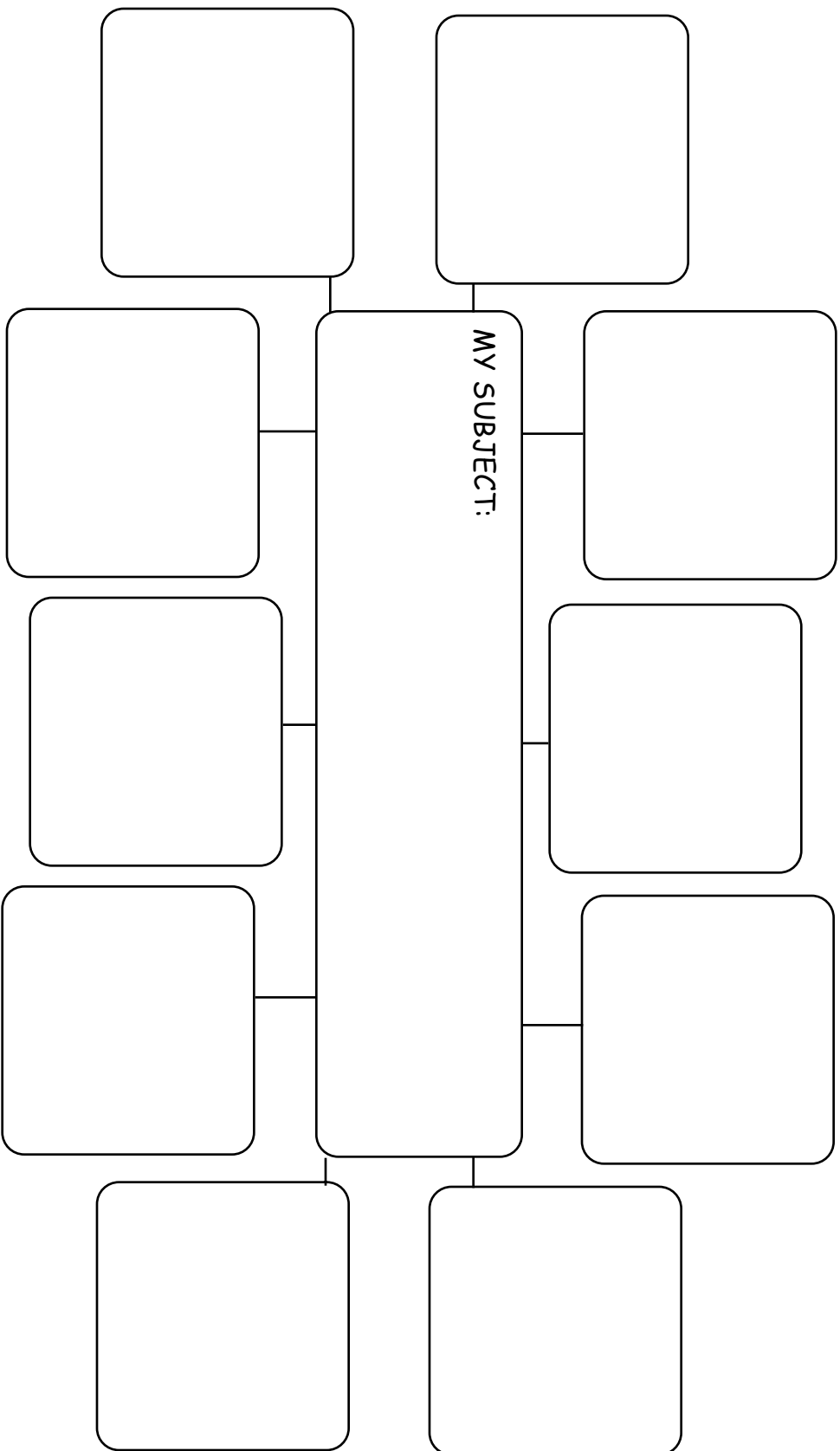
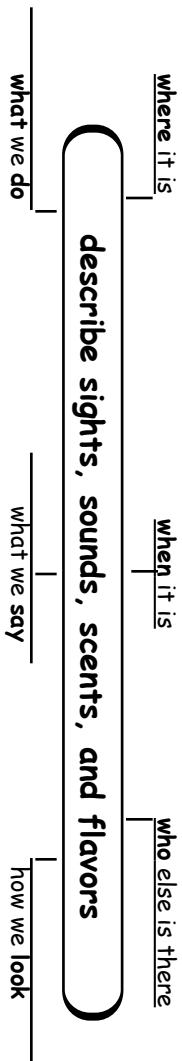
I looked at my Dad and he was smiling.

So that is how "Empress Victoria Regina" became a member of our family. That is how one day we all set out to see some stuff and came home with a Sheltie puppy I call "D-O-G." Get it? "D-o-gee."

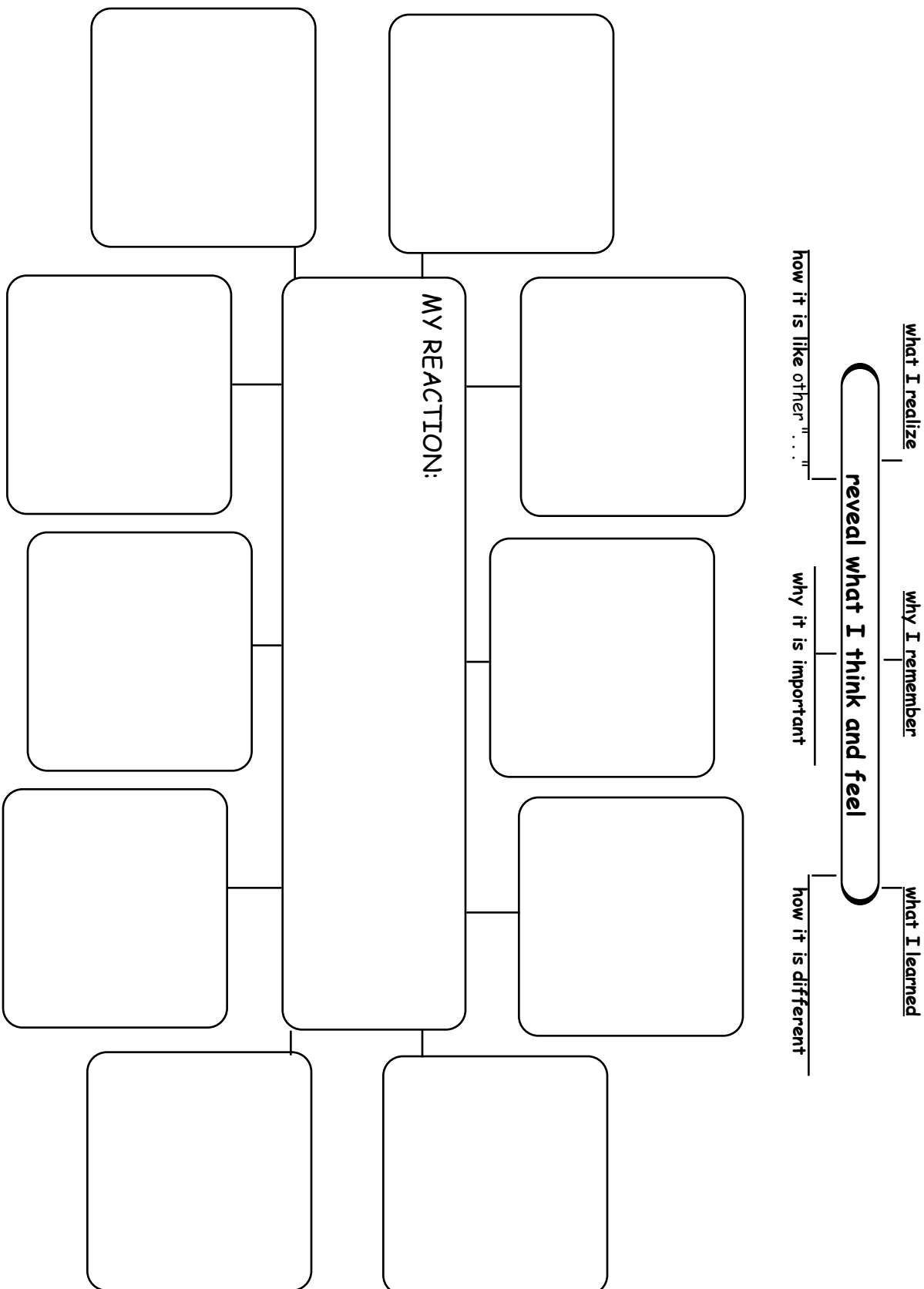
Brainstorm Narrative Writing 1. Explore my subject



Brainstorm Narrative Writing 2. Show my subject:



Brainstorm Narrative Writing 3. Share my reaction:



NARRATIVE PRE-WRITE 1

DRAW a representation of the event or experience you wish to retell. Try to clearly remember and show the specific details of the situation and your ideas, observations, and memories. You may use stick figures--it is not necessary to be a good artist to draw a successful representation.



Briefly explain your drawing on the lines below.

NARRATIVE PRE-WRITE 2

CREATING A NARRATIVE SCENE: Now describe the scene you just illustrated as though you were creating a story. Briefly **show** the details of this incident by describing **where** you were. Describe the **people** involved: their appearance, actions, words. Finally, what were your **thoughts**, questions, and/or ideas at the time?

Where are you?

Describe the people involved. What do they look like?

What do they do?

What do they say?

What makes this experience important to you?

NARRATIVE PREWRITE: Use the spaces below to plan your narrative.

Setting, characters, and a statement of the situation: Where are you? How old are you? Who else is there? What is happening?

Jot down your purpose or reason for choosing this event or experience. Why is it important?

Event 1

Event 2

Event 3

Event 4

Event 5

Event 6

Event 7

Event 8

How does it end?

What are your ideas, observations, and thoughts about this experience?

PEER RESPONSE SHEET
NARRATIVE

CHECK LIST:

EASY TO FIND? (CIRCLE YES OR NO)

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|----|
| 1. | A lively, creative opener | YES | NO |
| 2. | Enough setting to help the reader understand the situation | YES | NO |
| 3. | A clear beginning, middle, and end | YES | NO |
| 4. | Details which appeal to the senses | YES | NO |
| 5. | A sense of why this is an important memory | YES | NO |
| 6. | Confident, vivid, interesting vocabulary. I can tell you care about this. | YES | NO |

1. I know this is important to you because:

2. The way you describe this part helps me to see it clearly:

3. Your best part is when you say:

because -----

4. I want to know more about:

because -----

5. I am confused about:

