



MY Access! Writer's Workshop

**Middle School Narrative Writing
Prompt: Happiest Time in Your Life**

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Prompt: Happiest Time in Your Life

Think about the happiest time in your life. Write a story in which you describe one special experience and what it meant to you.

As you write, remember that 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

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: Happiest Time in Your Life

Think about the happiest time in your life. Write a story in which you describe one special experience and what it meant to you.

As you write, remember that 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**.

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

Rachel’s story:

One day I woke up. It was 10:00 a.m. Outside it was raining. We were in a hotel room. We went to Saint Louis to go to six flags, but it was raining. I thought I was going to be bored all day. But then I did not know what was ahead. I went back to sleep. I woke up at 12:00 p.m. Opening the curtains, I saw bright sunlight shining in my eyes. I woke up my dad and asked him when could we go. He said in a little bit. We take showers usually fast. When we got there I was happy. I rode all the rides. Then the day was over like that. It felt like we were there for one hour, but we were there for more like five hours. But it went so fast. Oh well, I had the happiest time of my life.

Comment 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?

Madison's story:

The happiest time of my life was when I got to go to Disneyland with my brother. We rode on many different rides. We ate at a weird restaurant. We also saw the firework show. It was amazing. Disneyland with my brother was very fun. We got in free because my brother used to go there to work. When we got in we were really hyper and excited. The first thing we did is go on a slow ride. It was boring. The other rides were alright. We went on many different rides.

The best ride that, I think was the best, was the log ride. I never get sick of that ride. Another one of my favorite rides was Space Mountain. Space Mountain was really slow in the afternoon, but when we got on at night it went really fast. That ride was much better at night. I decided to go eat because I was really hungry. We ate at this weird restaurant. I forgot what it was called. I got this really big sandwich. It was delicious but I couldn't finish it all. There was at least one third of the sandwich left so I threw it away.

At night we watched the firework show. We took many pictures. My favorite part of the show was when tinkerbell came out at the end. It was really amazing, the only thing I disliked was the loud noises the fireworks made but everything else was really amazing.

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Natasha's story:

Swish! Whiss! I was struggling to keep my eyes open. I was going over 70 mph on the American eagle backwards. The six flags theme park in Chicago Illinois was almost deserted because it was late fall, and it was getting cold. I could ride freely, only waiting in line for rides up to five minutes. I had the happiest time of my life on this day.

My parents were going to do what ever it took to make this a fun friday for my sister and me. They let us each take a friend and gave us each 50\$ to spend on whatever we liked. ON the way up we stopped at a nice restaurant and had some of the best food I ever had. When we got there the ride seemed like a mere five minutes. It already started out to be a good day. " Are you sure this park is even open anymore?" I said to my dad, noticing the lack of many cars in the parking lot.

“Yea, Yea, Yea, IM sure it is open, I just called yesterday,” my dad said in reply.

When we got into the park we noticed that all the rides were running, but many were only half full. My best friend, and me Drew went off by ourselves to go on all the rides we could.

“Be back by 2:30 and we will get something to eat,” my mom screamed to me from the distance.

We rode on each ride at least four times before it was 2:00 and we figured we should be heading back.

On the way back to the meeting play we saw a virtual reality game play with a lot of neat video games.

“We have to do this,” Drew said certainly.

We had a lot of fun in the arcade. We each spend around five dollars before I looked back at my watch “2:45” It read

“WE best be getting back or my mom is going to be.... She is going to be... mad, to put it lightly.

We ran as fast as we could to get back as soon as possible. Once we got there my parents were not even there. At first we thought maybe they had gone looking for us. Soon they got back and told us that they had gotten caught up somewhere.

We had some really good pizza to eat at a really nice place. After that we went around and played the games for the rest of the time until 7:00. We had a lot of fun that day.

To top off the fantastic, fun, exhilarating, happy day, we figured we would play some games. There was a game where you had to throw a ball off on a board and you had to get it to go into the bucket that was at the bottom of the board. I could not seem to get it to go in the bucket, but I saw people walking around with the prize, which was a big stuffed animal, so I knew it had to be possible to win the prize.

I only had two dollars left, so I figured I would spend the last of it on the game and give it one more shot. I threw the ball; I figured I would put a lot of backspin on in this time just to try something new. I threw it and I thought it was a terrible throw. It bounced off the top of the board, but the backspin brought it back to me. It bounced in the bucket and then landed smoothly. I asked if it counted and he concurred. That topped off the happiest day of my life.

As you can see a lot of things came together to make my day so good. The good arcade, the deserted park, and the won prize were all great. My parents succeeded in wanting us to have the happiest time of our life's. My sister and I had the happiest time we have ever had!

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Prompt: Happiest Time in Your Life

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Rachel's story:

One day I woke up. It was 10:00 a.m. Outside it was raining. We were in a hotel room. We went to Saint Louis to go to six flags, but it was raining. I thought I was going to be bored all day. But then I did not know what was ahead. I went back to sleep. I woke up at 12:00 p.m. Opening the curtains, I saw bright sunlight shining in my eyes. I woke up my dad and asked him when could we go. He said in a little bit. We take showers usually fast. When we got there I was happy. I rode all the rides. Then the day was over like that. It felt like we were there for one hour, but we were there for more like five hours. But it went so fast. Oh well, I had the happiest time of my life.

Score Overview and MY Tutor Feedback

Holistic Feedback

Rachel, on a scale of **one to six**, your response to this assignment was **rated a 2**. 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 two minimally communicates its message. Typically, a response at this level has an unclear purpose and lacks unity. The response shows little support of ideas presented with little use of examples, evidence or other supporting details. There is little evidence of an organizational pattern and an unclear sequence of ideas. Sentence construction shows considerable errors in sentence structure, usage and word choice, with considerable errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that substantially interfere with the communication of the message.

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

Rachel, on a scale of one to six, your response to **this assignment was rated a 2 for focus**. Focus relates to your ability to present a consistent, unified message and stay on topic.

Your focus is minimal. Typically, a response at this level demonstrates a limited understanding of the purpose and audience.

Rachel, 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. Read your own writing and think:
 - What is the main event in my story? The topic of YOUR story should be the SAME as the topic of the prompt.

- Why did I write my story? Am I writing to describe, to inform, to persuade? 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.

Example:

Topic: Write about a special day in your life.

I wrote about the day I was in the talent show because that was a special day for me.

Purpose: Describe the day.

I used many details to describe the talent show.

Audience: Write a story for your friends and family.

I included important details that I think will be interesting to my family and friends like how I felt before the talent show, what I did for my talent, how well I performed, and how I felt afterwards.

Revision Goal 2: Narrow your focus.

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: It was a day to remember. Jake and I made popcorn yesterday.

Frank's Strategy: *I need to delete ideas that are not related to the topic of my story. What is my focus? The day to remember is the focus; making popcorn is not.*

After Revision: It was a day to remember.

Frank's Reflection: *I deleted "Jake and I made popcorn yesterday" because making popcorn is not the focus of the story.*

Revision Goal 3: Use details to support the topic and purpose of 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 things act?

Example:**Before Revision:** It was a day to remember.**Frank's Strategy:** *I need to add more important details and information about the main event.***After Revision:** I will always remember the day I sang a song in the talent show.**Frank's Reflection:** *I added important details about the topic of my story. I explained that the "day to remember" was the day of the talent show.***Content & Development**

Rachel, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 2 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.

Your development is minimal. Typically, a response at this level develops ideas incompletely or inadequately, using few examples, evidence or other supporting details.

Rachael, at this point in your writing, you have quite a bit more detail to add since your story has minimum development. This means you need to make sure the reader knows what your story is about. The reader also needs to know *when* and *where* your story is taking place and who the *characters* are in your story. Only by using enough detail will the reader understand.

Rachel, let's add more detail to your story!

Revision Goal 1: Create a detailed setting.

1. Highlight, in green, the words that tell when and where your story took place. Now, 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:** On Halloween, we got ready in my house.

Annie's Strategy: *I need to add more specific details about where and when my characters are getting ready. I also need to describe how the setting smells, looks, feels, and sounds.*

After Revision: On a crisp, fall Halloween night, we put on our costumes in my big, dark, cold kitchen.

Annie's Reflection: *I replaced "house" with "in my kitchen" and added "crisp, fall" and "night" to "Halloween" to make the setting more specific. I also added "big, dark, cold" to describe how the kitchen looked and felt.*

Revision Goal 2: Create realistic characters.

1. Underline the people in your story. Give them names if they do not have them.
2. Highlight, in green, details about your characters. Add more details to help your reader "see" and "hear" your characters: How do they look, sound, and act?

Example:

Before Revision: On Halloween night, my little brother and I got ready in our kitchen.

Annie's Strategy: *I want to add specific details about my characters. What is the little brother's name? I need to describe the little brother. How does he act?*

After Revision: On Halloween night, my annoying little brother Mikey and I put on our ghost costumes in our big kitchen. Since we were young, Mikey has always copied everything I do. So, this Halloween, we were both dressing up as ghosts.

Annie's Reflection: *I named the little brother, "Mikey," and added "annoying" to describe him. I also gave more details about what the main character and Mikey were doing on Halloween night.*

3. Dialogue (what your characters say) makes your characters seem more real. Find a place in your story where your characters could talk or think out loud. Add dialogue to show what your characters would say to themselves or to each other.

Example:

Before Revision: My annoying little brother, Mikey, wanted to be a ghost for Halloween just because I was going to dress up as one. Because he is younger than I am, our mom said that he could.

Annie's Strategy: *I want to include dialogue to make my characters seem more life-like. What would my characters say? How would they say it?*

After Revision: My annoying little brother, Mikey, wanted to be a ghost for Halloween just because I was going to dress as one. When I said I was dressing up as a ghost, Mikey whined, "I want to be a ghost, too!"

"NO! I said I wanted to be a ghost first!" I cried.

"Let your little brother be a ghost too," my mom said.

So, this Halloween, we were both dressing up as ghosts.

Annie's Reflection: *I added dialogue to make Mikey and his older brother seem more real and to help the reader know the characters better.*

Revision Goal 3: Build a well-developed plot.

1. Highlight the main event (what you most want your reader to know about) in yellow. Add important information about what happened during the event. For example, you can describe how the characters feel, how they act, and what they say.

Example:

Before Revision: On Halloween, my little brother and I put on our ghost costumes in our big kitchen. Once we were dressed in our ghost costumes, it was time for trick-or-treating. I was excited to go trick-or-treating.

Annie's Strategy: *I want to find my main event and add important information to describe it. What is important or interesting about the main event?*

After Revision: Once we were dressed in our ghost costumes, it was time for trick-or-treating. I was still excited to go trick-or-treating, even though Mikey and I had the same costume. Nothing would make me less excited to get candy!

Annie's Reflection: *I added more details about how the older brother felt and why he felt that way. The reader needs to know this information in order to understand why the main event is important.*

2. Highlight, in green, details about the main event. Highlight your verbs (the action) in red. Add details and strong verbs to make the main event come to life! Use the word bank to help you.

Example:

Before Revision: Mikey and I got our bags for the candy and ran outside. It was almost dark, and there were a lot of people in costumes trick-or-treating already.

Annie's Strategy: *I want to use sensory details to help the reader picture the setting. I can add strong verbs to make the action exciting.*

After Revision: Mikey and I grabbed our bags for the candy and raced outside. The sun was setting, and it was getting darker and spookier. The street was already filled with witches, pirates, and monsters who were already trick-or-treating.

Annie's Reflection: *I replaced weak verbs like "got," and "ran" with strong, exciting words like "grabbed" and "raced." I added more specific and colorful details about the main event; for example, the sights he saw on the street during Halloween.*

Organization

Rachel, 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.

Rachael, the story you wrote does not have a beginning, middle and an end. The ideas of the story need to be written in the order that they happen.

Rachel, 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

Rachel, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 2 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.

Your language use and style is minimal. Typically, a response at this level shows major errors in sentence style, usage and word choice.

Rachel, try some of these ideas to help improve the language and style in your writing.

Revision Goal 1: Choose nouns and adjectives carefully.

1. Underline the nouns (people, places and things) in your writing. Make your words more specific by naming the people, place and things and describing who and what they are.

2. Now, add details to describe how people, places and things look, sound, feel, or smell. Details help your reader picture your story.

Example:

Before Revision: The boy put on his coat. Then he went to the store.

Larry's Strategy: *I need to replace general words with more specific words. I need to add details about the people, places, and things in my story. Which boy? What coat? Which store?*

After Revision: Jack put on his gray wool coat that smelled a lot like a wet puppy.

Larry's Reflection: *I replaced "boy" with an exact name, "Jack." I also added clear details about the boy's coat to help the reader picture how Jack looks.*

Revision Goal 2: Choose verbs and adverbs carefully.

1. Highlight verbs (action words) in red. Change weak verbs (for example, is, was, got) to strong verbs (for example, eat, sleep, run, skip, hop, jump, cook, clean, bolt, slide). Use the word bank to help you.
2. Describe when the action took place: Was it today, yesterday, last year? Tell how people and things acted: Did they act quickly, slowly, quietly, loudly?

Example:

Before Revision: Jack **put on** his gray wool coat that smelled a lot like a wet puppy. He **went** to the grocery store.

Larry's Strategy: *I need to replace weak action words with strong action words. I also need to add details about when and how the action occurred. When did he go to the store? How did he get to the store? Car? Bike? Rollerblades?*

After Revision: In the afternoon, Jack slid into his gray wool coat that smelled a lot like a wet puppy. He walked quickly to the grocery store.

Larry's Reflection: *First I replace weak verbs, "put" and "went," with strong verbs, "slid into" and "walked." Secondly, I added the time phrase "in the afternoon" to explain when the boy put on his coat to walk to the store, and the adverb "quickly" to describe how the boy walked.*

Revision Goal 3: Write short and long sentences.

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 using conjunctions, such as “and,” “but,” and “or.”
Separate sentences with more than one idea into two or more sentences.

Example:

Before Revision: The boy put on his gray wool coat. He walked to the grocery store.

Larry’s Strategy: *I know that too many short sentences make my writing choppy! I need to use connecting words to combine the short sentences in my story.*

After Revision: The boy slipped into gray wool coat and walked to the grocery store.

Larry’s Reflection: *I found two short sentences and identified the relationship between the two. I added the conjunction “and” to combine the two sentences.*

Mechanics & Conventions

Rachel, on a scale of one to six, your response **was rated a 2 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 minimal. A response at this level contains many errors in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

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

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

1. Read your writing. 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 spell checker. Then, make your reader SMILE by doing the following:

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

Before Revision: My house on Halloween.

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: We put on our costumes in my house on Halloween night.

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: My five-year-old brother and I were putting on our costumes in the kitchen how funny Mikey looked wearing his costume, which was too big for him what was my mom thinking when she bought it

Marcy's Strategy: *I noticed that this paragraph does not have any punctuation. I need to put punctuation marks at the end of each sentence to make my writing clearer.*

After Revision: My five-year-old brother and I were putting on our costumes in the kitchen. How funny Mikey looked wearing his costume, which was too big for him! What was my mom thinking when she bought it?

Marcy's Reflection: *I put punctuation marks at the end of each sentence. If the sentence was exciting, I added an exclamation point. If the sentence was a question, I added a question mark.*

Indents: Indent when you begin a new paragraph.

Before Revision:

As my five-year-old brother, Mikey and I were putting on our costumes in the kitchen, Mikey yelled, "I can't wait to go trick-or-treating!" Yesterday, we mapped out the entire neighborhood and planned where we wanted to go trick-or-treating. We better get started soon or we will never make it to all of the houses.

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

After Revision:

 As my five-year-old brother, Mikey and I were putting on our costumes in the kitchen, Mikey yelled, "I can't wait to go trick-or-treating!" Yesterday, we mapped out the entire neighborhood and planned where we wanted to go trick-or-treating. We better get started soon or we will never make it to all of the houses.

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

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

Before Revision: it was Halloween night. my brother and i got ready in the kitchen.

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

After Revision: I was Halloween night. My brother and I got ready in the kitchen.

Marcy's Reflection: I changed all of the lowercase 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)

Student: Rachel Linden
Class: Narrative Writing
Prompt: The Happiest Time in Your Life

My Goals

Focus and Meaning:

I must focus on only one special experience I had on the day I went to Six Flags in Saint Louis instead of making almost my whole story about the morning before we went.

Content and Development:

I will write about the roller coaster ride I went on and give lots of details about the experience so that whoever reads my story will be able to picture the ride in his/her mind.

Writing Strategy

Focus and Meaning:

I will begin my story at the moment the attendant told me to lock myself into my seat. I will stick to just talking about the events and excitement of the ride and nothing else.

Content and Development:

I will add dialogue, conflict, feelings and sensory details to help my reader feel the fear and excitement that I felt when I took the ride.

Reflection

I started writing without planning out the most important experience I wanted to share. Instead, I wrote about the events that led up to the roller coaster ride and just stopped. I had some good details about the morning when I woke up, but they didn't add to the experience I wanted to tell in my story.

Additional Sample Stories

Dylan's story:

My happiest time in my life is when I was watching my father play the drums. It was exciting. My heart was racing. And I kept watching him hoping I will be just like him.

The music he played was heavy metal. It sounded great. The base was bumping and the music was loud. It was almost like a concert the music was so loud. When I watch him I feel like he's my favorite person.

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Anthony's story:

The most happiest time in my life was when I went to Hawaii. It was early in the morning and I had to wake up to go catch my plane. When I got on the plane and settled I had no idea what was in store for me on this long flight. The flight was nine hours long. When I landed in Hawaii I was not impressed. What I saw was brown rocks and long yellow grass. The whole island looked like it had been covered in dirt. My first thought was "I thought Hawaii was supposed to be tropical." But as we got closer to the hotel every thing got greener, the ocean got bluer and every thing started coming to life.

When I finally got inside the hotel I could not believe what I was seeing. There was palm trees and the ocean was right in our back yard I took my bags up stairs and unpacked. I went to go find my brother and sister. When I found them they were just as amazed as I was. The best part was the four big pool they had. We had a slide, and a water fall. And all of the pools were connected. This place really was paradise.

The next day we got to go snorkeling. After we got all of the gear on we dived in. I saw many different colors of fish. I also saw some bright coral that had everyone amazed. After about a half an hour swimming I hear some thing. I looked out of the water and saw some thing swimming near. My first thought was sharks. But it was five dolphins swimming towards us. At first I was scared because I had no idea what these creatures might do. After a while I loosened up and started to swim with them. One dauphin let me grab on to him. He took me all the way to the bottom, which was only maybe 15 feet. The water presser was not that bad but hurt a little. It was so much fun. We had spent all day there.

After a week of being in Hawaii doing things like going site seeing and going to an aquarium, it was time to go home. I did so many fun things with my family and got to swim in the ocean. I also got to go to Pearl Harbor and got to see so many cool things. I was so happy that I got a chance to go to Hawaii and see so many things I would not see in Illinois. Now it was time to say good-bye to Hawaii, and maybe some day I will visit there again. Aloha.

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Becky's story:

"Congratulations! You did it, way to go!" I joyfully hollered as I gave a big embrace to the participant. I never felt so happy in my entire life. No, it was not anything I had won, or achieved, or earned myself, it was something that I had received, that could never be wrapped or put under the Christmas tree, it was the gift of love. What defines happiness? Is it the peace you feel when you know everything will turn out okay? Or is it the smile on your face that seems to say I-feel-like-a-million-dollars? This moment would change my definition of happiness forever. I never felt so happy in my entire life when I volunteered to be an awards personal.

On that routinely boorish March day, was when it all started. The sun was frying the earth like a fried egg and melting the once flawless-white snow, turning it into tawny, chocolate, slush that made it look like dog droppings instead of fresh white cauliflower. Inside my refurbished school, class had begun with the usual ring of the bell, and fifty-meter dash to get to the desks on time.

"This Saturday, all of you who are in student council are welcome to come and help give out awards to the participants in the Special Olympics." Mrs. Brown said with that you-really-don't-have-a-choice look of her face.

She continued, "I think you could learn a lot and I think you all could have one of the happiest times of your life."

Throughout the whole class, groans rang out from every mouth but mine. I inferred that this opportunity could be the one I wanted, so I could make someone's day brighter or put a smile on their face. So I told Mrs. Brown I would not miss it even if the Viking were playing the Packers that day.

Before you could say, "Time flew by," it was Saturday and there was a soft breeze that kissed my newly polished nails dry. We got the ribbons and medals organized and I looked up to see an Autistic man walking my way. But despite his limp, and his physical disabilities, he seemed as strong as a giant, but at the same time, as gentle as

the breeze, and as happy as newly weds, his smile seemed as wide as the ocean. When he reached my side he stretched out his hand and said with slurred speech,

“Hi. My name is Bill. What is your name?”

“My name is Becky. It is very nice to meet you Bill.” I replied, touched by his kindness. I continued, “You look very happy, did you win the race?”

“Sure did! I won it Becky, I won it!” He exclaimed with a grin two times as big as himself.

As he climbed to the top of the winner’s circle, his happiness shown as bright as the star over Bethlehem and he raised his hands high with pride. Tears welled up in my eyes as I placed the medal around Bill’s neck. This precious moment of glory taught me the true meaning of happiness.

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Ella’s story:

The butterflies built up slowly inside my stomach, making every second that I was waiting seem like an hour. I was so excited to dance in front of all the people, nervous that I would mess up and make a-o-my-gosh-she-is-a-complete-failure-why-did-she-even-do-this out of myself, and happy that I was finally able to show everyone my talent all at the same time. Trying to calm myself, I took deep breaths and went over the dance in my head. There was no way that I could forget it, with all the practice and commitment I had gone through. This day would always be remembered as the happiest time in my life.

Dancing was the only thing on my mind that week before our recital. Music filled my ears instead of the voices of my teachers, giving one of their verbose speeches. During class, I would be asked to recite an answer, but I would have no clue what I was supposed to do, for I heard the sweet, calming sound of the music. As I slept, the motions played through my head, reminding me what to do. No dreams entered my mind except for ones about my recital. I dreamed of performing, millions of on seers gazing open-mouthed as they watched with exasperation on their faces, wondering how I could dance so gracefully and be so talented. With those thoughts in my mind, I would wake only to find me as I was before I fell asleep, in my twin-sized bed. When I awoke, I heard the audience, begging to see it again. My heart raced with the tempo, slowly at first, then gradually getting faster and faster until the song ended in silence. Soon, this day, the happiest day in my life, would arrive.

Waiting for this happy day to arrive was like waiting for a turtle with a broken leg to finish the mile race. I counted the days until I would perform. Each day, I would wake up to the same tedious routine. As soon as I woke, I turned on the music, turned up the volume, and danced. Half an hour or so later, I would take a shower and go to school. After school, I would practice even more, fixing every little mistake I made until it was flawless. I would try on my outfit, black, tight pants with a multicolored top. Then I would begin the tape and get lost in the music.

I waited backstage and the butterflies began. My mother had just left to go find a seat in the audience. She had barely noticed me with my hair done up in curls and my stage makeup on, rosy red cheeks, with dark eyeliner and mascara. My lips gleamed like the bright, glamorous, sun, shining down on everyone. As I impatiently waited, I remembered what my lovely mother had told me, "If you try your best, then you will do your best." These words reassured me as the sound of the performances before me beat in my ears. A voice, hardly able to be heard, came on over the intercom calling the number of my dance. This was it, the time for my performance and the happiest day in my life.

Rushing onto the stage, I took my spot and waited for the music to begin. I danced like I had never danced before, and ended in a sweat to the sound of applause. As soon as the curtains dropped, I ran to my mother and gave her a hug. I was handed a bundle of roses that smelled like they were freshly picked in the spring, even though it was winter, and people began hugging me. "You were great!" they told me, as I came to a stop in front of my family. The smile on my face was huge and full of pride and happiness. This day was so happy, perhaps the happiest day in my life.

Your score: _____

Feedback to the Writer:

Teacher Answer Key:

Madison: 3

Natasha: 5

Dylan: 1

Anthony: 4

Becky: 5

Ella: 6