



MY Access! Writer's Workshop

High School Narrative Writing

Prompt: A Memorable Childhood Event

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Notes:

Prompt: A Memorable Childhood Event

Think of a childhood event that you remember vividly. It might be the first time you rode on a school bus, the day you played in an important Little League game, the day you learned to ride a bike, or another memorable event.

Write a story about the event. Describe what happened and explain why it was so memorable. Tell your story in an interesting way to engage the reader. Remember to make sure the reader has enough details about your experience so he or she can picture it in his or her mind.

As you write, remember your story will be scored based on how well you:

- develop a multi-paragraph response to the assigned topic that clearly communicates the purpose of your story to the audience.
- describe the characters, setting, and conflict using meaningful sensory descriptions and details that enable the reader to visualize the experiences in your narrative.
- organize your story in a clear and logical manner, including an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- use well-structured sentences and language that are appropriate for your audience.
- edit your work to conform to the conventions of standard American English.

Use any of the tools available to you, such as the **Checklist**, **Spellchecker**, or **Graphic Organizer**.



I Wonder What's Downstream

One hot day at 4:00 in the afternoon I was running along the highway with Billy. We were getting ourselves into shape for fall sports practice that would start in two weeks. **I had no idea I was about to put myself in deadly danger.**

Introduction: Background

We'd run about four miles and I thought I would burst into flames if I got any hotter. We were two miles from my house, the end of the run. As we passed the stream below the power dam, I decided I had a better idea. I told Billy I was going to go sit in the water and cool off for awhile. He said he had to keep he didn't have time to stop.

As he ran on I slid down the bank to the stream. The stream was about fifty feet wide but only a foot deep. The bottom was all rounded stones. Some were so big they stuck out of the water by a foot or more. I took off my sneaks, not wanting to get them wet, tied the laces together, and threw them across to the other bank. I decided I would and make my way across, pick up my sneaks, and continue home.

I was halfway across when a wave knocked me down. That's right, a wave. The power dam at the head of the stream had opened its gates for some reason, and the water flow was suddenly ten times what it had been when I started.

Body: Conflict

I was trapped. If I stood up, the water knocked me down. If I tried to stay low in the water and crawl, the water pushed me quickly downstream. I didn't know what was down maybe another dam. What would it be like to go through a dam?

There was no one to call for help. It hurt my bare feet too much to try to jump from rock to rock above the water. Of course, my sneaks were safely on the other side, where I couldn't reach them.

With the creativity born of terror, I had an idea. I dug my fingers between some rocks and let the rest of me float. My feet and legs were pulled downstream, but I could hold on to the rocks.

Body: Climax or turning point

I let go with one hand, moved it six inches closer to the bank, and got a new grip. Slowly, I did the same with the other hand.

In forty-five minutes, I completed my sideways, horizontal, underwater rock climb and lay like a beached whale on the bank. After I tied my sneaks for the long I certainly wasn't going to run I looked back at the stream.

The water flow had dropped to its original level. Anyone could cross now.

Conclusion: Resolution

Focus Checklist

BECAUSE WRITING MATTERS

Teacher's Name:

Student Name:

Class:

**Writer's
role:**

Audience:

Subject:

Purpose:

**Pattern
(form):**

Voice:

Tone:

**Controlling
Idea:**

Narrative Topic Outline

Setting: Where and when does your story take place? Describe your locations in detail.

Characters: Who is in your story? Describe these people in detail. For example, what do they look like? What do they say that is important (dialogue)? What are they feeling?

Plot: What happens in your story? Create pictures for your reader to see, hear, and feel by using a great amount of detail in every scene you describe. **Show,** don't tell.

Conflict: A good story has to create suspense, anticipation, or a sense of wonder for your reader; otherwise, why would your reader keep reading? Even if your story is about a happy time in your life, remember to include something that will arouse your readers' emotions and make them excited about what will happen. Show your reaction to the conflict.

Climax: What is the turning point of your story—the point where you have your readers' greatest interest and greatest emotional involvement in your story?

Resolution: What is the final outcome of your story?

Introducing your story: How will you begin your story so that your readers will get really excited about reading on?

The following are some suggestions.

Dialogue - “It’s perfectly clear why she wants it,” said Marge, as she cut through the store, making sure she would beat out Jessica.

A flashback - Erin was a hundred yards from the finish line and knew she shouldn’t look back. The problem was that she couldn’t help herself.

A startling statement - My town of Newbridge was a village of fools, fools young and old.

A puzzling statement - Across the street lived old Johnson, blind as a bat, but kept my house safe from the zombies who visited every night.

A description of your main character and your setting - Erica pulled back her hair and put on her glasses. Now that she was running for class president, she wanted to look the part.

Putting your story in order - How will you tell your story? Will you start from the beginning and describe each scene until you get to the end? Or will you start at the end of your story to create interest and then after the first paragraph begin at the beginning?

Most importantly, make an outline of what happens in each scene of your story in the order that it happened before you begin writing. Then follow the sequence of events when you write your story. Otherwise, you can confuse your reader about what is happening.

Prompt: A Special Day

Is there a day or an event in your life that was so special that you wish you could live it over again? What day would you like to relive? What happened that made it so special?

Write a story about this special event or special day.

As you write your story, think about these questions:

- Did you write a story about the assigned topic?
- Did you use details to describe the characters, places, and events?
- Did you organize your story clearly with an introduction, body, and conclusion?
- Did you use a variety of words and well-written sentences?
- Did you use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation?

Use any of the tools available to you, such as the **Checklist**, **Spellchecker**, or **Graphic Organizer**.

Directions: Read Bill's story. Based on our discussion that centered on the elements necessary for writing a good story, is this a good story?

Bill's story:

It was a nice Saturday morning when the smell of breakfast woke me up. As I walked to the kitchen, I tripped over my brother's shoes. I sat on the table and asked my mom what she was baking, she said "pancakes". As I finished eating, I remembered I had a very important baseball game. We had to win so we could be the state champions. I was really tired, but I also really wanted to win. I was to be the pitcher that day. Boy, was I ever nervous!

It was time for my game and I got dressed and my Mom drove me to the game. Most of my team were there and they were also nervous. As I started stretching I saw their team and they were really big compared to us. I knew we had to win, but I was still nervous. The game started and I started pitching. The first pitch was a strike and he hit the next one. It was a grounder to me and I threw it to first base. It was my turn to bat and I hit one really far and I got a triple. I was in third base when my team mate hit the ball and I scored! We won the game and were the state champs!

Comments Box:

Directions: Read the following stories. Based on our discussion that centered on the elements necessary for writing a good story, are these good stories?

Megan's story:

It all started on a dark and stormy night. Ok, it wasn't dark or stormy or night but it was scary. I was sitting in my living room playing fetch with my dog Lassie. She was a terrier type dog so she could get a little to aggressive sometimes. After playing for awhile Lassie got tired so she lay down to chew on her rawhide chew toy. I thought it would be funny to take from her and see if she would chase after it. That was my first mistake.

She chased after it all right. She followed after barking extremely loudly. This scared me into running away. I scrambled over the couch and dashed into the dining room. There I tried swerve and go back towards the living room with no success. So I continued running into kitchen. From the kitchen there was no other places to go. And then it hit me, the basement. I could run down stairs to the basement and close the door! This would allow time for Lassie to cool off.

It seemed like a good plan at the time. So I veered to the right and ran for the stairs. As I went to run down the stairs my foot missed the first stair completely. My other foot stepped off the second stair throwing my body down the rest of the staircase in midair. I realized near the floor what had happened and screamed. Crack! Falling head first down a flight of stairs was no fun at all.

Although being chased by my dog and falling down my basement stairs was no fun that day, it was one of my most memorable childhood events. And I never even yelled at my dog, Lassie, afterward either.

Your Score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Joe's story:

It was seven years ago to this date, and I still can see the reflection of the moon shinning brightly over the long glistening lake. Midnight was nearing, the owls hooted throughout the land and the fireflies glided through the air showing us a path to the water. My friends and I were all afraid of the dark when we were alone, but when together, we were fearless and all wanted to prove that we had enough courage to scatter about the night.

We wandered down toward the coast of the lake and peered out into the darkness. It was a warm beautiful night and one to remember too. My friend's Tom, Ben, and Sam and I had a plan to row a boat out into the middle of the lake that night. We were very much afraid of being caught by our parents who had fallen asleep an hour before but being so excited we decided to march on. We shoved the row boat out into the water and we hurried into the seats. Tom, Ben, Sam and I had experience rowing a boat and felt that we should give Sam a try seeing that he never did it before. We also wanted a good laugh too.

Sam paddled for quite a distance, having some trouble but finally catching on. He continued on until his hands burned, and he finally fell over from exhaustion. The rest of us lent a helping hand and threw Sam out of his seat. When he was moved, I jumped into the hot seat and began to row rapidly and effortlessly toward the middle of the lake, or what we thought was the middle of the lake. It was nearly 1:00 a.m. now and we decided to stop where we were at to have a snack and enjoy the solitude of the lake.

We had brought some food with us, which included Hershey Chocolate, my favorite, graham crackers and marshmallows. We also had brought some matches along to fire up the marshmallows so we can make s'mores. I got out our first marshmallow and began to burn it so it was nice and gooey. Sam had the other part of the s'more set up and after the marshmallow was up in flames, I quickly blew it out and put it in between the two graham crackers. I continued to light up the marshmallows as quickly as I could so that everyone could have a more. Moving too quickly, I dropped a marshmallow that was on fire onto the wooden boat. Not thinking that the boat would catch on fire, I left the marshmallow there and continued on lighting the other marshmallows. We persisted to have our fun and after about 10 minutes had past we all noticed that smoke was starting to billow from the boat. It had caught fire! We all attempted to smother the fire with our shirts but it was to no avail. The flames soon towered over us and we had to abandon ship. Luckily, we were all smart enough to bring life preservers. We swam away from the burning wreck and watched as it sank. We then continued to swim back towards shore in the direction that we had rowed the boat.

As we got back to our home on the lake, all of us dropped to the ground as if it had saved us in some way. We were all completely exhausted from our near death

experience. We crept quietly back into the house and got into dry clothes. As we finally settled down, we began to think of what we were going to tell our parents in the morning about what had happened to the boat. I don't think that anyone in our group had enough courage to tell them what *really* happened!

Your Score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

BECAUSE WRITING MATTERS

	Focus & Meaning The extent to which the response establishes and maintains a controlling idea (or central idea), an understanding of purpose and audience, and completion of the task.	Content & Development The extent to which the response develops ideas fully and creatively using extensive, specific, accurate, and relevant details (<i>plot, setting, characters, conflict, dialogue</i>).	Organization The extent to which the response demonstrates a unified structure, direction, and unity, paragraphing and transitional devices.	Language Use and Style The extent to which response demonstrates an awareness of audience and purpose through effective sentence structure, sentence variety, word choice and usage.	Mechanics and Conventions The extent the response demonstrates control of conventions, including paragraphing, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
6	Very effective Focus & Meaning. Demonstrates a <i>thorough</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are all relevant to the story.	Very Effective Content & Development. Provides a <i>thoroughly</i> detailed and developed plot and setting. Creates complex characters. Clearly establishes tension/conflict/problem that heightens the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used very effectively to reveal characters' thoughts.	Very Effective Organization. Captures the reader's attention by cleverly opening the story. Story flows very smoothly because of excellent transitions that support sequential development. Has a conclusion that pulls the entire story together.	Very Effective Language Use and Style. Demonstrates <i>precise</i> language and word choice, a <i>defined</i> voice, and a <i>clear</i> sense of audience; uses <i>well-structured and varied</i> sentences.	Very Effective control of Conventions & Mechanics. <i>Few or no</i> errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling.
5	Good Focus & Meaning. Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are all relevant to the story.	Good Content & Development. Provides a <i>well-developed</i> plot and setting. Creates believable characters. Establishes tension/ conflict/problem that heightens the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used effectively to reveal characters' thoughts.	Good Organization. Opening of story excites readers' to continue reading. Story flows smoothly from one event to another with effective transitions that support sequential development. Conclusion provides reader with a sense of completeness.	Good Language Use & Style. Demonstrates <i>appropriate</i> language and word choice, with <i>some evidence</i> of voice and a <i>clear</i> sense of audience; uses <i>well-structured</i> sentences with <i>some variety</i> .	Good control of Conventions & Mechanics. <i>Few errors</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>do not interfere with the message</i> .
4	Adequate Focus & Meaning. Demonstrates a <i>basic</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are relevant to the story.	Adequate Content & Development. Provides a <i>reasonably</i> developed plot and setting. Creates believable characters. Establishes tension/ conflict/problem that holds the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used to reveal characters' thoughts.	Adequate Organization. Provides an interesting opening to the story that keeps the reader reading. Story generally flows smoothly from one event to another with transitions to support sequential development.	Adequate Language Use & Style. Demonstrates <i>appropriate</i> language and word choice, with an <i>awareness</i> of audience and control of voice; generally uses correct sentence structure with <i>some variety</i> .	Adequate control of Conventions & Mechanics. Some errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>do not significantly interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
3	Limited Focus & Meaning. Demonstrates a <i>limited</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that may not be relevant to the story.	Limited Content & Development. Provides an <i>adequately</i> developed plot, setting and characters, but lacks sufficient detail to make this more than a summary of what happens in the story. Tension/ conflict or a problem may be stated, but not developed. Some dialogue may be used to reveal characters' thoughts.	Limited Organization. Provides an adequate opening that may not hold the reader's attention. The flow of the story may be broken by haps in time and sequence. Transitions may be weak. Provides the reader with some sense of closure.	Limited Language Use & Style. Demonstrates <i>simple</i> language and word choice, <i>some awareness</i> of audience and control of voice; relies on <i>simple</i> sentences with <i>insufficient</i> sentence variety and word choice.	Limited control of Conventions & Mechanics. <i>Several noticeable</i> errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that may <i>interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
2	Minimal Focus & Meaning. Demonstrates a <i>minimal</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that may stray from the point of the story.	Minimal Content & Development. Provides a <i>minimally</i> developed plot and setting. Characters are only described rather than developed. Narrative may include details or information that detracts from the story. Lacks tension or conflict to make the story interesting. Little dialogue is used to reveal characters' thoughts.	Minimal Organization. Provides an opening that may repeat the title of the prompt. Flow of story may be difficult to follow because of gaps in time and sequence. Demonstrates little evidence of a conclusion.	Minimal Language Use & Style. Demonstrates <i>poor</i> language and word choice, with <i>little awareness</i> of audience; makes <i>basic errors</i> in sentence structure and usage.	Minimal control of Conventions & Mechanics. <i>Patterns of errors</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that substantially <i>interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
1	Inadequate or no Focus & Meaning. Demonstrates <i>almost no</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides very little detail, some of which may not be relevant to the story.	Inadequate or no Content & Development. <i>Lacks</i> an identifiable plot and setting. Characters are introduced but not developed. Lack of tension or conflict makes the story uninteresting to follow. Not much happens.	Inadequate or no Organization. May have an opening that does no more than repeats the title of the prompt. Story lacks basic organization (beginning, middle and end) with serious gaps in sequencing of brief ideas.	Inadequate Language Use & Style. Demonstrates <i>unclear or incoherent</i> language and word choice, <i>no</i> awareness of audience, and <i>major errors</i> in sentence structure and usage.	Inadequate or no control of Conventions & Mechanics. <i>Errors so severe</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that they <i>significantly interfere</i> with the communication of the message.

Prompt: A Special Day

Is there a day or an event in your life that was so special that you wish you could live it over again? What day would you like to relive? What happened that made it so special?

Write a story about this special event or special day.

As you write your story, think about these questions:

- Did you write a story about the assigned topic?
- Did you use details to describe the characters, places, and events?
- Did you organize your story clearly with an introduction, body, and conclusion?
- Did you use a variety of words and well-written sentences?
- Did you use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation?

Use any of the tools available to you, such as the **Checklist**, **Spellchecker**, or **Graphic Organizer**.

Bill's story:

It was a nice Saturday morning when the smell of breakfast woke me up. As I walked to the kitchen, I tripped over my brother's shoes. I sat on the table and asked my mom what she was baking, she said "pancakes". As I finished eating, I remembered I had a very important baseball game. We had to win so we could be the state champions. I was really tired, but I also really wanted to win. I was to be the pitcher that day. Boy, was I ever nervous!

It was time for my game and I got dressed and my Mom drove me to the game. Most of my team were there and they were also nervous. As I started stretching I saw their team and they were really big compared to us. I knew we had to win, but I was still nervous. The game started and I started pitching. The first pitch was a strike and he hit the next one. It was a grounder to me and I threw it to first base. It was my turn to bat and I hit one really far and I got a triple. I was in third base when my team mate hit the ball and I scored! We won the game and were the state champs!

Score Overview and MY Tutor Feedback

Holistic Feedback

Bill, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment was rated a 3. Your response was evaluated on the basis of how well it communicates its message considering important areas of writing including focus and meaning, content and development, organization, language use and style, and mechanics and conventions.

A response that receives a score of three communicates its message to a limited degree. Typically, a response at this level has some evidence of purpose, but that may not be totally clear and/or may lack a continued focus on the main idea. While there is evidence of development, there is typically a lack of support and supporting detail. There is some evidence of organization, but with limited order and sequence of ideas present. The sentence structure shows some errors in sentence structure, with little variety and noticeable errors in usage and word choice. The response typically shows poor word choice and usage with several distracting errors in mechanical conventions such as spelling and punctuation.

A more detailed analysis of your response is provided for each of the five important writing areas below.

MY Tutor Writing Analysis

Your response was also evaluated in terms of five important traits of writing, focus and meaning, content and development, organization, language use and style, and mechanics and conventions. Each of the five areas was evaluated on a scale ranging from one to six.

Focus & Meaning

Bill, on a scale of one to six, your response to **this assignment was rated a 3 for focus**. Focus relates to your ability to present a consistent, unified message and stay on topic.

Your focus is limited. Typically, a response at this level has a reasonably clear purpose evident, though the presentation may stray from the controlling point. The response may lack focus and cohesion.

Bill, now that you are ready to revise, try some of these ideas to help improve focus and meaning in your writing.

Revision Goal 1: Understand the purpose, audience, and task.

1. Read the prompt. Find the topic, purpose, and audience. Write them on your focus checklist or on a blank sheet of paper.
2. Review your draft and think:
 - What is my main event? The main event of YOUR story should be the SAME as the topic of the prompt.
 - Why did I write my story? Am I writing to entertain? Am I writing to make a statement? The purpose of YOUR story should be the SAME as the purpose in the prompt.
 - To whom am I writing? The audience to whom YOU are writing should be the SAME as the audience in the prompt. If not, then you should write in a formal manner with proper grammar and conventions.

Example:

Topic: Write a story about an important change

My story is about a character that energizes her town to take action against the loss of local stores.

Purpose: What change occurred that was important?

The character's former employer, Elverson's Hardware, closes down while she is away for the summer.

Audience: Who is your audience?

I am writing for family and friends.

Revision Goal 2: Focus details on the main event.

1. Highlight the main event in yellow.
2. Underline events and details that are NOT about the main event.
3. Move or remove the events and details that are NOT about the main event.

Example:

Before Revision: When I came home from vacation and saw another store closed down in town, I wondered what was going on. I was glad to see that Johnson's Bakery was still open though! What had happened in only a short time?

Frank's Strategy: *The closing of Elverson's Hardware is the focus of this passage. I need to delete details unrelated to the main event and add details that are related.*

After Revision: Why was Elverson's Hardware closed? I worked there for a year before our family's vacation, and when I saw the store boarded-up, I wanted to do something to prevent Paradise from becoming a "ghost town."

Frank's Reflection: *I deleted the sentence about Johnson's Bakery and added additional details about the hardware store and the town.*

Revision Goal 3: Use specific details to support your story.

1. Highlight, in green, details about the main event.
2. Add key details about the main event: Where did the event take place? What did the scene look like? How did people and animals act?

Example:

Before Revision: I did not interrupt them. After a long conversation, we all decided what was needed was a town meeting.

Frank's Strategy: *I need to add more details about the conversation between my characters.*

After Revision: "You know, we have been ignoring this for a long time," said my mother. My father responded, "It is hard today to find the time to do anything but work. Annie is three years from college and your promotion has made you much busier."

"No matter what we think and say, we can always come up with excuses to ignore the problem of what is happening to our town," claimed my mother. Before my father rebutted I spoke up, "Why don't we start a committee on why the town is losing businesses and what we can do about it, or join one that is already talking about it?"

Frank's Reflection: *I added dialogue and additional details about the purpose of the conversation, and how the characters came together to come up with a plan of action.*

Content & Development

Bill, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 3 for content and development**. Development relates to your ability to provide content that supports your main idea or controlling point and your ability to provide supporting details, examples and/or evidence.

Bill, you can improve your narrative by adding more description about your plot, characters, and setting.

Revision Goal 1: Create a detailed setting.

1. Highlight, in green, the words that tell when and where your story took place. Add more specific details about where your story took place and when it happened. For example, you can describe the place, the weather, the time of day or year, or the season.
2. Now use your five senses to describe your setting. How does the setting look, feel, smell, or sound? Use your five senses to add more details to your setting.

Example:

Before Revision: When I came **home from vacation** and saw another store closed down in **town**, I wondered what was going on. I walked down the **main street in town** and realized that there was the same number of stores opened as there was closed. What had happened in only **one summer**?

Annie's Strategy: *What sights and sounds did the character experience when she came home? Where did she vacation with her family? I need to add sensory details to the town and her reaction to the stores closing on the street.*

After Revision: Every summer, my family and I traveled to the Green Mountains of Vermont for vacation, but it was always good to come back home to Paradise. As we drove down State Street to our home on Acorn Avenue, I noticed that Elverson's Hardware had closed its doors. After we got home, I walked back to town and realized that there were the same number of stores opened as there was closed. "What is going on?" I thought.

Annie's Reflection: *I added details about where the character vacationed at the beginning of the paragraph. I have specific sensory details like the name of the town, names of streets, and the name of the store that had recently closed. These help the readers "feel" as if they are in my story.*

Revision Goal 2: Create realistic characters.

1. Underline your characters. Give your characters names if they do not already have them.
2. Highlight, in green, details about your characters. Add more details to help your readers “see” your characters: how did they look, act, and dress?
3. Highlight, in red, words that describe your characters’ actions. Use strong verbs (action words) to tell what your characters are doing. Use the word bank to help you.

Example:

Before Revision: I ran back home and told my parents what was going on. They seemed to already know and were talking about it too. We sat down at the dinner table to discuss what we could do about the town.

Annie’s Strategy: *I need to describe what the characters are wearing and give a better description of the parents. More specific verbs to describe the actions that take place would help as well.*

After Revision: I felt the urgency to do something rise up in me as I sat on the curb in front of Elverson’s Hardware. Running in my flip-flops, I made it to Acorn Avenue in record time, scampered up the steps of my house, and went in to make a scene. In the kitchen, my mother and father were sitting at the table in silence, both of them still wearing their jackets and shoes. “Were they having the same feelings as me?” I thought.

Annie’s Reflection: *I added details about my character’s reaction to the closing of Elverson’s Hardware, as well as specific descriptions of her parents.*

4. Dialogue (what your characters say) makes your characters seem more real. Is there a place in your story where two characters interact with each other? Try adding dialogue to show what your characters would say to themselves or to each other.

Example:

Before Revision: I didn’t interrupt my parents but sat down and listened to their discussion. After a long conversation, we all decided that we needed to create a citizens’ committee or join one that was already meeting to see what can be done.

Annie’s Strategy: *I need to add dialogue. What would my characters say? How would they say it?*

After Revision: “You know, we have been ignoring this for a long time” my mother said.

My father responded, “It is hard today to find the time to do anything but work. Annie is three years from college and your promotion has made you much busier.”

“No matter what we think and say, we can always come up with excuses to ignore the problem of what is happening to our town,” claimed my mother.

Before my father rebutted, I spoke up, “Well, what can we do?”

Annie’s Reflection: *I added dialogue to help my readers “hear” exactly what my characters are saying and how they are saying it. The dialogue shows the frustration of the characters with this situation about their town.*

Revision Goal 3: Create a well-developed plot.

1. Highlight the main event (what you want your readers to know the most) in yellow. Add important information about what happened during the event.

Example:

Before Revision: All of us sprang into action and decided to do something. By the end of the evening, there was a mayor-sponsored citizens’ committee organized to meet at the end of the month! My father picked up the phone and called our neighbor and both of them planned a street meeting. My mother used her cell phone to contact the mayor’s office. She made her aware that a citizens’ committee was being set-up to discuss the downtown. I went online and searched for ways to improve a downtown.

Annie’s Strategy: *I need to explain what is important about the main events. What information do my readers need to know to understand the main event?*

After Revision: All of us sprang into action. My father picked up the phone and called our neighbor and both of them planned a street meeting. My mother used her cell phone to contact the mayor’s office. She made her aware that a citizens’ committee was being set-up to discuss the downtown. I went online and searched for what other people did to improve downtowns in other towns and cities. By the end of the evening, there was a mayor-sponsored citizens’ committee organized to meet at the end of the month!

Annie’s Reflection: *I moved the main idea sentence to the end of the paragraph so it is clearer to understand. I added details about what my character did online so the connection between everyone’s actions is better understood.*

2. Underline the problem, or conflict. Add more details about the problem:
What caused the problem? Who has the problem? Why is it a problem?

Example:

Before Revision: As the time for the meeting drew near, I was upset that only a small group of people were present. I started to wonder if a town hall meeting was the best way to get the citizens involved. I started to write down other ideas to get the townspeople more involved.

Annie's Strategy: *I need to better explain why low attendance at the meeting is a conflict. What is causing the problem? What characters have the problem? What can the main character do to help resolve the problem?*

After Revision: "Where is everyone?" I thought to myself as I watched the small crowd gather in the town hall. My parents looked saddened as the mayor started the meeting with a call to order.

I sat down next to them and my mother said, "What is the point of this?" "Well, at least we know who wants to be leaders in this town," my father responded.

I stayed quiet, sat down, and thought about other options we can do to get the townspeople more involved.

Annie's Reflection: I added dialogue to show how the conflict is affecting the parents and the main character. In addition, I have a better connection between what was happening at the meeting and what the character is planning to do about the situation.

Organization

Bill, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 2 for organization**. Organization relates to your ability to present your ideas in a logical and ordered fashion.

Your organization is limited. Typically, a response at this level shows little evidence of organizational structure and sequence of ideas.

Bill, now that you have some ideas, let's work on putting them in order. Let's work on organization!

Revision Goal 1: Put your events in order.

1. Number each event in your story.

2. In the beginning, did you tell what took place first? In the middle, did you tell what took place next? At the end, did you tell what took place last? Make sure nothing is out of order.

Example:

Before Revision: (1) First, Sarah got out of bed. (2) Then, she ate cereal. (3) She ran out the door. (4) She heard her bus coming down the street.

Oscar's Strategy: *I need to put my events in the correct order. Sarah heard her bus coming down the street before she ran out the door.*

After Revision: First, Sarah got out of bed. Then, she ate some cereal. She heard her bus coming down the street. She ran out the door.

Oscar's Reflection: *I put the events in the correct order: Sarah got out of bed, ate some cereal, heard her bus coming down the street, and then ran out the door.*

Revision Goal 2: Use transitions to show your reader how events and ideas are connected.

1. Highlight, in orange, the transitions (words such as first, second, last, next, yesterday, today, in addition) in your story.
2. Add more transitions to show how your events go together. Use the word bank to help you!

Example:

Before Revision: First, Sarah got out of bed. Then, she ate some cereal. She heard her bus coming down the street. She ran out the door.

Oscar's Strategy: *I need to add transitional words or phrases to help my reader follow the events in my story.*

After Revision: First, Sarah got out of bed. Then she ate some cereal. A few minutes later, she heard her bus coming down the street. She ran out the door.

Oscar's Reflection: *I added the transitional phrase, "A few minutes later" to show when the events took place and to make the sequence of events flow together.*

Language Use & Style

Bill, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 3 for language use and style**. Language use relates to the decisions you make as a writer to create "**style**" in your writing. Style is created through sentence variety, word choice and usage,

Bill, let's work on your style and language use. Try some of these ideas to make your story more interesting!

Revision Goal 1: Choose, with care, nouns and adjectives.

1. Underline the nouns (people, places, and objects) in your story. Use specific words to tell how people, places, and objects look, sound, feel, or smell.

Example:

Before Revision: The next day, I was hired by the manager at the hardware store.

Larry's Strategy: *I need to add sensory details that describe the characters in my story.*

After Revision: On Sunday, I was hired by Amarelle, the manager, at Elverson's Hardware.

Larry's Reflection: *I used the specific words "Sunday," "Amarelle," and "Elverson's Hardware," in order to specify who, where, and what is going on in the story.*

2. Highlight your verbs in red. Use strong verbs (such as run, walk, scream, cook, bolt, and jump). Tell when and how people and things act: Did they act now, yesterday, this afternoon? Did they act slowly, loudly, quickly? Use the word bank to help you.

Example:

Before Revision: After a short training session, I **ran** around and **helped** people. I worked at the register as well.

Larry's Strategy: *I need to replace weak action words with strong action words. I also need to add details about when and how characters acted.*

After Revision: After I quietly sat through a short training session, I sprinted from one person to another and assisted them. I cached people out at the register as well.

Larry's Reflection: *I added "quietly sat," "sprinted," "assisted," and "cashed people out," in order to have stronger action verbs and adverbs.*

Revision Goal 2: Vary your sentence types.

1. Highlight short sentences in pink. Highlight, in purple, long sentences that include more than one idea. Be sure to use both long and short sentences.
2. Combine short sentences with conjunctions (and, or, nor, for, so, yet).

Example:

Before Revision: Elverson's Hardware was so much fun! I never thought that I would enjoy working at a hardware store. I went home after work and helped my mother make dinner and hang pictures on the wall.

Larry's Strategy: *I need to combine short sentences using conjunctions. The last sentence should be two sentences because it is two ideas.*

After Revision: Elverson's Hardware was so much fun, but I never thought that I would enjoy working at a hardware store. I went home after work and helped my mother make dinner. In addition, we worked together to hang pictures on the wall.

Larry's Reflection: *I connected the two sentences with the conjunction "but." I separated the third idea into its own sentence.*

Revision Goal 3: Diversify the beginnings of your sentences.

1. Underline the first three words in each sentence. Do all of your sentences start the same way?
2. If sentences begin the same way, add details such as *when* or *where* something happened to change how some of your sentences begin.

Example:

Before Revision: I never thought we would have such a great first week in Paradise. I also never thought that I could be happy living in another town. Finally, I never thought that I could make friends so easily and quickly.

Larry's Strategy: *Variety is the key to interesting writing. I need to diversify the beginnings of the sentences that are written the same.*

After Revision: I found happiness in the first week in Paradise, where I thought there would only be sadness. Friends were missed, but I made new ones.

Larry's Reflection: *I diversified and reworked the sentences so they are not repetitive.*

Mechanics & Conventions

Bill, on a scale of one to six, your response **was rated a 3 for mechanics**. Mechanics has to do with your ability to apply the rules of standard American English, including grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Your use of mechanics is satisfactory. A response at this level contains few errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and spelling.

Bill, the better the mechanics, the easier it will be for readers to enjoy and understand your writing.

Revision Goal 1: Eliminate errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and spelling.

1. Read your story. You may want to read out loud (to yourself) so that you can hear many of your mistakes and correct them.
2. Correct any spelling errors using the spellchecker. Then, make your readers SMILE by doing the following:

Sentences: Make sure each sentence has a subject and an action.

Before Revision: All of us. By the end of the evening, there was a mayor-sponsored citizens' committee organized to meet at the end of the month!

Marcy's Strategy: *I noticed that this sentence does not have an action. I need to add a verb to make this fragment a sentence.*

After Revision: All of us sprang into action. By the end of the evening, there was a mayor-sponsored citizens' committee organized to meet at the end of the month!

Marcy's Reflection: *I added a verb to make the sentence fragment a complete sentence.*

Marks: End each sentence with a punctuation mark.

Before Revision: When the time for the meeting came close, I was upset that only a small group of people were present I started to wonder if this was the best way to get the townspeople involved. I started to write down other ideas that we could do to get the townspeople more involved What could work now

Marcy's Strategy: *I noticed this passage is missing two periods and a question mark. I need to add these now.*

After Revision: When the time for the meeting came close, I was upset that only a small group of people were present. I started to wonder if this was the best way to get the townspeople involved. I started to write down other ideas that we could do to get the townspeople more involved. What could work now?

Marcy's Reflection: *I added a period after "present" and "involved," as well as a question mark after "now."*

Indents: Indent when you begin a new paragraph.

Before Revision:

Every summer, my family and I traveled to the Green Mountains of Vermont for vacation, but was always good to come back home to Paradise. As we drove down State Street to our home on Acorn Avenue, I noticed that Elverson's Hardware had closed its doors. After we got home, I walked back to town and realized that there was the same number of stores opened as closed. "What is going on?" I thought.

Marcy's Strategy: *I noticed that I did not indent the beginning of this paragraph. I need to indent each paragraph.*

After Revision:

_____ Every summer, my family and I traveled to the Green Mountains of Vermont for vacation, but it was always good to come back home to Paradise. As we drove down State Street to our home on Acorn Avenue, I noticed that Elverson's Hardware had closed its doors. After we got home, I walked back to town and realized that there was the same number of stores opened as closed. "What is going on?" I thought.

Marcy's Reflection: *I indented the beginning of the paragraph.*

Letters: Start each sentence with a **capital letter**.

Before Revision: all of us sprang into action. by the end of the evening, there was a mayor-sponsored citizens' committee organized to meet at the end of the month!

Marcy's Strategy: *These sentences do not begin with capital letters. I need to capitalize the words at the beginning of sentences.*

After Revision: All of us sprang into action. By the end of the evening, there was a mayor-sponsored citizens' committee organized to meet at the end of the month!

Marcy's Reflection: *I changed all of the lower case letters in the beginning of sentences to capital letters. I need to remember that I always have to capitalize the pronoun, "I."*

Editor: Click on MY Editor for more ways to improve your writing.

Revision Plan (Sample)

Name: Bill Maloney
Class: Narrative Writing
Prompt: A Memorable Childhood Event

My Goals

Focus and Meaning:

I must focus on the key events during the baseball game.

Content and Development:

I will write about my performance and my feelings during the game.

Writing Strategy

Focus and Meaning:

I will begin my story a few moments before the game begins. This will help to build excitement and eliminate the unnecessary details about my breakfast.

Content and Development:

I will write about my pitching, batting, and base running during the game. I will also include my feelings before, during, and after the game to help my readers understand why the experience was so memorable. I want my readers to feel like they were present when my team won the championship game. In order to make this possible, I plan to include more sensory details and dialogue.

Reflection

As soon as I read the prompt, I began to write my story. This caused me to include some details that were not relevant to my story. If I plan more before I write, my story will be easier to read and include key points with supporting details. I think using the Narrative Topic Outline would have helped me to more clearly write about my story's conflict, climax, and resolution.

Additional Sample Stories

Seth's story:

My childhood event is when my brother had a party and we were putting on a show for them and I tripped my brother and he fell super hard on his forehead and made a big gash and blood was squirting everywhere everyone was crying my brother was unconscious and my mom was calling the ambulance, and all that was going on while I was cleaning and crying all the blood away. He went to the hospital and they gave him medication and he woke up and his head was all numb and they gave him twenty-five stitches. Then he came home and tried swinging at me.

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Pete's story:

My favorite childhood memory is I first went up four wheeling with my dad and little brother James. My dad was in his truck and I was driving my Jeep. We were going up to a place called Deep Creek, it is in Rinder. Deep Creek is a Canyon that is about 100 miles long, my dad's friend owns all the land that is on and I know it worth a lot of money. There is nothing on the land but a lot of cows and wild life. It is really cool because we can go up there almost any time of the year and go camping, fishing and hunting and there is no one else for a hundred miles.

It was about two years ago when I first got to drive all the way up there with my dad and our family. We were going up there with my Uncle Mark, Uncle Keith and Grandpa. In my jeep I was driving just me and my brother following my dad when he had everyone else in his truck. It is about a 16-hour drive then once we reach my dad's friend's land its about four hours of four wheeling to get to the area where we like to set up camp. I did very well for being as young as I was and four wheeling that long, it is a very rough drive to our camp site. There is hardly a road and there are huge rocks everywhere but it is a lot of fun.

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Frank's story:

Going back to a different time, caused my deepest reflection and utmost remembrance. It was not that the world itself was that different, but it was the carefree way in which I lived within it. There was a time when growing up was fun and life was on the brink of complication. With one final attempt to fend off the inevitable, we were children for one last time.

My friends, our mind set, and our life at Monteval Middle School, encompassed everything childish. Basketball might have been our only, but brief escape. A season of basketball was not without its immaturity but there were moments that on one could forget. These were moments when we foolishly felt wise and important. Perhaps it was the seriousness in which we approached basketball that made it so memorable and successful.

The year before, our team had made it to the seemingly amazing "Monteval Valley Conference Championship Game," but tragically lost. This unforeseen setback spurred us onto an undefeated season in eighth grade. Through many tough games and even more easier ones we strengthened, united, and once again advanced to the championship game.

Our coach, Mr. Little delivered a stunning speech before our last game together in middle school. The way we were so captivated and excited one would think that this day was our final chance at life itself. After an emotional account of our coach's love of the game, but more importantly love of his lost daughter, we stormed the court to meet our opponent. We played Dallas, who had an enormously tall center who towered at least two feet above our whole team. The four other starters, and I met in a tension filled, and nervously intense circle. Little gave us the final game plan before we prepared for the tip-off.

Parents, family, and friends from both sides made up the crowd that had followed us to the game. They were all stationed to one side of the gym's bleachers leaving the opposite empty. It thoroughly enhanced the emphatic air that filled the gym in the anticipation of a great battle. With the shriek of an official's whistle the contest began. I scored the first points for our team and the crowd erupted with a roar. It was a close, back and forth game, especially toward the end. All of the teammates contributed to the win with many points, but in the end Mark Wilbur sealed the victory with several clutch free throws in the final seconds.

I perhaps remember the celebration of our victory with the most vivid images. The moment the final buzzer rang I turned and ran the length of the court into our team crowded around Mark. Everyone had an expression of extreme satisfaction and pleasure after such a long and difficult path toward our deserved honor. After an emotional celebration with my friends and team mates I lifted the trophy toward the crowd.

In looking back it was no great accomplishment that we achieved. The excitement soon faded, after about a week. Perhaps the most loveable moment can only be understood in retrospect and not in the extreme thrill of winning. As the years have gone by, for certain reasons, I have since distanced myself from any association with basketball. This causes me to appreciate my last enjoyable game. Only now can I respect not so much what we did, but the story of how we did it. The memories from when basketball was still fun, will be etched in my mind forever.

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Notes:

Teacher's Answer Key:

Megan: 4

Joe: 6

Seth: 2

Pete: 3

Frank: 5/6