

How to Write A Narrative

WHAT IS A NARRATIVE?

- ❖ A narrative is a first person account of a personal experience or event in a writer's life.
- ❖ The narrative offers writers a chance to think and write about themselves, to explain how their experiences lead to some important realization or conclusion about their lives or about the world in general. Each of us has memories of times that have been meaningful, of times that have taught us lessons about ourselves or others. Through the narrative essay, we have the chance to record those experiences and show the new understanding we gained from those experiences.

HOW DO YOU PLAN A NARRATIVE?

- ❖ Two crucial first steps in planning a narrative essay are:
 1. *Selecting an incident worthy of development in a narrative.*
 2. *Finding the central, relevant point in that incident.* This relevant point becomes the thesis you will prove in your narrative because it provided new insights or awareness for you.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES AND CONVENTIONS OF THE NARRATIVE?

- ❖ Once you have chosen the subject for your narrative, you should keep the following principles in mind.
 1. Remember that ultimately you are writing an *essay*, not simply telling a story. You will have a beginning that includes a symbolic setting, a middle, and an end.
 2. Develop a thesis that links to what you learned from the personal experience.
 3. Remember to incorporate details of your story that not only support your thesis, but also engage your readers' imagination and make the story "real" for them as well.
- ❖ When writing your narrative essay, keep the following conventions in mind.
 1. Narratives are generally written in the first person singular, i.e., *I*. However, third person (*he*, *she*, or *it*) can also be used. Which person you use most often is a function of whose perspective is being captured in the narrative. If it's your story, use *I*; if it's a story about what happened to a friend, use *she*. That's logical and simple. However, be consistent. If you begin your narrative in the first person singular, use that throughout.
 2. Narratives rely on concrete, specific details to make their point. These details should create a clear impression. You need to make sure the reader can envision the action – see it happening.
 3. Narratives, as stories, should include these story conventions: a conflict/problem/ of question, a plot (so tell your readers what is happening), a setting (time, place, season) and characters; a climax (a peak experience often leading to the thesis, the important realization); and an ending (explaining how the incident resolved itself, also explaining how the narrative's thesis comes to its full realization).

Narrative Writing Checklist

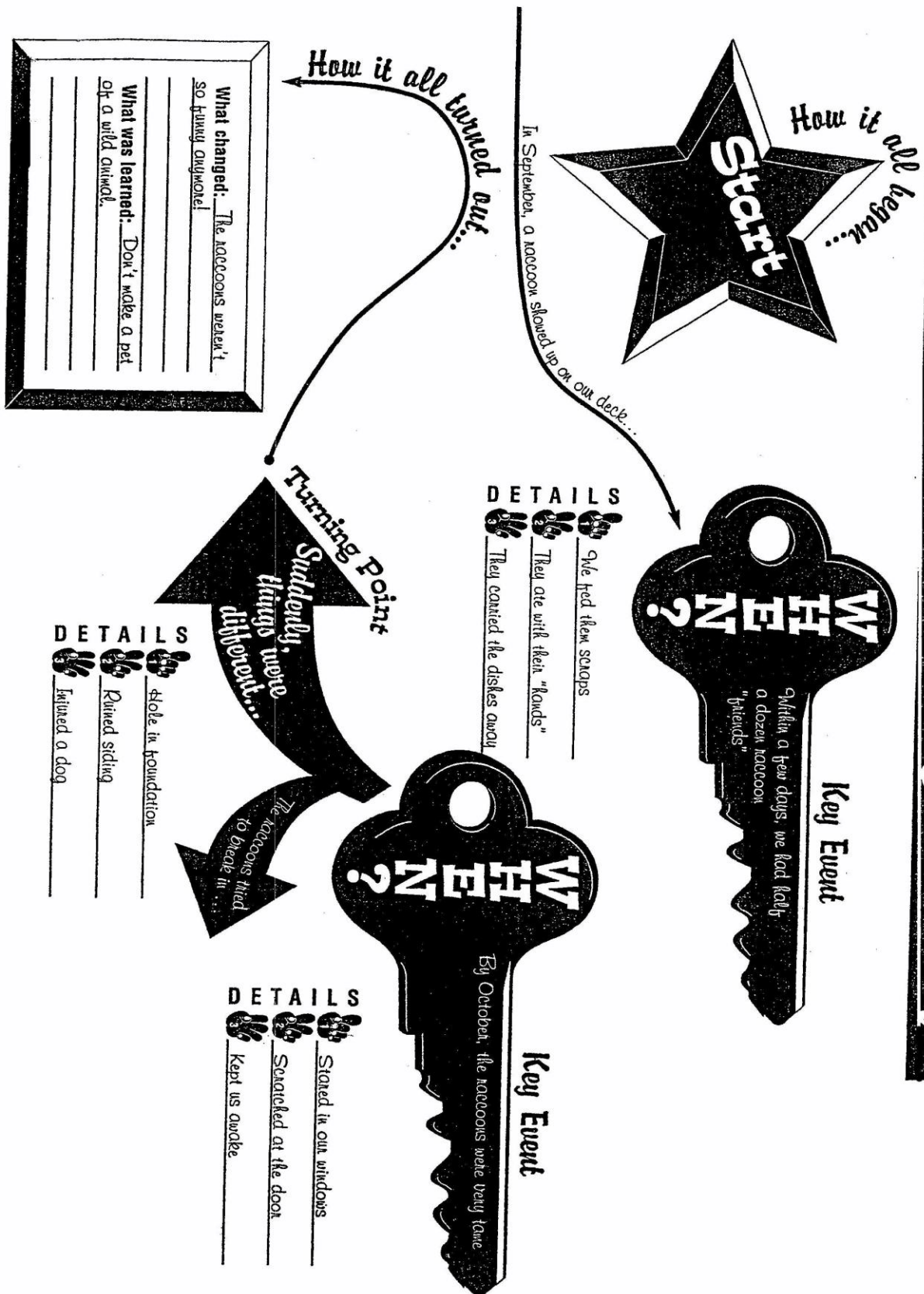
QUICK CHECK FOR THE WRITER

DID YOU ...

Do not use a question in your Hook, but insert a symbolic setting!

- _____ (Introduction) Start off with developing a symbolic setting in your lead sentence? Continue the with telling the story in the GDT leading up to your thesis?
- _____ (Body Paragraphs) Start with a lead sentence and develop each point in the thesis? Did you start with your conflict and build to your climax?
- _____ (Conclusion Paragraph) Make this either your climax and resolution, just the climax, or just the resolution if your climax is in your last body paragraph?
- _____ Figure out where/how your story really begins?
- _____ Open with a real lead that makes your reader want to keep reading?
- _____ Use transitional phrases instead of the normal essay transitions?
- _____ Center your story around a conflict, problem or question?
- _____ Figure out how (or whether) you will resolve the conflict, solve the problem or answer the question? (HINT: you do not HAVE to have a HAPPY ending- but you do need to tie up the loose ends!)
- _____ Let your reader know when and where your story takes place?
- _____ Make your characters seem real, not cardboard cutouts without feelings or thoughts?
- _____ Give your characters interesting things to say?
- _____ Show your character doing things that reveal what they are like?
- _____ Tell things in an order that makes sense and keeps the reader wanting to find out what happens next?
- _____ Skip over (or leave out) little boring details that do not matter?
- _____ Tell the reader everything he/ she needs to know to get the point of your story.
- _____ End your story in a good spot (showing how everything came out, but not going too long)? Show an event where you learned something?

INARRATIVE: Telling A Story



Power to Carry On

(Hook) During the sunny and rainy days of the past year, I experienced an ongoing struggle to acquire my black belt and often felt like quitting, yet continued and was satisfied in the end. (GDT) I was right to think that it would be somewhat difficult and I would have to be incredibly persistent to gain what I had strived for during the past five years. After attending ordinary classes to complete the twelve ranks before black belt and nine months of intense preparation, I witnessed what was probably the hardest most substantial test of my life at Santa Clara University and learned a valuable lesson. (Thesis) Although I often felt like relinquishing during the boot camp, the actual black belt test, and endurance part, I discovered that if I persevere with what I do, I will eventually succeed and be rewarded for pushing forward.

(TS) After going to nearly five years of Tai Kwon Do classes, twice a week, I was required to attend a training system at my karate center on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and additionally Saturday rain or shine during a nine month time period. (1st Pt.) On the weekdays, my brother, sister, and I would arrive at the location at approximately five o'clock in the afternoon to work out and practice our curriculum for a few hours. (Ex.) As soon as the class began, we would rake a one to two mile run around the neighborhood near our karate's location to become fit for the corporal exertion of the exam. I could feel my heart pounding and sweat dripping down my face as my feet repeatedly beat the sidewalk. I truly desired to stop, sit down, drink some water, and rest for a while, but I kept going because I knew I must get in shape for the test. When we got back to the school, we would practice boxing, kicking, Tae Kwon Do forms, and the Korean language behind the school in a parking lot area over and over again for a couple of hours. At times, I felt frustrated being present all the long hours of attempting to focus on nothing except for karate; however, I was aware that I should continue in order to obtain my black belt. (2nd Pt.) When Saturday finally came, I would go in the afternoon to do mostly endurance exercises, however, also go over curriculum, and check over the journals we recorded in over the course of the week. (Ex.) I would go in the mid-afternoon to the site of the association and jog two miles nonstop in the chilly air on the wet ground. After exercising in the unfavorable weather, we would arrive at the park nearby to do obstacle courses on the damp grass and metal playground to condition our bodies and get them into shape. As I executed pull-ups on the monkey bars, I would tell myself to get my chin all the way over the bar before coming back down. When I was bounding up the stairs two at a time, I thought that it was essential that I reach the top. As I sprinted across the muddy field with flecks of dirt and drops of water flying up around me, I realized that I must get to the edge. When I was leaning with my back against a wall, my knees bent at a ninety-degree angle, and my thighs feeling as if they were on fire, I thought to myself, "undergo just a few more minutes of pain." Although I was in agony and the bodily training was torturous, with my determined outlook and my instructors encouraging me, I was not capable of simply giving up. When we went back to the school, we would go over our material for a couple of hours. At the very end, our instructors would verify if we noted what we ate, how long we slept, how much we exercised, and what we needed to do better over the course of the week. Occasionally, I would not write in my journal, and was punished with a penalty of one hundred pushups. (CS) There fore, attending boot camp challenged my patience and skill, yet I learned to be resolute in what I do.

(TS) When it came to the black belt test at Santa Clara University, I had to struggle to complete various tasks so that I would be evaluated on my performance and if I did well, be awarded my black belt at the end. (1st Pt.) On the morning of the examination, I was scrutinized and critiqued on the material I had been studying for the past nine months and before that for five years. (Ex.) I was placed in front of a judge to be assessed on my actions and hopefully earn my black belt. As I demonstrated all that I had been taught to the best of my abilities, I sensed my superior's eyes boring into me and I wondered if I was doing well or if he was going to fail me. I wanted to prove myself, escape from this judgmental person, the scornful look about him, and was becoming exhausted from the physical toil. However, I expelled these depressing thoughts from my consciousness and maintained presenting the most excellence that I was capable of showing. (2nd Pt.) During the sparring and board-breaking portion of the test in the late morning, I had to look deep within myself for the strength to carry on. (Ex.) When it came to the fighting element of the test, the previous part was taking its toll on my energy, and I had to push myself to go on. We put pads on all over our bodies to protect ourselves and fought seven one minute long rounds of nonstop combat. Some of the people that I was up against were a couple on feet taller than me and kicked quite a bit more firmly. My breathing become ragged as I hailed constant blows on them and one girl caught me off guard, hit me square in the gut with a kick, knocked the wind out of me, and I fell to the ground. I felt slightly defeated wanted to just to lie there as the air drained from my lungs, but my anger and persistent attitude took over and I got up on my feet and fought as hard as I could, whacking her on the side of the head and kicking her with solid hits to the chest. When it was time for board breaking, the first couple of tries I could not break through the barrier with my foot, but I felt determined to succeed and snapped it in half. (CS) Thus, the judging and contest sections were impediments that I came across and overcame with instinctive fortitude during the black belt test.

(TS) During the last conditioning component of the exam, I had a tough time doing pushups, sit-ups, and squat-thrusts as well as the running portion outside on the field yet stuck with it and was proud of myself afterward. (1st Pt.) On that summer night, as the test was coming to its finish, we had to do exercises such as pushups, sit-ups, and squat-thrusts, which were at times not easy for me to keep going on or complete. (Ex.) Subsequent to the evaluation, we were tested on our physical fitness during six minutes of pure agony. Inside the vast gym on the campus of the university, we did one minute of pushups, rested, one minute of sit-ups, rested, then did one minute of an exercise called squat-thrusts when one bends down, extends their legs out behind them, brings their legs back in towards their chest, and then jumps up a high as possible. Subsequent to this, I did three minutes of the same exercises nonstop including one minute of pushups, sit-ups, and squat-thrusts. I was nearly to tears as a result of the sheer pain, yet I knew that I had already come this far and must not give in. (2nd Pt.) I felt like stopping completely later in the evening when we went outside to do aerobic cardiovascular exercises, however, I needed to keep going to receive the full benefit of the test which was my black belt and a feeling of accomplishment. (Ex.) By that time, I was entirely drained of energy and the freezing air outside was not very comforting as we walked out to test endurance. I had to crawl on my hands and feet with my back facing the ground for twenty-five yards, scurry with my hands and feet on the ground and my rear in the air as quickly as possible for twenty-five yards, and then run around the field back to where I started before repeating this twice more. All the while I felt extremely worn out and was ready to relinquish, but I reminded myself that it was almost over and I must finish the test. During the final victory lap, I had to army crawl through the soaking grass and mud with my arms moving one in front of the other and my legs pushing behind me across the field before running around it through a gate towards the audience. It was that moment that I realized that I had achieved my goal. I saw everyone cheering for me and flashing pictures of the testers and a wave of relief swept over me as it settled into my mind that I was done. (CS) Although it was complicated during conditioning, I did not give in for the last part and received my black belt.

(RT) In the end, I struggled to keep going with the preparation before the black belt examination, the test itself, and the physical conditioning; however, in the process I gained the knowledge to never surrender. (Summary) If one sticks with what they are doing, they will find the results to be exceptionally pleasing. Nonetheless, if they decide not to even attempt something extraordinary, they will come to realize that their lives are somewhat dreary since they did not exert themselves for any cause or accomplishment. (Clincher) As a wise man once said, "I did not want to come to the end of my life and find out that I had not lived," and that is an amicable way to plot the future for me.