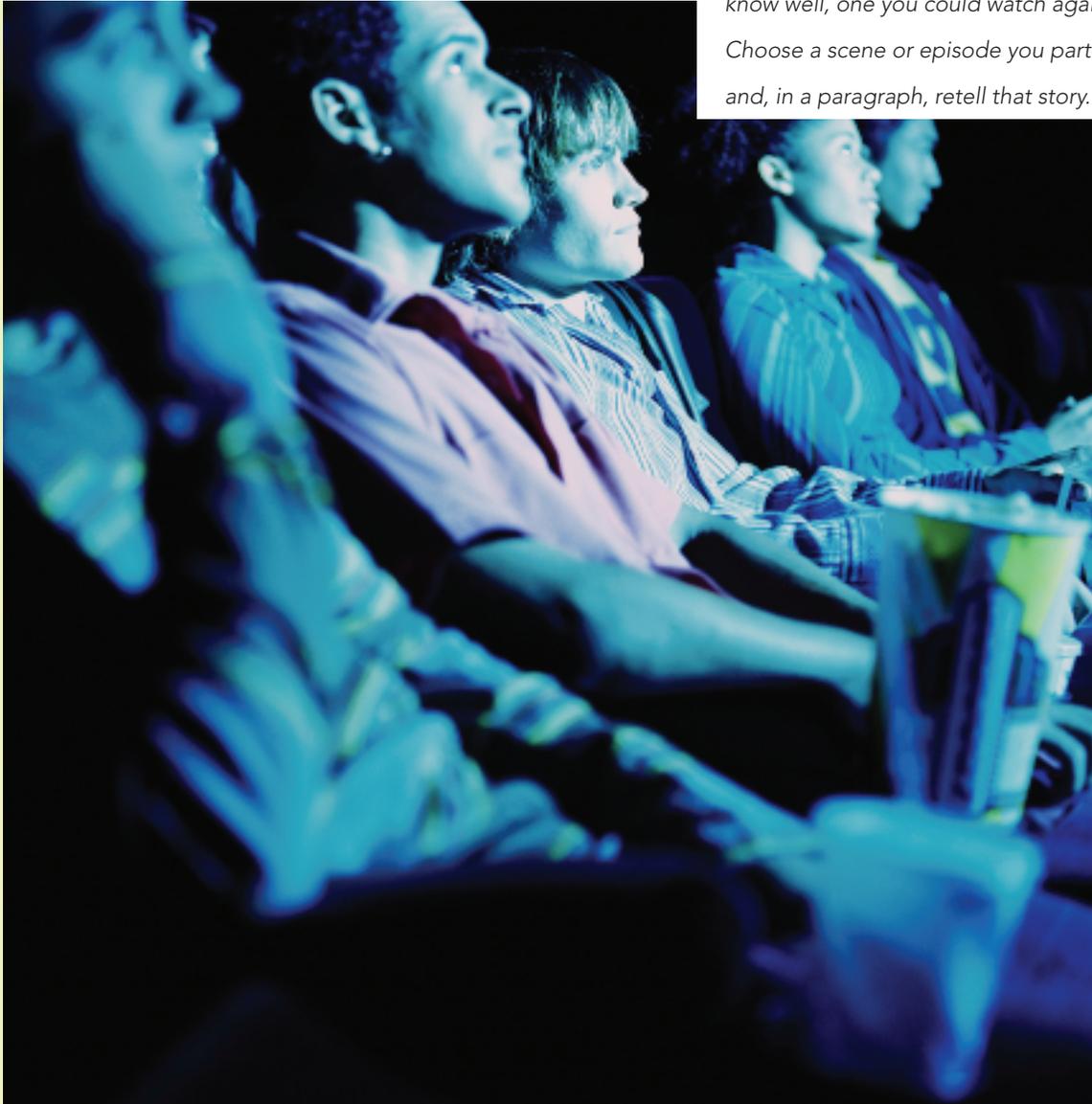


# Telling a Story (Narration)

# 22

[ *Think of a movie or television show that you like and know well, one you could watch again and again. Choose a scene or episode you particularly enjoyed and, in a paragraph, retell that story.* ]



## KEY TOPICS

- Developing skills in narrating
  - Emphasizing conflict, suspense, and a climax
  - Finding significance or meaning
  - Telling and showing
- Using effective dialogue
- Using space and time transitions
- Learning from a student model
- Writing a narrative paragraph

# What Are We Trying to Achieve and Why?

## Setting the Stage

What are the people in the preceding picture doing? They sit with eyes turned forward and up, mesmerized, and one person eats popcorn: an audience is watching a movie. Films, most TV programs, novels, and short stories are forms of **narrative**, or storytelling. People often tell stories to entertain others, though they also use stories to help present information, warn, or persuade people. Our focus in this chapter is how to tell a story about ourselves, about some small but important moment in our lives.

**TEACHING IDEA:** You can introduce students to personal narrative through the stories they have read, seen as films, and told about their own lives.

## Linking to Previous Experience



### What You Already Know about Telling Stories

We tell stories almost every day. Sometimes these tales are long and involved: recapping your two-week vacation to Wyoming, you might cover the drive there, the places you stayed, your activities, and the great people you met along the way. At other times we share brief stories to keep others in touch with our lives or illustrate a larger point; we might tell the tale of a frustrating wait at the post office or about how the boss has been mistreating us. Sometimes we write stories in letters or e-mails. And how many of our phone conversations begin something like this: “You’ll never guess what happened . . .” (the promise of a story) or “Hi, \_\_\_\_\_, what are you doing?” (a request for one)?

#### JOURNAL / BLOG ENTRY 22.1

Summarize, in a few sentences each, three recent experiences. Who did you tell about them? What was your purpose in sharing these stories: to release frustration, give information, or persuade someone of something? Perhaps it was a mix of these? Was your audience unclear about any part of your story? If so, how did you make it clearer?

**FEEDBACK** Respond to a classmate’s three stories. Which event would you like to know more about? Ask a specific, relevant question about it.

**TEACHING IDEA:** Use this journal/blog entry to begin your discussion of audience and purpose in narrative, heading off the vague summaries many students are inclined to produce.



## Developing Skills in Narrating

The following skills will help you create more interesting personal narratives:

1. Emphasizing conflict, suspense, and a climax
2. Finding significance or meaning
3. Telling and showing

**TEACHING IDEA:** Explain that conflict, suspense, and climax in a narrative make the difference between an interesting story and a boring one.

- Using effective dialogue
- Using time and space transitions

## Emphasizing Conflict, Suspense, and a Climax

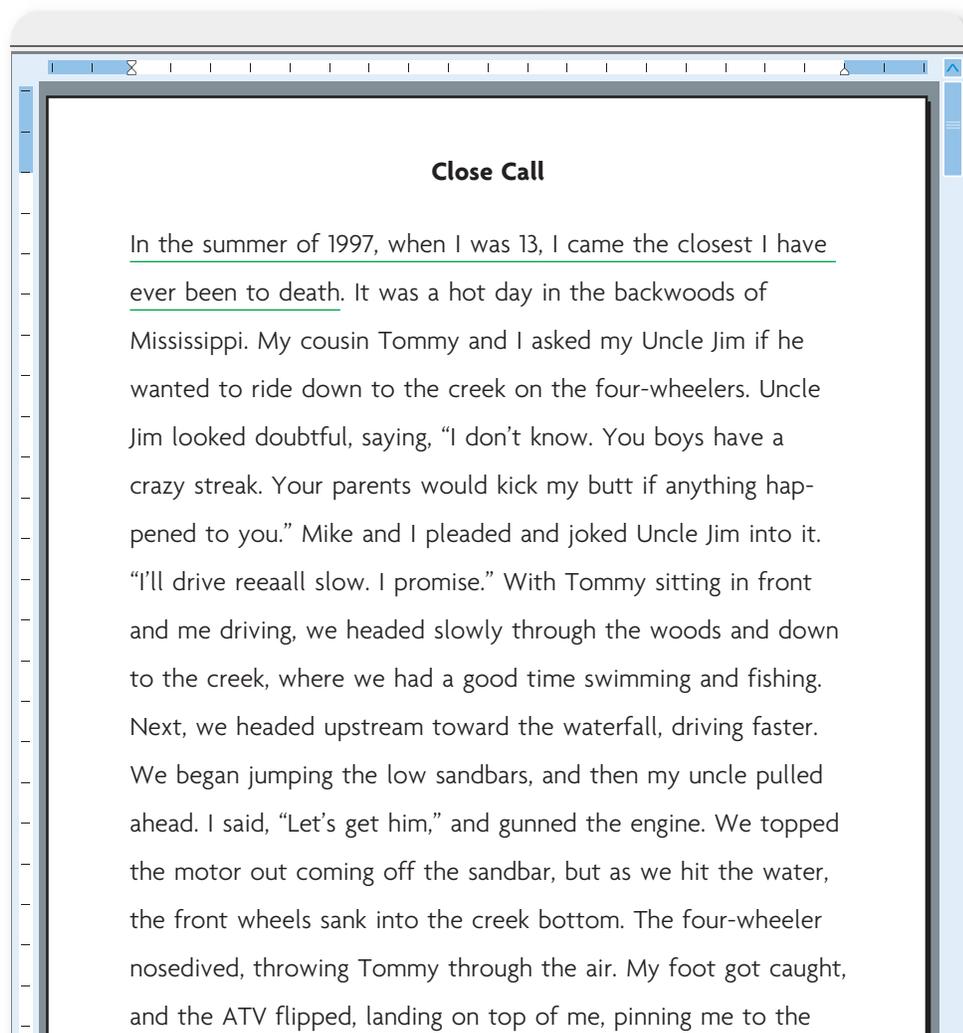
For a story to interest most people, it must have **conflict**—a problem or the potential for events to go wrong. This conflict can be of three sorts:

- A person dealing with another person: for example, arguing with a friend
- A person dealing with herself or himself: for example, trying a new exercise plan
- A person coping with the world around him or her: for example, driving in a blizzard

While presenting the conflict in the story, careful writers also build **suspense**, a state of uncertainty that makes readers wonder what will happen next. You should try to keep your readers in suspense right up until the **climax** (the high point of action) of your story.

Let's look at these elements of conflict, suspense, and climax in the following narrative paragraph written by student Andrew Lucht.

**TEACHING IDEA:** "Close Call" shows students that conflict can exist between a person and his or her environment, not just between people.



**Close Call**

In the summer of 1997, when I was 13, I came the closest I have ever been to death. It was a hot day in the backwoods of Mississippi. My cousin Tommy and I asked my Uncle Jim if he wanted to ride down to the creek on the four-wheelers. Uncle Jim looked doubtful, saying, "I don't know. You boys have a crazy streak. Your parents would kick my butt if anything happened to you." Mike and I pleaded and joked Uncle Jim into it. "I'll drive reeaall slow. I promise." With Tommy sitting in front and me driving, we headed slowly through the woods and down to the creek, where we had a good time swimming and fishing. Next, we headed upstream toward the waterfall, driving faster. We began jumping the low sandbars, and then my uncle pulled ahead. I said, "Let's get him," and gunned the engine. We topped the motor out coming off the sandbar, but as we hit the water, the front wheels sank into the creek bottom. The four-wheeler nosedived, throwing Tommy through the air. My foot got caught, and the ATV flipped, landing on top of me, pinning me to the

Andrew begins with the topic sentence. Does it make you want to read on?

Notice that the author moves right into the action.

How does this dialogue from Uncle Jim add suspense?

Do the sentences about the ATV landing on top of the author and him being pinned add to the suspense?

The author concludes with the resolution and point of the story.

bottom of the creek. I was stuck underwater. I couldn't get my head up for air. I couldn't move, yell for help, breathe—nothing. I saw my shoe float by on the surface and felt my chest begin to ache. I began to thrash my arms in panic, thinking, "I'm going to die!" But then my uncle arrived and flipped the four-wheeler off, pulling me above the water. I took the biggest, most welcome breath of my life. Although the ATV was smashed, Tommy only had a few scratches, and I didn't have even a bruise. I hadn't thought much about God before then, but that day I felt as if someone was watching over me. I was and still am grateful for how that makes me feel.

TEACHING IDEA: Activity 22.1 models the focused action that students need to write a short narrative paragraph.

### ACTIVITY 22.1 *Noticing Conflict, Suspense, and Climax*

After reading the narrative paragraph "Close Call," write on the lines below what the main conflict is and how the writer builds suspense. Next, list the story's key moments in the "action outline" section; the first action is listed as an example. Finally, tell where the climax occurs.

**Main conflict:** the author trying not to drown

**How the writer builds suspense:** dialogue from Uncle Jim, narrator's remark about getting "a little dangerous," racing the ATVs, being pinned beneath the ATV, thrashing his arms

**Action outline:**

1. asking uncle about riding the ATV
2. pleading with the uncle
3. driving slowly through the woods
4. speeding up along the creek
5. trying to catch up with the uncle
6. flipping the ATV
7. being pinned beneath the ATV
8. thrashing his arms in panic

**Climax:** being saved by the uncle

### *Finding Significance or Meaning*

Stories that stick with us usually have a point. They make us pause for a moment and think, "Yes, that makes sense." Or maybe, "I see how that could apply to me." Although the meaning or significance of a story may not be clear to us

when we begin to write, if we are interested in telling the story and wonder why we remember it so vividly, we can usually identify why it matters.

A narrative's point might show how the story did or does one of the following:

1. Changed the writer's behavior, thinking, or feeling
2. Shows something important about who the writer was or has become
3. Affected other people at the time or affects them now
4. Helped the writer learn something about another person or the larger world

In "Close Call," Andrew Lucht tells us the significance of his experience, that he appreciates what he feels to be God's protection. Andrew implies a change in his thinking and feeling, as in suggestion 1 above. However, there may be more than one possible point to a story, and different people often feel differently about similar events.

### ACTIVITY 22.2 WORKING TOGETHER: *Finding Significance*



With group members, discuss how you would have felt in Andrew's place in "Close Call." Having just been saved from drowning, what thought or feeling might *you* take from this experience? Review the four points listed above under "Finding Significance or Meaning," and write on the lines below three possible points (in complete sentences) the story could have explored. One possibility is written out as an example.

#### Possible Points for "Close Call":

1. Changed behavior: I learned from that horrible day not to drive any kind of vehicle like a maniac.
2. Who the writer was: Until that day I never realized that I was such a risk taker
3. Affected other people: My Uncle Jim never told my parents about the accident, but it was several years before he trusted me again.
4. Learn about another person: I learned that I could count on my Uncle Jim but, more importantly, that I should respect his judgment.



**TEACHING IDEA:** This activity can help students write an effective concluding sentence for their own place descriptions.

## Telling and Showing

In telling stories, we try to bring them to life. However, if we only *tell* and never *show* the reader the action, our story is likely to fall flat. Here are two sentences, one that tells and one that shows. Which do you prefer?

1. I looked back and was terrified.
2. I looked back and saw a gigantic black bull galloping toward me, and for a moment I was petrified with terror.

Most people prefer sentence 2, as readers are attracted to a sentence that *shows* action, one that places them in the specific situation. When we *tell*, as in sentence 1, the reader must take our word for it; we tell the audience what to believe. When we *show*, however, we give readers enough details that they can decide how to respond; in sentence 2, readers can *see*, not just hear, that the writer was frightened stiff. Showing is a powerful way to improve a story, though it often takes more words. Good writers mix telling and showing, choosing which moments to sum up and which to spend time with.



You can *show* with specific words, sensory details, a person's actions, and dialogue.

**TEACHING IDEA:** Ask students to read aloud their "showing" answers to demonstrate how many different ways there are to show.

**TEACHING IDEA:** If students resist using dialogue in their narratives, ask them how many movies they have watched or works of fiction they have read that don't use dialogue.



Practice changing from direct to indirect speech. How does switching affect the word order, pronouns, and tenses?

**TEACHING IDEA:** You might tell students that indirect dialogue generally indicates speech that is less important than direct dialogue. Direct dialogue, of course, has several purposes, including to characterize key actors.

### ACTIVITY 22.3 *Telling and Showing*

The following sentences tell a reader what to see in a story. Write a sentence that shows the same statement.

**EXAMPLE:**

**Telling:** By the tone of Jeff's voice, I could tell he was in trouble.

**Showing:** *Dripping blood from his wrist, Jeff shrieked, "Help me, Shane! The sander exploded!"*

1. **Telling:** Surely, Consuela was a happy bride.

**Showing:** *As Miguel lifted his bride's veil to seal their vows, Consuela smiled happily and kissed her husband passionately.*

2. **Telling:** Driving in the winning run, Brian crossed home plate as his team showed their appreciation.

**Showing:** *Smashing a homerun, Brian trotted around the bases while the fans screamed with joy and his teammates swarmed out onto the field to hoist him onto their shoulders.*

3. **Telling:** When Sed threw a lit string of firecrackers onto the deck, his friends reacted quickly.

**Showing:** *When Sed threw a lit string of firecrackers onto the deck, his friends bolted for the sliding door and the stairs.*

4. **Telling:** Katie had to be the messiest 10-month-old baby ever to eat a bowl of peas.

**Showing:** *Ten-month-old Katie had bright-green peas smeared over her face and caked in her hair and ears.*

### *Using Effective Dialogue*

Most stories use dialogue because readers are interested in hearing what characters have to say. Dialogue helps us get to know the writer and his or her characters. In your personal narrative you can use three types of "speech":

- **Direct dialogue** uses quotation marks and reproduces what a person has said word for word.
- **Indirect dialogue** does not use quotation marks but reports or summarizes what someone has said.
- **Revealed thought** often uses quotation marks to show what a person is thinking in the midst of action.

In example 1, notice both direct and indirect dialogue:

**INDIRECT DIALOGUE**

1. It was a hot summer day in the backwoods of Mississippi. My cousin Tommy and I asked my Uncle Jim if he wanted to ride down to the creek on the four-wheelers.

## DIRECT DIALOGUE

Uncle Jim looked doubtful, saying, “I don’t know. You boys have a crazy streak. Your parents would kick my butt if anything happened to you.”

In example 2, notice how the author reveals his thought:

2. I began to thrash my arms in panic, thinking, “I’m going to die!”

### ACTIVITY 22.4 *Using Effective Dialogue*

Type or write a paragraph that imagines what the people in this picture might have said to each other during this happy moment at high school graduation. Call the father “Erik,” the mother “Elizabeth,” and the daughter “Jasmine.” Try to include all three forms of speech acts: direct and indirect dialogue and revealed thought.



**TEACHING IDEA:** See the Instructor’s Manual at [www.mhhe.com/brannan](http://www.mhhe.com/brannan) for a good sample response to Activity 22.4.

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## Using Space and Time Transitions

As we learned in Chapter 19, linking sentences with connectors—such as repeated words, synonyms, and transitions—is essential if readers are to follow the flow of your ideas. Narratives especially benefit from **space** and **time** transitions like the following:

### SPACE TRANSITIONS

above	at	in	on	to
across	below	into	over	toward
around	by	near	there	under

### TIME TRANSITIONS

after	now	then	references to clock and calendar time:
first (second, etc.)	often	until	
next	once	when	1:00, last week, etc.



Review this chart to master transitions involving space and time.



For a more complete list of transitions, see pp. 288–289.

### ACTIVITY 22.5 Using Space and Time Transitions

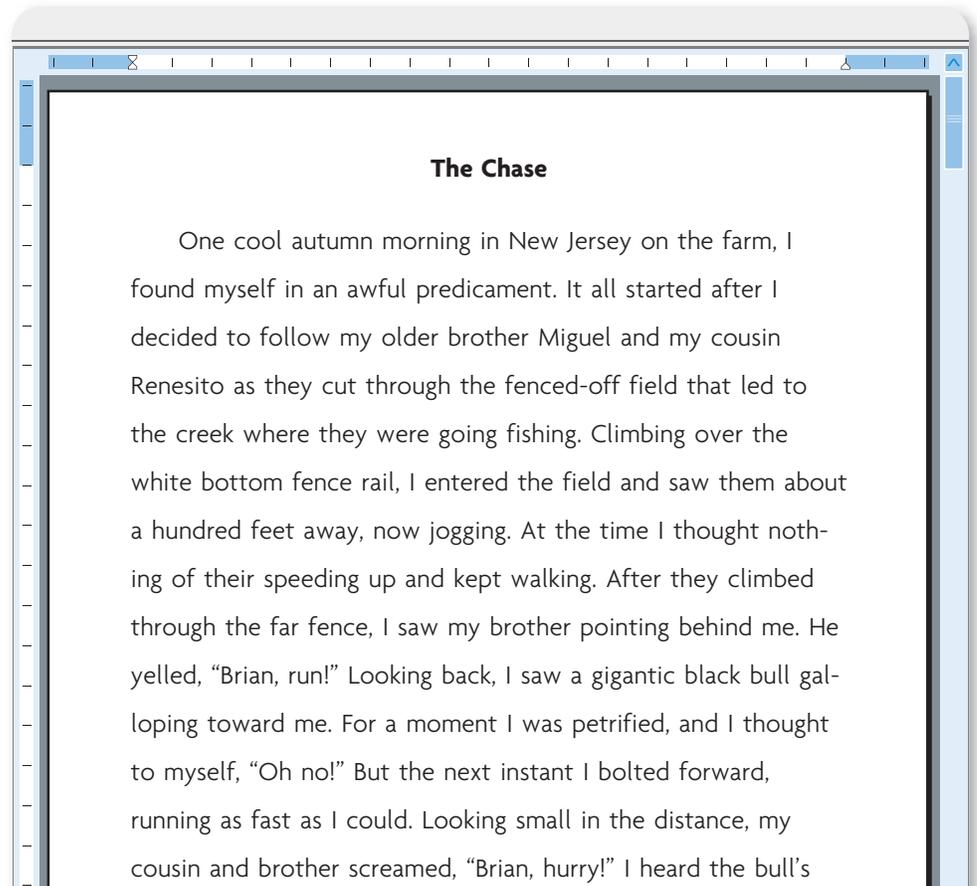
Fill in the blanks with the time and space transitions from the preceding lists.

1. Listening at the door, Becky fell into the room when her sister opened the door.
2. When we reached the hospital, no one could find the emergency room.
3. First, we headed upstream to the huge waterfall.
4. I was following them, so they cut across the field.
5. A crowd had gathered near the Red Cross van.
6. It was now morning, and I was falling asleep.
7. My dad parked next to a police car.
8. My mom asked me to wait in the lobby until she could find the tickets.

## Learning from a Student Model: A Narrative Paragraph

**TEACHING IDEA:** To help students focus their own narratives, discuss with the class how long this story takes.

Read the following student model closely, noticing the elements of vivid story telling that you practiced in the skills section. Focus on **conflict**, **suspense**, and **climax**; **significance**; **showing** and **telling**; **dialogue**; and **space and time transitions**.



**The Chase**

One cool autumn morning in New Jersey on the farm, I found myself in an awful predicament. It all started after I decided to follow my older brother Miguel and my cousin Renesito as they cut through the fenced-off field that led to the creek where they were going fishing. Climbing over the white bottom fence rail, I entered the field and saw them about a hundred feet away, now jogging. At the time I thought nothing of their speeding up and kept walking. After they climbed through the far fence, I saw my brother pointing behind me. He yelled, "Brian, run!" Looking back, I saw a gigantic black bull galloping toward me. For a moment I was petrified, and I thought to myself, "Oh no!" But the next instant I bolted forward, running as fast as I could. Looking small in the distance, my cousin and brother screamed, "Brian, hurry!" I heard the bull's

hooves hitting the ground faster. “He wants to get me!” I thought. Nearing the fence, I saw Miguel’s face, pale with fear and amazement. The bull was right behind me now. I felt the moisture of his breath as I dove through the white fence rails, but the bull couldn’t stop. He smacked into one of the posts with a sickening thud and keeled over in the grass in agony. My cousin and brother looked at me, dumbfounded. Then Miguel broke the silence with a roar of laughter, which made Renesito and me laugh too. I had other close calls on the farm, but none like that, and to this day I won’t go near a pasture with a bull in it!

—Brian Rodriguez

### THINKING ABOUT THE STUDENT MODEL

1. What two important points do we learn from the topic sentence?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What words in the concluding sentence link to the topic sentence?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What point does Brian make in his last sentence?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Create an action outline that lists eight major actions of the characters.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. List three active verbs (Chapter 3) and three *-ing* (Chapter 5) words the author uses to show action.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. List an example of telling and one of showing (p. 325).  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How does the dialogue add to the story?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Name three specific words (p. 309), and tell how they add to the story.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. List at least three time and three space transitions (p. 327).  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What three details or specific words could you add to make the setting more vivid?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**TEACHING IDEA:** See the instructor’s manual at [www.mhhe.com/brannan](http://www.mhhe.com/brannan) for sample responses to these prompts.



For an action outline, see Activity 22.1. For more on telling and showing, see Activity 22.3.



Conclude your narrative with a point that shows its significance or meaning.

**TEACHING IDEA:** Because stories tend to grow in the telling, some students will want to write more than 250 words. Encourage them to start close to the climax, to avoid writing 600-word paragraphs.

**TEACHING IDEA:** To help students choose topics, skim through this list with them and summarize several stories.

# Writing a Narrative Paragraph

## The Assignment

Write a single paragraph of roughly 200 to 250 words that shows and tells a story about a brief but memorable moment in your life. Begin with a topic sentence that tells your reader what the story is about, move straight into the action, build toward a climax, and finish with a sentence that makes some point.

## Audience and Purpose

Choose an audience that would be interested in reading your story. Remember that you may have to explain a situation more thoroughly or define particular words depending on who reads your work. For example, the author of “Close Call” (p. 323) assumed his reader would know what *ATV* stands for, so he did not spell out *all-terrain vehicle*.

In a narrative, your purpose may be to inform, persuade, or entertain your reader. Regardless, be sure to make the significance of your story clear.

## Discovering Ideas: Prewriting for Narration

Finding a good story topic is not always easy, even though (or maybe because!) we have lived through hundreds of memorable moments. To help focus your search, consider that you should care about your topic, remember it well, and be able to fit it into a paragraph. Often, strong single-paragraph stories (like both of this chapter’s student models) span only a few minutes’ time. The following topic list may give you a few helpful ideas:

### POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR NARRATION

1. A special experience in a group: sports team, band, club, Boy/Girl Scouts, fraternal organizations (Kiwanis, Rotary, Elks), military, PTA
2. A moment when you realized something important about yourself, positive or negative: you are supportive, well-organized, industrious, cruel, selfish, lazy
3. An experience with altering your appearance: tattooing, piercing, hair coloring, cosmetic surgery, weight loss, body building
4. An embarrassing moment: speaking in public, asking for a date, being caught in a lie, getting a speeding ticket
5. A life-threatening accident
6. A time when another person badly frightened you
7. A moment when you lost control of your anger and harmed yourself or others
8. A time when you experienced great pain: childbirth, broken bone, burn, migraine headache, heart attack
9. A moment of triumph: graduating, making a touchdown, making it onto a sports team or into a musical group
10. A particularly pleasant or unpleasant moment at your job
11. A major life change: switching jobs, schools, homes, countries
12. A moment when you were especially happy or depressed
13. A moment when you lost someone close
14. A moment of special celebration: birthday, bat or bar mitzvah, wedding, family reunion, Mother’s Day

## TELL A STORY ABOUT THE NATURAL WORLD

To hear a range of interesting stories (and get inspiration for your own), list “Nature Stories” audio podcasts from the Nature Conservancy. Consider telling a story about a moment when you felt connected to the natural world or separated from it. You will find these podcasts at <http://support.nature.org/site/PageServer?pagename=podcast>. •



After you have chosen a story to tell, you can use several prewriting methods, such as clustering and listing. For narratives, the journalist’s questions can be especially useful, as in the following example for the student model “The Chase” (p. 328):



See Chapter 1 for more on prewriting methods, including the journalist’s questions.

**Who:** Brian, his cousin Renesito, and his brother Miguel were involved.

**What:** Brian was almost trampled by a bull.

**When:** It was an autumn morning, back when Brian was a child.

**Where:** It happened on the farm in New Jersey.

**Why:** Brian wanted to follow his brother and cousin and was not being careful.

**How:** He followed his brother and cousin into a pasture with a bull.

**What was the result:** The boys were deeply frightened, but Brian escaped unharmed.

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As you prewrite, focusing on these points will help give you good material for your story:

- **Setting:** Give your reader enough details to see the story happening.
- **Characters (people):** Give enough details about the characters so that the reader can place them in the story.
- **Dialogue:** Use dialogue unless there is a good reason not to.
- **Action:** Show yourself and others doing something.
- **Thoughts and feelings:** Tell and/or show some of both.
- **Significance:** A story with a point is both memorable and meaningful. Reward your reader at the end.

**TEACHING IDEA:** Let students know that dialogue does not have to be remembered word-for-word. A close approximation is fine.

**TEACHING IDEA:** Discuss the possible significance of several students’ stories, to make it easier for students to find a point to their own stories.



## JOURNAL / BLOG ENTRY 22.2

Review your prewriting notes. Does your story have a point yet? Does the story reveal something about you or another? In one or two sentences, explain the meaning of your story.

**FEEDBACK** *When you have a good start on your prewriting and have thought your story through, find a friend or classmate and tell your story to him or her. Your reader may help you decide to change your focus, add or cut material, or just keep moving ahead.*

## Organizing Narrative Paragraphs

After you have gathered your ideas and arranged them in chronological (time) order, write a topic sentence that tells what the story will be about. Here you can hint at the conflict without giving away the climax, as Brian Rodriguez does in his topic sentence for “The Chase.” Next, move right into the action of your story. Resist giving several sentences of background explanation. Remember that you are writing only a paragraph, so you must use space carefully. Also, be sure to limit the time your story covers and keep the action in only one or two scenes. Don’t skip from place to place.

**TEACHING IDEA:** Going through some of these outlines in class will save some students from a lot of drifting.

## JOURNAL / BLOG ENTRY 22.3

To help focus your draft, try an action outline (as in Activity 22.1) that lists the major actions of your event as they occurred. Limit your main actions to around eight to ten.

## Drafting Narrative Paragraphs

As you move into your drafting, keep the following points in mind:

1. To make the story seem more immediate, close your eyes in a quiet place, and try to visualize what happened. Think of specific things and people, sensory details, actions, and dialogue. Try to see the story as a movie.
2. Use your “creative memory” to fill in gaps in your story. Use details that could have been part of the scene and dialogue that could have been spoken.
3. Summarize the action to move readers quickly through some parts of your story.
4. Describe a scene in detail when you want the reader to slow down and pay attention, especially near the climax.

## JOURNAL / BLOG ENTRY 22.4

After finishing your first rough draft, reread it, and tell why your story is interesting. Where do you build suspense? Does the action reach a climax near the end? Do you wrap up the story soon after the climax? If you’re using a blog, post the draft of your story for feedback.

**FEEDBACK** Read one or two of your classmates' rough drafts, and offer feedback on each story's use of suspense and its climax. To you, what seems like each story's meaning or significance?



## Revising Narrative Paragraphs

As you begin revising the first draft of your narrative, use the following checklist as a guide:

### CHECKLIST FOR REVISING NARRATIVE PARAGRAPHS

- Does your story start fairly near the climax so that you can tell it in around 200 to 250 words?
- Does your topic sentence tell what the story is about, hinting at the conflict or main point?
- Have you included conflict, suspense, and action that lead to a climax and make a point?
- Have you included details of the setting and people and given the characters some dialogue?
- As your story unfolds, does it tell and/or show your reader what you think and feel?
- Have you used sufficient time and space transitions and other connectors?
- Does your concluding sentence reflect on the event and its meaning?

### HINT

For detailed suggestions for revising all drafts, turn to Chapter 20.

### HINT

See pp. 288–289 for more on connectors.

## Alternate Assignments

Here are several narrative writing options that might interest you. For any of these assignments, be sure to do the following:

- Create a narrative that has conflict and suspense.
- Choose a story with clear significance.
- Build a story that shows as well as tells.
- Use effective dialogue.

### Alternate Assignment Possibilities: Narration

1. **Write a story for a child.** Your story can be real (nonfiction) or imagined (fiction). Decide on an age group (3–5, 6–9, 10–12), and write with those readers in mind. Let's say you're writing a story about getting your ears pierced for an 8-year-old girl who wants to wear earrings: you would be careful to use words and dialogue that a young reader would understand. Also, you might assume that your reader is concerned about how painful ear piercing is (with her own ears in mind) and address this detail in a reassuring or cautionary way.

If you write a fictional story, you could use it to explain something or just to entertain. For example, you could tell how a playground bully was finally stopped when a child stood up to him. Or you could write a fantasy about good fairies that guide lost pets back home.

Be sure to begin with a topic sentence that tells what the story is about and end with a sentence that reveals the story's point.

2. **Write a story from an animal's point of view.** For example, horses are ridden by people who may be kind but still control their lives and are heavy to carry! Show and/or tell how a horse feels about this. Or become your own dog or cat, and narrate a story from that animal's perspective. Maybe your toy poodle believes she is the ferocious defender of your house and that without her, your family would be lost. If you have seen or read *The Golden Compass*, you might tell part of one of the humans' stories through the eyes of one of their "daemons."
3. **Use the accompanying picture to help you write a story.** You can approach this assignment in several ways. For instance, you could retell the tortoise and hare fable or, as movies like *Hoodwinked* have done, give the story your own twist. Maybe the rabbit wins this time; or maybe he still loses, but we find out that he didn't fall asleep: perhaps he was off saving another animal that needed help. Or you might tell the story of the people who put these animals in the picture. What were they thinking? What did they hope to accomplish with this image?



#### ACTIVITY 22.6 WORKING ONLINE: *Telling Great Stories*



Listen to a free podcast of the latest *This American Life* episode at [http://www.thislife.org/Radio\\_Podcast.aspx](http://www.thislife.org/Radio_Podcast.aspx). Is the story interesting, and if so, why? Write a paragraph about an event in your life that you think radio or podcast listeners would find interesting. If you want to write and share more stories, consider creating an online story portfolio on Writing.com (<http://www.writing.com/?rfr=stories.com&rfrt=www>), a site for beginning and experienced writers.



#### ACTIVITY 22.7 WORKING ONLINE: *Narration Review*



At [www.mhhe.com/brannan](http://www.mhhe.com/brannan), take the Chapter 22 Review Quiz to test your understanding of narrative-writing skills.



## Linking to Future Experience



A good story is useful in all types of college and workplace writing. Storytelling is a great way to ground your readers in specific situations and gain their interest and trust. Narratives are commonly used in the introductions of papers or speeches. Political candidates know that if they first tell you the story of Paula, a 19-year-old Iowan who was denied health care coverage for leukemia because it was a preexisting condition, you will be more willing to listen when they say, “The current health care system needs to be revamped.” And in the business world, every product has a “story.” Watching commercials, you’ll notice that some tales are taller than others. The story that an iPod is easy to use and transport is both compelling and true; but does ordering KFC make your family happier by freeing up food-preparation time? In an academic context, be careful that your stories aren’t misleading.

### Chapter Summary

1. A narrative tells (and shows) about events and usually about people.
2. Narratives involve conflict and suspense. They are arranged chronologically, lead to a climax, and have a point.
3. The setting is the backdrop for a story’s action.
4. Narratives reveal a character’s thoughts and feelings and usually use dialogue.
5. Well-organized narrative paragraphs require topic and concluding sentences.
6. Time and space transitions and other connectors are essential in storytelling.
7. Both showing and telling are used to develop stories.
8. Specific words and sensory details are important for scene building.
9. Writing is not complete until it has been revised and carefully edited.