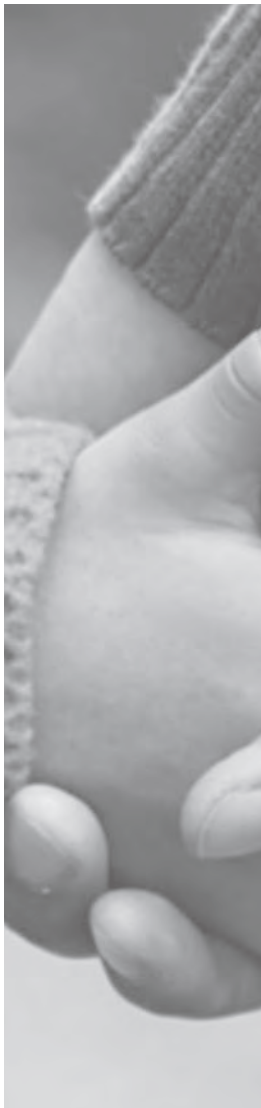
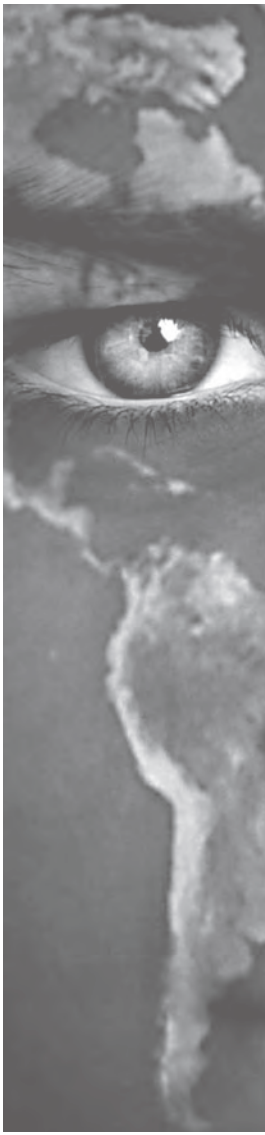
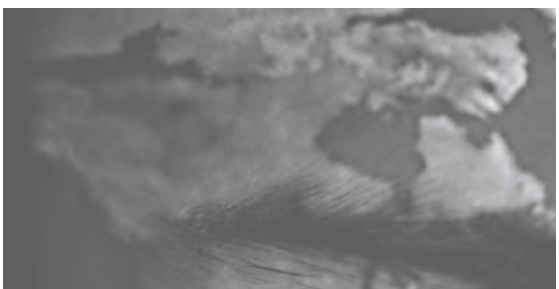
UNIT TWO *Family Ties*



UNIT THREE *The Forces of Nature*

UNIT FOUR *Other Worlds*



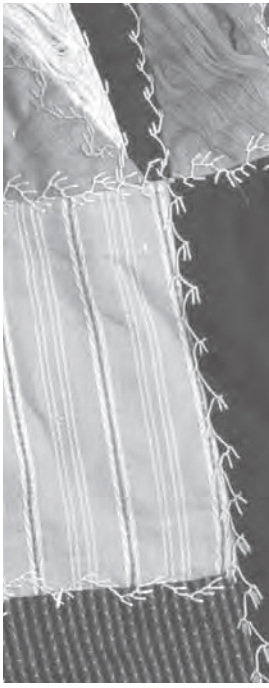


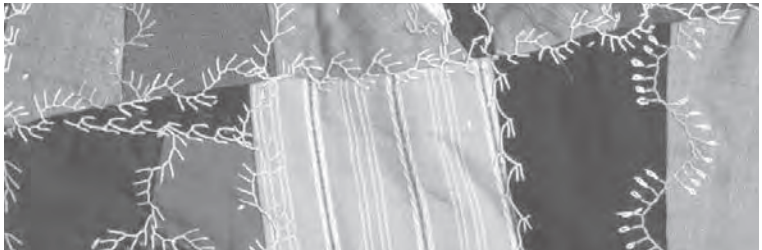
UNIT FIVE Crossing Borders

UNIT SIX *Echoes from the Past*

UNIT SEVEN *The Dark Side*

UNIT EIGHT *What Has Value?*





Understanding Fiction

Short Stories and Novels

The two main types of fiction are short stories and novels. How do they differ? Short stories can usually be read in one sitting, have fewer characters, and take place in a limited setting. They generally have just one theme, unlike a novel, which is multi-themed. Both types of fiction contain the following basic elements.

Plot The plot is the action of a story—what happens in it. As one old saying has it, the writer gets the hero up a tree and then gets him back down again. A good plot shows how one event leads to another, which causes another, and so on until the story ends. A problem or **conflict** is needed to move the story forward. No "trouble" equals "no story"!

But fictional conflict doesn't necessarily mean things blowing up. In fiction, a conflict means that the main character wants something, and someone or something is in the way of getting it. The "opponent" can be anything from a raging hurricane to a picky math teacher. And some conflicts occur from within. Perhaps the main character wants to be popular, but his or her basic nature—shy and awkward—makes that goal difficult. Inner conflicts can be the worst kind.

In a well-made story, the conflict builds until there is a **climax**, or high point of the action. Here the bully is confronted, or the inner demon is conquered. In the story's **resolution**, the conflict sorts itself out.

Character As a reader, you keep turning the pages of stories mainly because you are interested in what happens to the characters. Writers create believable characters by describing their actions, speech, thoughts, feelings, and interactions with others. There are **round characters**—characters who are drawn realistically and seem capable of change—and **flat characters**, who are undeveloped.

Setting A story's setting includes the time period and location in which the events of the plot occur. A setting can actually influence the plot and characters, sometimes even becoming a character itself. When nature is given human characteristics—an angry sea, a forbidding forest—setting is being used as a character.

Theme The theme is the underlying meaning or message of a story. A *story* is about a particular character and what happens to him or her. The *theme* of the story is more universal. Usually, the theme is not directly stated. The reader must interpret what the author is saying through careful reading and analysis.

Understanding Nonfiction

Nonfiction sounds like it might be the opposite of fiction, or that it might be anything *other* than fiction. In fact, much nonfiction uses many of the tools of fiction—vivid storytelling, characters, and settings—to write about true things. Like fiction, it relies on specific details, colorful images, and sometimes dialogue to make the writing come to life. Although it often reads like fiction, everything in it is expected to be true.

Nonfiction includes writing about the sciences, arts and culture, sports, adventure, travel, family, and personal life. Memoirs, biographies, and even literary book reviews fall under the heading of nonfiction. It comes in the shape of essays, diaries, and excerpts from longer works and can be either formal or informal. The most common kinds of nonfiction are listed below.

Autobiography An autobiography is the story of someone's life, written by the person him- or herself. Events in the writing are true, but they are colored by the author's memory as well as by the writer's wish to look "good" to readers. Autobiographers can emphasize incidents or leave them out entirely depending on the impression they want to create.

Biography This is also a true story about a person's life, but it is written by someone else. Usually, biographers do a great deal of research on their subject before they begin to write.

Essay An essay is a short, multi-paragraph piece of writing that focuses on one topic or idea. Much of the writing you do for school will be essay writing. Essays differ depending on the writer's purpose. Some are **persuasive** and try to convince others to change their mind about an issue and accept the writer's point of view. **Personal** essays are informal pieces that present the writer's thoughts and feelings. An **expository** essay is more formal in tone and structure. The purpose of this type of essay is to present information and ideas.

Articles Articles may be long, short, humorous, serious, formal, or informal. Their purpose is to provide factual information to the reader. Examples include newspaper and magazine articles and entries in encyclopedias.

Nonfiction writing is a product of the writers' unique voices and the choices they make when presenting their subjects. If two people write an essay about the same topic, the results will probably be very different. Imagine two essayists describing a chili cook-off. One writer thinks the event is absurd; the other takes it to heart. The first writer focuses on chili's weirdest ingredients—such as chocolate—and pokes fun at how seriously the competitors take themselves. The second writer depicts the event as a cooking Olympics of creativity.

Understanding Drama

While plays are written to be performed, and this is certainly the best way to enjoy them, you can still experience drama by reading it. This is a great way to practice your visualizing skills. As you read a play, try to see the characters moving through the scenery and imagine how they sound.

In a good play, nothing is left to chance. Each character, change of scene, and line of dialogue is chosen carefully. Plays are more narrowly focused than novels and movies, with fewer characters, less action, and usually one dominant theme. Here are the main elements of drama.

Cast of Characters The list of a play's characters is found at the beginning of a play. The playwright might add the briefest description; for example: **Lord Capulet,** *Juliet's father.* When you are reading the play, refer back to the cast of characters as often as necessary until you are familiar with everyone.

Acts and Scenes An act is a large division of a full-length play, sometimes separated from the other act or acts by an intermission. A scene is a section of the play that occurs in one time and place. Each act may have one or several scenes. As you read a scene, try to visualize the set as well as the characters on the stage.

Dialogue Dialogue refers to the words that characters speak to each other. In drama, great characters are defined by the quality of their dialogue—the juicier, the better. In a script, a character's words directly follow his or her name. This manuscript style helps the actors learn and keep their lines straight. When you are reading a character's lines, try to imagine what that person looks like and how he or she might speak.

Stage Directions Stage directions are exactly that—instructions for the people who are putting on the play. The directions are usually printed in italic type. They describe the setting and tell actors where and how to move or say their lines. Some playwrights like to provide detailed descriptions of the scenery, lighting, costumes, and sound. Others leave such decisions for the play's director, actors, and production crew. Don't skip the stage directions when you are reading a play—they provide valuable information about the playwright's intent.

Understanding Poetry

A poem expresses ideas and feelings in a compact form. To get to the heart of a poem's meaning, ask yourself questions like these:

- Who is writing this, and to whom? What does the **title** mean, and what is the **subject**? What is the **setting**?
- What **word choices** does the poet make? Might some words be **symbols**?
- What **imagery**, or word pictures, does the poem contain?
- What **theme** does it all suggest—what central idea?
- What **sound devices** occur?

When you first look at a poem, notice its shape. Unlike prose, a poem's lines don't always stop or start at the margins of a standard page. Where each line ends is a clue to how it is supposed to sound. A poem is often made up of **stanzas:** rhythmical units of lines. The stanzas in a poem generally have lines with a similar rhyme pattern.

Rhyme refers to identical or similar sounds that are repeated (hat/cat/rat). Rhymes are the music of poetry, a source of play for the poet and delight for the reader. And while rhyme is an important feature of older verse, many modern poems do not have any rhyme at all.

Rhythm means a repeated pattern of beats or accents ("SHE sells SEA shells, DOWN by the SEA shore").

Comparisons are important to poetry, especially **personification**, **metaphors**, and **similes**. This **figurative language** allows words to mean something other than their literal definition. A rose is almost never just a rose in poetry. When in bloom, it may be compared to a sweetheart's beauty. And when it is withered, poetically speaking, it may refer to death.

After considering the words and meaning of any poem, you need to look at its "mechanics." **Sound devices** are techniques used to create rhythm and emphasize certain sounds in a poem. Some of the most common include:

- **Alliteration** The repetition of similar letters or sounds at the beginning of close words. **P**eter **P**iper **p**icked a **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**eppers. **W**arm, **w**et, **w**alks are **w**onderful.
- **Assonance** The repetition of vowel sounds in stressed syllables. The **time** is **ripe** for this a**ssign**ment.
- **Consonance** The repetition of consonant sounds in stressed syllables. Bra***d*** ha***d*** a har***d*** hea***d***. Sti***r*** the batte***r***, mothe***r***.
- **Onomatopoeia** A word that imitates the sound it represents. Buzz, whiz, shush, kerplunk.
- **Repetition** The technique of using repeated elements in a poem to give it rhythm. A **refrain** is a repeated line or a stanza.

UNIT ONE

Rites of Passage

He looked down into the blue well of water. He knew he must find his way through that cave, or hole, or tunnel, and out the other side.

Doris Lessing, from "Through the Tunnel"

TOWARDS THE HILL, Ken Danby, 1967

BEFORE YOU READ

The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant Oranges

Meet the Authors

W. D. Wetherell Wetherell was born in 1948. He lives with his family in Lyme, New Hampshire, near the banks of the Connecticut River—the river that forms the border between New Hampshire and Vermont, the river in the story "The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant." He has written several books—novels, collections of short stories, nonfiction—as well as travel articles that have appeared in *The New York Times*. His lifelong fondness for the Connecticut River inspired him to create the anthology *This American River: Five Centuries of Writing About the Connecticut River.* He is also active in local and regional efforts to protect the river.

Gary Soto Mexican American writer and poet Gary Soto (born 1952) grew up in a poor neighborhood in Fresno, California. He turned to writing when he was a freshman at Fresno State University, where he discovered the power of contemporary writers and poets. He has never stopped writing. One of his most recent projects is a collection of love poems for adolescents called *Partly Cloudy: Poems of Love and Longing.* For more on Gary Soto, see page 390.

Build Background: Coming-of-Age Stories

In a coming-of-age story, the main character undergoes an adventure or some inner struggle that is part of the character's growth and development. Sometimes the adventures are violent and teach cruel lessons about how the world works. Sometimes the struggles are internal, involving only the character, the choices he or she makes, and lessons learned as a result of the choices.

The story you are about to read is a coming-of-age story. In it, a fourteen-year-old boy experiences a dramatic but hidden struggle between something he cares about and something he thinks he wants.

- At what times have you hidden your own feelings or interests because you were afraid of what others might think?
- Think of times you have been torn between something you always enjoyed as a child and some new interest.

The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant

W. D. WETHERELL

THE BASS, THE RIVER, AND SHEILA MANT

W. D. Wetherell

There was a summer in my life when the only creature that seemed lovelier to me than a largemouth bass was Sheila Mant. I was fourteen. The Mants had rented the cottage next to ours on the river; with their parties, their frantic games of softball, their constant comings and goings, they appeared to me **denizens** of a brilliant existence.

denizens inhabitants

"Too noisy by half," my mother quickly decided, but I would have given anything to be invited to one of their parties, and when my parents went to bed I would sneak through the woods to their hedge and stare enchanted at the candlelit swirl of white dresses and bright, paisley skirts.

Sheila was the middle daughter—at seventeen, all but out of reach. She would spend her days sunbathing on a float my Uncle Sierbert had moored in their cove, and before July was over I had learned all her moods. If she lay flat on the diving board with her hand trailing idly in the water, she was **pensive**, not to be disturbed. On her side, her head propped up by her arm, she was observant, considering those around her with a look that seemed queenly and severe. Sitting up, arms tucked around her long, suntanned legs, she was approachable, but barely, and it was only in those glorious moments when she stretched herself prior to entering the water that her various suitors found the courage to come near.

pensive dreamily thoughtful

These were many. The Dartmouth heavyweight crew[1] would **scull** by her house on their way upriver, and I think all eight of them must have been in love with her at various times during the summer; the coxswain[2] would curse at them though his megaphone, but without effect—there was always a pause in their pace when they passed Sheila's float. I suppose to these **jaded** twenty-year-olds, she seemed the incarnation of innocence and youth, while to me she appeared unutterably suave, the **epitome** of sophistication. I was on the swim team at school, and to win her attention would do endless laps between my house and the Vermont shore, hoping she would notice the beauty of my

scull row

jaded made dull or cynical by experience

epitome ideal example

1 **Dartmouth heavyweight crew:** one of the rowing teams at Dartmouth College

2 **coxswain:** team captain

flutter kick, the power of my crawl. Finishing, I would boost myself up onto our dock and glance casually over toward her, but she was never watching, and the miraculous day she was, I immediately climbed the diving board and did my best tuck and a half for her and continued diving until she had left and the sun went down, and my longing was like a madness and I couldn't stop.

It was late August by the time I got up the nerve to ask her out. The tortured will-I's, won't-I's, the agonized indecision over what to say, the false starts toward her house and embarrassed retreats—the details of these have been seared from my memory, and the only part I remember clearly is emerging from the woods toward dusk while they were playing softball on their lawn, as bashful and frightened as a unicorn.

Sheila was stationed halfway between first and second, well outside the infield. She didn't seem surprised to see me—as a matter of fact, she didn't seem to see me at all.

Sheila was stationed halfway between first and second, well outside the infield. She didn't seem surprised to see me—as a matter of fact, she didn't seem to see me at all.

"If you're playing second base, you should move closer," I said.

She turned—I took the full brunt of her long red hair and well-spaced freckles.

"I'm playing outfield," she said, "I don't like the responsibility of having a base."

"Yeah, I can understand that," I said, though I couldn't. "There's a band in Dixford tomorrow night at nine. Want to go?"

One of her brothers sent the ball sailing over the left fielder's head; she stood and watched it disappear toward the river.

"You have a car?" she said, without looking up.

I played my master stroke. "We'll go by canoe."

I spent all of the following day polishing it. I turned it upside down on our lawn and rubbed it with chamois until it gleamed as bright as aluminum ever gleamed. About five, I slid it in the water, arranging cushions near the bow so Sheila could lean on them if she was in one of her pensive moods, propping up my father's transistor radio by the middle thwart[3] so we could have music when we came back. Automatically, without thinking about it, I mounted my Mitchell reel on my Pfleuger spinning rod and stuck it in the stern.

3 **thwart:** seat in a canoe

POETRY CONNECTION

Oranges

GARY SOTO

The first time I walked
With a girl, I was twelve,
Cold, and weighted down
With two oranges in my jacket.
December. Frost cracking
Beneath my steps, my breath
Before me, then gone,
As I walked toward
Her house, the one whose
Porch light burned yellow
Night and day, in any weather.
A dog barked at me, until
She came out pulling
At her gloves, face bright
With rouge. I smiled,
Touched her shoulder, and led
Her down the street, across
A used car lot and a line
Of newly planted trees,
Until we were breathing
Before a drugstore. We
Entered, the tiny bell
Bringing a saleslady
Down a narrow aisle of goods.
I turned to the candies
Tiered like bleachers,
And asked what she wanted—
Light in her eyes, a smile
Starting at the corners

AFTER YOU READ

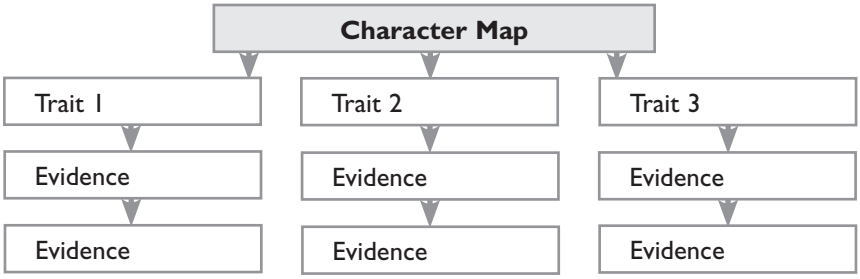
The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant / Oranges

Think and Discuss

1. Wetherell wrote, "A story isn't about a moment in time, a story is about *the* moment in time." Which moment in time is this story about?

2. The passage from childhood to adulthood involves learning many lessons—about yourself, about others, and about the world. What lesson does the main character learn in "The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant"?

3. Think about the two **characters** in the story: the narrator and Sheila Mant. In your Writer's Notebook, create a character map similar to the one below for each character. You may find you need to add more traits for the narrator's map and fewer for Sheila's map.



4. "The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant" is a **first-person narrative**. What are the advantages of having the main character tell his own story?

5. Think about times you have you faced a choice between two appealing options. What and how did you choose?

6. What "rite of passage" do both "The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant" and "Oranges" represent?

Write to Understand: Character Sketch

Use your character map for the narrator to write a character sketch. Your sketch should tell the most important traits of the narrator and how these traits are revealed through his thoughts and actions. When you've finished your character sketch, exchange your work with a partner. Discuss any differences in the traits you and your partner identified.

Writers on Writing

BEFORE YOU READ

Introduction to *Shelf Life*

Meet the Author: Gary Paulsen

Gary Paulsen (born 1939) is one of the best-known authors of books for young people. He lived for many years in the woods of northern Minnesota. A love of outdoor adventure led Paulsen to compete in two Iditarod dog sled races. He learned firsthand how to survive in the wilderness, a theme that plays out in many of his works. In his 175 books and more than 200 articles and short stories, Paulsen draws on a wide range of life experience for his material. He was at different times a carnival worker, an engineer, a ranch hand, and a sailor. But no work has meant more to him than his work as a writer, to which he often gives 18 to 20 hours a day.

Build Background: A "Write" of Passage

Gary Paulsen credits books with saving his life, of getting him through the passage from his difficult childhood into the world beyond his family. He is so grateful for the salvation he found in both reading and writing books that he has committed himself to promoting a love of the written word among adolescents. As part of that effort, Paulsen asked well-known authors to write a story for a new collection of short stories, with only one rule: the story had to include mention of a book. The selection that follows is the introduction to that collection, which is called *Shelf Life: Stories by the Book*.

- What books or stories have transported you from your everyday life into a world that you could lose yourself in as you read?
- How do you feel about yourself as a writer? Give examples.

Gary Paulsen and his dogs

Introduction to *Shelf Life*

GARY PAULSEN

A Writer's WORKSHOP

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

In this unit you have read about young people and their feelings as they approach adulthood. In the autobiographical narratives, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; page 15, "Vegetarian Enough," page 51; *My Forbiden Face*, page 63; and Shelf Life, page 83) you have had a chance to get to know about who the writer is deep inside. Now you have a chance to share a little of yourself with readers as you write your own autobiographical narrative.

Prewriting

REVIEWING IDEAS

The writing you've done so far in your Writer's Notebook includes possible ideas for an autobiographical narrative. Review what you have written to see which idea grabs you the most. A good subject for an autobiographical narrative is an incident:

- with a clear beginning, middle, and ending that shows how you made a passage of some kind and grew as a person or learned an important lesson
- that will allow readers to get a good sense of who you are.

If you don't find an incident in your Writer's Notebook that you want to write about, brainstorm other incidents from your life that might work well as the subject of an autobiographical narrative.

FREEWRITING TO DEVELOP DETAILS

Once you have chosen an incident for your narrative, write down everything you can remember about what happened. Include all of the people involved, the place, the time, and every other detail you can think of. Write freely without worrying about form or mistakes.

Sample Freewriting

I'm going to write about the time my sister and I went to the Bellwood Avenue shopping area by ourselves for the first time. It must have been spring because I remember my father's muddy boots when he came to pick us up. We went to the dimestore—I remember I bought a pencil case with my allowance money. I don't remember what Marsha bought. Marsha felt very grown up being in charge of me. I was wearing my favorite blue . . .

Organizing Ideas

Look over your freewriting. Circle each event in the story. Then copy and complete the framework below in your Writer's Notebook.

The passage you made or lesson learned	
Setting	
Event that begins narrative	
Next important event in narrative	
Next important event in narrative	
Event that ends the narrative	
What narrative shows about you	

Drafting

Use your chart to write a first draft. Also look back over the notes you made about other details you remember from this incident. Add these to your narrative to make it come alive and to show its importance to you. Use dialogue to reveal character.

Cooperative Learning: Peer Review

Pair up with a partner and exchange drafts. Discuss the strengths of your partner's draft as well as ways it can be improved. Be open to your partner's suggestions for improving your work.

Revising and Editing

Use your partner's comments to help you evaluate and revise your narrative. Keep revising until you are happy with your draft. Then check your work for errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

Using Word Processing

The most fundamental strategies for revising are *adding, deleting, substituting*, and *rearranging*. With a word processor, you can easily add, delete, substitute, or rearrange your ideas while revising by using the Cut and Paste functions. Highlight what you want to change. Then choose Cut (or Copy) from the Edit menu. If you choose Copy, position your cursor where you want to insert your highlighted text and choose Paste from the Edit menu. Save different versions of your work under different file names, such as autobiography1 and autobiography2. You can then compare them side by side as you continue to think of ways to improve your writing.

Reading with an Editor's Eye

In narrative writing, transitional words and phrases help readers follow the passing of time. Here are some of the words and phrases Gary Paulsen uses as he recounts his early experience with books and reading (see page 85).

- After a time, it could have been ten minutes or an hour or my whole life, she asked me . . .
- A few years later, when I was thirteen . . .
- Later that night back at home . . .

As you are revising your autobiographical narrative, check to make sure you have clearly signaled to readers when time is passing so that they can follow the story easily. Use such words and phrases as *later, the next day, when I was eleven*, and *by the time I got home*.

Using a Checklist

The Six-Trait checklist on the next page will help you evaluate and polish your narrative.

Six Traits of Writing: Autobiographical Narratives
Content and Ideas • subject focuses on passage or lesson learned • narrative reveals something about writer's personality or character • vivid supporting details bring the experience to life
Organization • narrative has clear beginning, middle, and ending • events are presented in a clear time order
Voice or Style • narrative uses first-person point of view • writer's voice sounds natural, not forced • dialogue is realistic and reveals character
Word Choice • lively verbs and specific nouns give the writing energy • such comparisons as similes and metaphors create memorable images
Sentence Fluency • transitional words help the writing flow smoothly • sentence length and sentence beginnings are varied and purposeful
Conventions • sentences are complete and begin with a capital letter and end with a period • grammar and usage are correct • spelling and punctuation are correct

Cooperative Learning: Peer Editing

Exchange papers with your partner and check each other's editing. Fix any errors your partner points out. Make a neat final copy of your narrative.