

The Locked Locker

Writing a Nonfiction Narrative

About the Lesson

This lesson presents students with directions for writing a nonfiction narrative and with an example of one. The sample narrative is a true story of an emotional situation in the life of a middle schooler. The lesson ends with students writing a nonfiction narrative.

Targeted Learner Outcomes

The student will:

- learn the elements and steps for writing a nonfiction narrative, and
- write a nonfiction narrative.

- 1 Start the lesson with a definition of a nonfiction narrative along with instructions for writing one. Go over the steps in class to be certain students understand each.
- 2 The tale of the woes of a boy (and his mother) in trying to solve an embarrassing problem with his locker is presented in chronological order. You might mention that some works in this genre incorporate flashbacks and are not strictly chronological.
- 3 After getting so much instruction about writing a nonfiction narrative, students can begin writing the first drafts without referring too much to the directions for writing the narrative. Then, when they have finished their first drafts, they can go back and look at the directions and the example.

You might also review the elements of a narrative at that time:

Purpose: The primary purpose of a narrative is to recreate an experience so vividly that the reader shares it. You may also want to make a point about people, institutions, or an abstract idea such as fate or luck.

Theme or Story: What is the overall theme of the narrative?

Audience: Who will be reading your narrative? What are they like?

Events: What are the events or actions and who are the characters that make up your narrative?

Point of View: Choose a voice to convey point of view. The first person and the third person (limited or all-knowing) are commonly used.

Plan: In most cases the plan will be organized chronologically.

Revision: Examine your first draft with a critical eye. Look to see if you've presented the events with continuity. It helps a great deal to have someone read your second draft in an objective way. Consider the trial reader's comments and criticisms in writing a final draft. Ask yourself if you are satisfied with the final draft.

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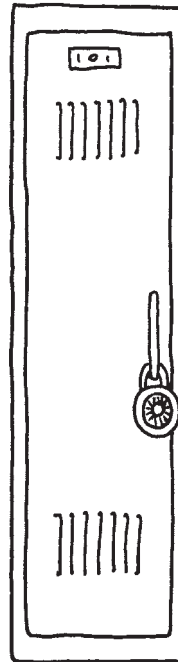


Name _____ Date _____

- 1 A nonfiction narrative describes a series of events. Some events can be omitted, and some events may get a fuller treatment than others. The essential purpose of the narrative is to allow the reader to follow the events and get a sense of having gone along on the journey or of having had the experience. Because the narrative is usually written in chronological order, it is easy to plan.

Directions

1. Determine your purpose in writing in narrative. Get a clear notion of why you are doing the narrative and express the idea in one sentence.
2. Determine which voice you will use—*I* or *we*, *you*, or *he/she/they*. Generally the first or third person is used. Once you begin to use one of the voices, stay with it until the end of your narrative.
3. Determine the length of the narrative by making a list of scenes and events.
4. Write a rough draft.
5. Read what you have written. Is it too long? Is it detailed enough to convey what you want to convey? Does it move at a good pace? Is it clear? Is your writing understandable?
6. Correct obvious errors.
7. Rewrite the narrative.
8. Look critically at your second draft. Look for mechanics, consistency, clarity, development, and total effect.
9. Have someone read the second draft.
10. Discuss the trial reader's suggestions and criticisms with him or her.
11. Write your final draft in light of those suggestions and criticisms.



Name _____ Date _____

- 2 Following is an example of a narrative, the story of a boy's first days in a new school.

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Introductory statement/foreshadowing

This is what happened to a friend of mine—I won't tell his name—when he came to our school last year. My friend almost quit school because of a locker.

First Episode

Before his first day of school, my friend and his mother visited the school. His mother thought it would be a good idea to see what the school was like because they had just moved into town. My friend learned that all students have their own lockers, and he was given the number of his locker and its combination. His mother suggested that they examine the locker because on the first day of the following week he would have to be able to open it. Because he had never opened a locker with a combination lock, my friend was nervous about it. Sure enough, he wasn't able to open the lock. His mother helped him, and they finally were able to open the lock. My friend's weekend thoughts of school were poisoned by fears that he wouldn't be able to open his locker on Monday.

Second Episode

When the dreaded day arrived, he reached his locker a half-hour before the bell was to ring for the first class and struggled with the combination lock for several minutes. When the other students started to crowd around him, opening their lockers, he gave up and went to class. In the first three periods he was given three textbooks and three assignments. During the noon recess he tried unsuccessfully to open his locker again. Red-faced, he went to the office to make sure he had the correct combination. The assistant principal went with my friend to make certain the lock was operating all right. It was. He put his books into the locker and went to lunch. After the noon hour ended, however, he couldn't open the locker. He went home feeling awful.

Third Episode

Fourth Episode

Fifth Episode

Sixth Episode

After telling his mother that he couldn't open the locker, my friend went to his room, but he couldn't do his homework because his books were in the locker at school. When his teachers asked for the completed assignments on Tuesday, my friend wasn't able to hand anything in to them. He went home terribly depressed. "Why don't you have another student help you?" asked his mother when she learned of her son's predicament. My friend said he would ask someone. But because he hadn't made any friends at school yet, he knew that he wouldn't.

Name _____ Date _____

Seventh Episode

On Wednesday he was embarrassed when two of his teachers asked their students to read sections from their textbooks and his were still in his locker. He thought about going to the assistant principal again, but he couldn't bring himself to ask for help. The assistant principal hadn't been unfriendly the day before, but he hadn't been particularly kind either. My friend's only thoughts that evening were of never going to school again.

Eighth Episode

When his mother came home from work, she knew immediately that her son hadn't been able to open his locker. The door to his room was closed, and there were no books on the kitchen table. Being an understanding woman, she didn't press him about the problem. After giving it a lot of thought that evening, she came up with a plan. She'd rehearse opening the locker with him at home until the whole operation was second nature to him. She cut out two pieces of cardboard, wrote numbers on the larger piece, and put them together with a pin, making something that would work like a combination lock. After a good deal of her coaxing, my friend consented to practice moving the small piece of cardboard to the numbers on the larger piece, following the sequence of numbers on a now-crumpled piece of paper. She discovered his problem—he was turning it clockwise when he should be turning it counterclockwise, and vice versa.

Ninth Episode

Final Episode

Now there was only one more thing she could do to help my friend, but it was risky. Nevertheless, at 6:30 A.M. she drove him to school. Except for a back door leading from the main building to the playground, all the doors were locked. The custodian was in the boiler room having a cup of coffee, so he didn't see a lady and a boy sneak into the building from the rear and head for the lockers in the hall. With his mother watching anxiously, my friend opened his lock the first time. Relieved, she went back home to have a second cup of coffee. He took his books and went to the restroom.

Meaning

That guy's lucky to have such a great mom.

- 3 Think about a series of events that is true and that has happened to you or to someone you know. Jot down the events on a separate sheet of paper and then write a rough draft of the narrative. Make sure that you have presented enough information so that your readers will have no trouble in following your tale.