

Personal Response Writing includes all of the following:

- first person (I, we, us, me, myself)
- detailed references to personal experiences
- **specific** details = describe **actual scenes** from your life
- your **emotions** and **voice** throughout
- effective and purposeful word choice (get your thesaurus ready)

REMEMBER: The more **PERSONAL** details and references you can include, and the more you can distinguish your personality on paper, the more your writing will come alive. See the “**Voice in Writing**” Handout for tips.

ESSENTIALS OF NARRATIVE (STORY) WRITING

- ❖ first person point of view
- ❖ no set length (aim for 5 paragraphs – 1 per phase of plot: exposition, rising action, etc.)
- ❖ clearly defined beginning, middle, and end
- ❖ description/details
- ❖ dialogue
- ❖ CONFLICT (internal and/or external), and clearly defined CLIMAX
- ❖ logical order (chronological – by time)
- ❖ focus on a brief 15-60 minute event and be MEGA detailed (please do NOT write a story that takes place over a series of hours or days, i.e. an entire family vacation)

NARRATIVE LEADS

When writing narratives, you should always try to start your stories in an interesting way. You may use any of the following “hooks” to begin your narratives.

1. Begin a story in the middle of a conversation.

Example: “Just who do you think you are?” Mrs. Fleming asked as April slammed her notebook on the desk.

2. Begin with a description:

Example: Millie’s face turned red when she entered the room. Stapled on the walls all around were pictures of her. There she was holding the first place trophy high above her head after her team won the state basketball tournament.

3. Begin with background information (exposition):

Example: Kevin was accustomed to being first. Since he had started track, a sixth grader on the high school team, he had always been a champion.

4. Begin with a peek into a character's mind:

Example: *Not this time, you won't*, I thought as I stood there staring into my father's eyes. I picked up the basketball and began to dribble with my left hand.

5. Start with a simile, metaphor, hyperbole, or pun:

Example: They murdered him. (from *The Chocolate War*)

6. Start with a startling statement:

Example: Private Hammond staggered as the bullet ripped into his leg.

7. Start with a question:

Example: Have you ever eaten one of those sugar-coated pieces of fried dough at the fair? I think they're called *elephant ears* or some such.

8. Begin with a quote from a song, movie, famous person or book:

Example: *"It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine."* Kevin spun in circles as he listened to his older brother's old R.E.M. record in the basement. In a time like this, the lyrics seemed particularly suitable.

TIPS FOR WRITING AN INTERESTING NARRATIVE

Consider using some or all of the following techniques to add interest and appeal to your narratives.

- 1. Snapshot** - Shows the reader a "photograph" of the scene. The "snapshot" describes a scene or part of a scene in vivid detail, using sensory details, concrete words, and figurative language.
Example: We were flying at about 40,000 feet in altitude. I could see the tip of the wing shine in front of the sun setting colors in the background. A transition of bright orange and ultramarine begin to form the black sky from above.
- 2. Thoughtshot** – The thoughts and feelings of the character are described in detail; reveals what a character is thinking, as well as their personality and motivation. Characters may ask themselves questions, recap something that has happened, or reflect on actions or events that have occurred.
Example: My palms tingled—I wanted so badly to hit something. I was surprised at myself. I was usually a nonviolent person. I turned my back and started to walk away. (from *Twilight*)
- 3. Ping Pong Dialogue** – A back-and-forth conversation that includes quick exchanges of dialogue, between characters, where no other action is described. **NOTE:** When including dialogue, always move to a new line when a new person is talking.
Example: "Hi, Tony," said Katy.
"Hey," Tony answered.
"What's wrong?" Katy asked.
"Nothing," Tony said.
"Really? You're not acting like nothing's wrong."
- 4. Descriptive Dialogue** – The gestures and body-language of characters are described while they are speaking, in addition to the dialogue (the words that are being exchanged).
Example: "Hi, Tony."
Tony looked down at his shoe, dug in his toe and pushed around a pile of dust.
"Hey," he replied.
Katy braced herself. *Something was wrong.*