Narrative Writing Class
Lesson 2

Here is what you will learn in this lesson:

I. Writing About Ourselves: Autobiographical narrative.
II. Super Story Starter.
III. Finding and Using the Right Word.
IV. Attention Grabbers: Varying sentence beginnings and structure to make your writing more interesting.

Writing About Ourselves–Autobiographical Narrative

Telling stories about real events that happen in our day-to-day lives is something that we all do daily. These personal narratives, or stories, are how we share information with others. They give the people we share with a little peek into our world as we relive and reflect on incidents in our lives. These stories let others know how we feel and what our thoughts are about what has happened in our life.

When writing a personal narrative, or autobiographical narrative, you will be sharing **a true story about an incident that happened to you**. You are the main character in your story, and the incident you share is something that is important to you. Your goal is to take your reader on a journey through a brief moment of time in your life, making sure to share your experiences in vivid detail.

What Do I Write About?

In lesson 1, you began keeping a personal events journal. Looking back and reviewing your journal entries may give you ideas on what to write about, or you may choose something else that has happened recently. The event or topic you choose is completely up to you and does not need to be an earth-shattering event in your life; in fact, it can be something as simple as a trip to the grocery store.

Your autobiographical narrative will tell a story of an incident that happened to you over a brief period in time. Your story needs to follow a time sequence, and you must be sure to include your feelings and thoughts at the time.

Writing Your Autobiographical Narrative, Step By Step

Step 1: Decide on a *topic*. Make sure your topic has a single focus or idea. If you want, you may use one of your personal event journal entries as a place to start.
Step 2: Write a *topic sentence*. Remember, the topic sentence tells the reader the main idea or focus of your paragraph.
Step 3: Write your *detail* or *supporting sentences*. Start by writing down all the details you remember about what happened. Then write sentences for each of the details, making sure to put them in logical order. Remember to use descriptive adjectives, vivid verbs, and lively adverbs in your sentences. Remember to try to start each sentence in a different way.
Step 4: Write a *closing sentence*. Remember, the closing sentence restates the main idea of your paragraph.

Topic (focuses on a single idea)
feeding the horses in the morning

Topic Sentence (states the main idea)
Feeding the horses in the morning is my job, and waking up at 6:00 a.m. used to be tiresome, but the events from last Tuesday changed that forever.

Details (remember to use vivid verbs, lively adverbs, and descriptive adjectives)
getting up and out of the house, quiet and peaceful outside, horses acting weird,
stray dog, problem getting dog out of paddock, relief

Detail or Supporting Sentences
(support your main idea; use many different sentence beginnings)

1. I rose sleepily out of bed and started down the stairs, then stumbled out the back door.
2. The morning was quiet and bright– not a cloud in the sky. The air smelled sweet, and the breeze felt gentle and cool on my skin.
3. Glancing over at the stalls to greet the horses, I noticed Nellie cautiously approaching her stall door. This was unusual, and I quickly realized that something was wrong.
4. Concerned, I scanned the yard and caught sight of a stray dog in the corner of the paddock. He then caught sight of me and ran over, baring his teeth and growling!
5. My heart raced as I quickly thought of a plan to get the stray out of the paddock. Realizing what I needed to do, I raced over to the main gate to our back yard and opened it, and on my way back, I picked up our training whip to use for protection. Carefully, I opened the paddock gate and then chased the stray out of the back yard.
6. I was so relieved once he was gone, and I was very thankful that neither the horses nor I were hurt.

Closing Sentence (restates the main idea, but in different words)
Waking up at 6:00 a.m. to feed the horses will never feel the same

Okay, now that you have your topic sentence, detail sentences, and closing sentences written, let's put them into paragraph form.

[Header] Smith 1

Brian Smith

Ms. Jones

Narrative Writing

August 16, 2009

[Heading]

Terrifying Tuesday *[Title]*

Feeding the horses in the morning is my job, and waking up at 6:00 a.m. used to be tiresome, but the events from last Tuesday changed that forever. Tuesday morning started out just like any other day. I rose sleepily out of bed and started down the stairs, then stumbled out the back door. The morning was quiet and bright, and there was not a cloud in the sky. The air smelled sweet, and the breeze felt gentle and cool on my skin. Glancing over at the stalls to greet the horses, I noticed Nellie cautiously approaching her stall door. This was unusual, so I quickly realized that something was wrong. Concerned, I scanned the yard and caught sight of a stray dog in the corner of the paddock. He then caught sight of me and raced over, baring his teeth and growling! My heart raced as I quickly thought of a plan to get the stray out of the paddock. Realizing what I needed to do, I raced over to the main gate to our back yard and opened it, and on my way back, I picked up our training whip to use for protection. Carefully, I opened the paddock gate and then chased the stray out of the backyard. I was so relieved once he was gone, and I was very thankful that neither the horses nor I were hurt. Waking up at 6:00 a.m. to feed the horses will never feel the same.

Super Story Starter:

Have you ever been watching television and had a particular commercial capture your attention? Or how about seeing a colorful envelope in the mail amidst all the other white ones? Companies pay large sums of money to advertise their products, and they do this because they want you to remember their product and purchase it when you are at the store. Just as companies use visual and verbal creativity to capture the attention of their audiences, good writers use written creativity to capture the attention of their readers.

When you begin your story, you want to grab the readers' attention immediately. Your writing should make them want to read on and wonder, "What's going to happen next?" Try the following to help you get started:

Start your story by describing the main character, the setting, and the beginning of the incident or event you will be writing about.

Main Character (who): The main character is the person or persons (sometimes animal or thing) that the incident or event happens to. The main character or characters rarely switch around in a story.

Setting (where): The setting is the place, time, and atmosphere where the story happens. A good setting describes all the elements of the place, including the mood. Settings can change as the story progresses.

Incident or Event (what and how): This is what happens in your story. It describes what happens, when it happens, and how it happens. Most stories have a main incident or event, but depending on how long a story is, there may be many other sub-incidents or events that happen, which lead up to the climax of the story.

Make sure to **use your thesaurus** to find the perfect words to describe the character and setting. Here is an example:

Sentence 1: Mary ran to the store.

Sentence 2: Mary raced to the smoldering store where her father works.

It may take you many tries to get the perfect start to your story, but it is well worth the time and effort. You will be amazed at how your efforts will spark your creative juices and how your story will begin to grow.

You can use a chart similar to this to help you organize your thoughts.

Main Character:	Setting:	First Incident or Event:
Chuck: A 13-year-old boy who runs away from home because he is angry with his parents for getting a divorce.	A dark, musty alley where an injured dog is lying behind a dumpster.	Chuck is rummaging through the dumpster in the alley when he sees an injured dog lying behind the dumpster.

Now that we have all the important information down, we can play with the information to come up with an exciting introduction to our story. Let's start by describing Chuck, his feelings, the setting, and the opening to the incident or event we will be writing about.

Hungry and desperate, 13 year-old Chuck watches as the bakery worker tosses day-old rolls into the dumpster. Hoping he hasn't been seen, Chuck darts down the dark, musty alley to retrieve the unwanted rolls. Just as he begins to retrieve the rolls, he catches sight of a furry, blood-stained tail behind the dumpster. "What in the world?" Chuck gasps. Curious, he bends down to get a better look.

Finding and Using the Right Word

Using the Thesaurus

Along with a dictionary, you will be required to use a thesaurus in this class. A thesaurus is a book that gives lists of words that are similar in meaning to others, commonly called *synonyms*. The thesaurus will also give you words that are

opposite in meaning. We call these *antonyms*. Most thesauruses are set up similarly to the dictionary, in that the words are listed alphabetically, and you are given the part of speech for each word. Use the thesaurus to help you find words that describe exactly what you want your writing to say. Using more descriptive and colorful words in your writing will give the reader a better picture of what is happening.

Vivid Verbs

A verb is a word that shows *action* or *state of being*. The verb is an important part of the sentence because it shows what the subject does. To help the reader get a better picture, use more precise vivid verbs.

Example: The little girl walked to the store.
A more vivid verb: The little girl stomped to the store.

Descriptive Adjectives

An adjective describes a noun or pronoun. Adjectives tell us more about the noun, which also gives the reader a better picture. Let's look at the following sentences. One uses an adjective and one does not.

Example: Tammy looked out the window.
With an adjective: Tammy gazed out the fogged window.

As you can see, adding the adjective, *fogged*, changes how we picture the noun, *window*. In addition, we changed the verb *looked* to *gazed*, which gives us a more precise picture of what Tammy did.

Lively Adverbs

Just as adjectives give us more information about nouns and pronouns, adverbs give us more information about verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Adverbs give the reader more information on when, how often, and the manner in which the action is done. Look at the example to see how adverbs add to the sentence to give the reader a better description.

Example: The little girl raced to the park.
With an adverb: The little girl raced competitively to the park. The adverb *competitively* tells us how/the manner in which she raced to the park.
With a different adverb: The little girl raced daily to the park. The adverb *daily* tells us how often she raced to the park.

Attention Grabbers—Varying sentence beginnings and structure to capture the attention of your readers

Have you ever sat down to read a book and become so captivated by the story that you read for hours? How about starting a book that had an interesting title but was so boring you never finished it? Writing is a wonderful way to express our creativity, and it is important for our readers to be interested in our story. To make your writing more interesting, start your sentences in a variety of ways, making sure to use words and phrases that capture your reader's attention.

Read the following paragraphs and decide which one sounds more interesting:

The Bad Bee

I have always been worried about being stung by a bee. Today I was stung by a bee. The bee stung me on my way to the pool. It stung me on my hand. My hand really hurt. I screamed for my mom. She came running to me. She took me back to the house to get ice. My hand started to swell. I started to cry. My mom called the doctor. I had to go to the hospital. They gave me a shot. The swelling went down fast. I pray I never get stung again!

The Yellow and Black Villain

Bees have always terrified me, and it has always been my fear that I would be stung one day. Sadly, my worst fear came true today. Eager to get to the pool, I merrily skipped onto the grass. My friend was waving to me from the pool, and I was thrilled to see she had grabbed a pair of goggles for me. Then, without warning, a swarm of bees started buzzing around my head. Terrified, I began flailing my arms around, hoping they would fly away. I shrieked in horror and began to run back to the house. That's when I felt the excruciating pain! A bee had stung me right on the palm of my hand. As I screamed in anguish, my mother came running out to help me. She quickly helped me back into the house where she put ice on my swelling hand. My mother was very concerned about the swelling and decided to take me to the hospital. Once there, I received a shot, and the swelling went down almost immediately. With tears of relief streaming down my face, I prayed I would never be stung again.

The first paragraph is written with all simple sentences, making it a little boring to read. The second paragraph has a nice variety of sentence types and quite a few vivid verbs, lively adverbs, and descriptive adjectives, which make it much more interesting to read.

Playing with the words in your sentences:

Do you want your story to be interesting to read and to grab the attention of your readers? Then use a variety of sentence types in your writing. You also can try starting your sentences in different ways. Here are a few ideas for you to try:

- ***A verb ending in -ing or -ed:*** *Skipp**ing** through the woods, I soon realized I was lost. Scar**ed** by the train, the puppy hid behind the log.*
- ***Although:*** *Although she knew it was wrong, she told the lie anyway.*
- ***While:*** *While waiting for the bus, Susan realized her mother was gone.*
- ***As:*** *As we were leaving the church, the rain began to fall.*
- ***With (or without):*** *Without noticing, Eileen missed her exit.*
  With tears in her eyes, she told her husband the heartbreaking news.

Narrative Writing—Lesson 2 Assignments

When typing your assignments in Word, please make sure to use MLA format. Also, when you e-mail me your assignments, please make sure that the subject line on your e-mail includes your name, the class name (**NW**), and the assignment number or numbers.

Example: Subject: BrianS NW-2A
Or (if sending more than one)
Subject: BrianS NW-2B and 2C (and so on)

When you are sending in your revisions, make sure to include that in the subject as well (rev1 or rev2 or whichever revision number it is).

Example: Subject: BrianS NW-2D rev2

NW2A: Vocabulary For this week's vocabulary assignment, I would like you to choose two new vocabulary words from a book you are reading. *Make sure to choose words that you don't know the meaning of yet.* You will need to look up the definition, synonyms, and part of speech for each of your words. Your assignment is to type the following information into a Word document:

Word 1 (spelled correctly)
Definition (in your own words)
Synonyms
Part of speech
Sentence using the word correctly

Word 2 [Include all the same information for your second vocabulary word.]

Please name your assignment with your name and NW2A (make sure to save it as a .doc or .docx). **Remember to use MLA format**. E-mail this assignment to me as an attachment. *Example:* Brian_NW2A.doc

NW2B: Book Journal Continue making entries in your book journal. Reminder: *Journal entries need to be made at least two (2) times a week using one of the techniques described in Lesson 1 (double-entry or problem-solution).* Your assignment is to type one of your book journal entries into a Word document. Please make sure to tell me what book you are reading by using it as the title for your assignment. Please name your assignment with your name and NW2B (and make sure to save it as a .doc or .docx). **Remember MLA format**. E-mail this assignment to me as an attachment.

NW2C: Personal Event Journal Continue to make entries in your personal event journal. Review the entries you have made so far, as you might choose one of your entries as an idea for your autobiographical narrative (Assignment 2D). Reminder: *Journal entries need to be made at least two (2) times a week using one of the techniques described in Lesson 1 (double-entry or problem-solution).* Your assignment is to have one of your parents e-mail me to let me know that you wrote in your personal events journal twice this week.

NW2D: Autobiographical Narrative When completing this assignment, it will be very helpful for you to review all aspects of this lesson (but most importantly the section on writing an autobiographical narrative). Your assignment is to choose a recent event from your life and write about it. Please follow the steps on the next page to help you get started. You may also want to use the Five Steps in the Writing Process to guide you in writing your autobiographical narrative. Type your finished assignment in a Word document. Please name your assignment with your

name and NW2D (make sure to save it as a .doc or .docx). **Remember MLA format**. E-mail this assignment to me as an attachment.

Topic (choose one personal event to write about):

_____

Start by following these steps:
Step 1: Write your topic sentence. Remember, it needs to state the main idea of your paragraph.
Topic Sentence: _____

Step 2: Write your detail or supporting sentences. Start by making a list of all the important details that you want to share about your story, and then write a sentence for each detail. Make sure to put them in a logical order and try to start each sentence in a different way. **Need help?** Read over "Attention Grabbers" for ideas.
Detail Sentence: _____
Detail Sentence: _____
Detail Sentence: _____
Detail Sentence: _____
Detail Sentence: _____
Detail Sentence: _____
Detail Sentence: _____
Detail Sentence: _____

Step 3: Write a closing sentence. Remember, a closing sentence restates the main idea of your narrative.
Closing Sentence: _____

Step 4: Now you are ready to put all of your sentences into paragraph form. Make sure your sentences are in logical order. See the third step in the Writing Process (Revising) if you need help.

Step 5: Look over your autobiographical narrative and make any necessary edits. See the fourth step in the Writing Process (Editing) to remind yourself what you should check.

Step 6: Think of a creative title for your autobiographical narrative and make sure that your assignment is in MLA format. If you like, you may also add clip art or a picture to your assignment. See the fifth step in the Writing Process (Publishing) if you need help.