

Handouts

Teaching Elements of Personal Narrative Texts

Gateway Resource TPNT0002

Prewriting Graphic Organizers

Brainstorming Chart for Personal Narratives

List ideas based on your own experiences.

Special Places, Trips, or Vacations	Trials and Tribulations	First Time or Day
Triumphs or Proud Moments	Friendships	Family Traditions
Growing Up	Mistakes	Other Ideas

Narrowing the Focus of an Idea

Brainstorming Idea. *Select one brainstorming idea that is really important to you.*

List and Choose. *List specific things that you remember about this experience. Then read over your ideas. Pick one memory to write about and place a check mark in the corresponding box.*

Developing the Central Idea of a Personal Narrative

Narrowed Focus and Topic. *Write your singular, significant event or experience here.*

Important Details. *Visualize what happened. List several important details. Focus on your feelings, thoughts, and impressions.*

Significance. *What is the significance (importance) of this event or experience? What was its effect on you then and/or now?*

Central Idea. *Write the central idea of your personal narrative. The central idea should include the singular, significant event and why it is important or meaningful to you.*

Prewriting Model Lesson

Brainstorming Chart for Personal Narratives

Today we will begin writing a personal narrative. A personal narrative is about an event or experience in the writer's life that is important to the writer.

To help you think of some possible personal narrative topics, let's use the Brainstorming Chart for Personal Narratives to brainstorm some ideas.

Distribute copies of the chart. Display the chart on a projector.

The categories on the chart can help us recall experiences from our past. First, I will read each category on the chart. Then, I will start adding my ideas related to some of the categories.

Read the categories.

I have an idea for a personal narrative about family traditions. Every holiday season, my family and our neighbors look at holiday lights. Everyone squeezes into a van for our annual drive. I will write this idea, "look at holiday lights," in the Family Traditions category.

Have one or two students share ideas about their own family traditions. Tell students that they can add the ideas to their charts.

I also have an idea about a class trip to the museum. I think I will add this idea in the category Special Places, Trips, or Vacations. I will write "class trip to museum" on my chart.

Does anyone else have an idea for this category?

Ask one or two students to share their ideas. Continue to model and think aloud to brainstorm a few more ideas and then add them to your chart.

Now it is time for you to brainstorm some ideas for your chart. Write as many ideas as you can, but you do not have to include an idea for every category.

After approximately 5 minutes, have students share with a partner one or two of the ideas on their chart.

Narrowing the Focus of an Idea

Now you have some great ideas for topics of personal narratives. Remember, personal narratives should have a narrow focus or topic, rather than a large one. When you write a personal narrative, it is important to narrow your topic or focus before you begin writing.

Let's use the Narrowing the Focus of an Idea graphic organizer to help us narrow the focus of one of our ideas.

Distribute copies of the graphic organizer. Display the graphic organizer on a projector.

I will model how this graphic organizer can help me narrow my focus for one of the brainstorming ideas on my chart.

I first select one brainstorming idea that is really important to me. I write “class trip to museum” on my chart.

Now I will list specific things that I remember about this experience.

Write “long bus ride to city,” “lots of exhibits,” “picnic lunch at the park,” “IMAX movie,” and “the snake on the bus” on the graphic organizer.

Now I have some specific events from our class trip to the museum. I need to select which narrowed focus I will write about. I think I will write about the snake on the bus. I will place a check mark in the box in front of “the snake on the bus.”

Now look over the ideas on your brainstorming chart. Select an idea that really matters to you and write it on your graphic organizer. Then, tell your neighbor which idea you chose.

Allow 5 minutes.

Now you are ready to narrow your focus. List specific things that you remember about your experience. When you are finished, select the one that you want to write about. Place a check mark in the box in front of it.

Allow time for students to complete their graphic organizer. Have several students share.

Developing the Central Idea of a Personal Narrative

Narrowing the focus is important, but before you start writing, you also need to develop the central idea of your personal narrative. Let’s use the Developing the Central Idea of a Personal Narrative graphic organizer to help us determine the central idea.

Distribute copies of the graphic organizer. Display the graphic organizer on a projector.

First, I will write my narrowed focus on the chart: “the snake on the bus.” To develop a central idea, I need to visualize, or picture in my mind, exactly what happened. I will list these important details on the chart as I remember them.

List on the chart: “first-year teacher,” “field trip to the museum,” “halfway home with an hour more to go,” “several girls scream,” “snake is somewhere on the bus,” “Eric caught a grass snake at the picnic in the park,” “snake escaped from Eric’s backpack,” “everyone had to get off the bus,” “searched for 45 minutes,” and “found it hiding inside a paper bag under my seat.”

Now I need to consider the significance or importance of this experience and think about its effect on me then and now. Well, I will never forget this experience because it was both scary and funny. It also taught me a valuable lesson. I learned that, as a teacher, I should never assume anything and should always be prepared for the unexpected. I should always clarify expectations, including what qualifies as a souvenir!

Using this information, I know precisely what my personal narrative will be about. I will write the central idea on my chart.

Write: "Be prepared for the unexpected and clarify expectations for out-of-town field trips."

Let me check. Does my central idea include the singular, significant event I chose to write about? Yes, I am writing about finding a snake on the bus when coming home from an out-of-town field trip. Does my central idea include why it is important or meaningful to me? Yes, it states that I learned to be prepared for the unexpected and to clarify expectations.

Now develop the central idea for your personal narrative. First, write your narrowed focus on the chart.

Pause and monitor as students write their narrowed focus on the chart.

Now try to visualize what happened that day. List on the chart several important details that you remember.

Monitor and provide support as students list details. Allow 5 minutes.

Before you write your central idea, think about the following questions listed on your chart: What is the significance (importance) of this event or experience? What was its effect on you then and/or now? Then, discuss these questions with your partner.

Allow 2 minutes.

Now, on your chart, write the significance or importance of this event and its effect on you then or now.

Monitor and provide support.

You are ready to develop the central idea of your personal narrative. On your chart, write the central idea. Try to include the singular, significant event that you will write about and why it is important or meaningful to you.

Monitor and provide support. Have several students read their central ideas.