

Lessons from Mentor Personal Narratives



Writers often write about a seemingly small episode-yet it has big meaning for the writer.



Writers often tell the story in such a way that the reader can almost experience it from start to finish. It helps record the exact words a character uses.



Writers often convey strong feelings, and they often show rather than tell about those feelings.



Writers often include two and sometimes three small moments so that there is a sense that the stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Strategies for Generating Personal Narrative Writing

~Think of a person, place, or thing that matters to you, then list clear, small moments you remember. Choose one to sketch and then write the accompanying story.

~Think of first times, last times, or times when you realized something important. Write about one of these moments.

~Carry your writer's notebook with you, paying attention to details and thinking, "I could write a true story about this."

~Think of a strong feeling, then list Small Moment stories pertaining to that feeling. Choose one to sketch and then write about.

~Think of the stories that your family tells and retells to each other. Write about one of those.

~Keep an ongoing list of story ideas in your writer's notebook.

Questions to Ask to Find Turning Points

- ~First/Last time you did something hard to do
- ~First/Last time you did something you now do every day
- ~First/Last time with a person, an animal, a place, an activity
- ~A time you realized something important about yourself or someone else
- ~A time you realized a huge change in your life almost happened

When to Use Paragraphs in Narrative Writing

- ~New character comes along
- ~New event happens; new idea is introduced
- ~New setting
- ~New person speaking (dialogue)
- ~Time moves forward (or backward) a lot

Strategies for Learning from Previous Writing

~Reread old charts and think about strategies that have already worked for us.

~Reread old charts and think about strategies we have yet to try that might work.

~Give ourselves self-assignments, writing things we plan to do in our notebooks.

~Look back over old writing, noticing what we did in revision that we might want to do earlier.

~Look back over old writing, noticing what made our writing strong that we want to remember to do, and noticing what got us into trouble that we want to avoid.

Qualities of Good Personal Narrative Writing



Write a little seed story; don't write all about a giant watermelon topic.



Zoom in so you tell the most important parts of the story.




Include true, exact details from the movie you have in your mind.



Stay inside your own point of view. This will help you to write with true and exact details.



 Make sure stories tell not just what happens, but also the response to what happens.

How Stories Tend to Go

- ~Main character (wants, hopes, desires)
- ~Problem (trouble) (probably an emotional response)
- ~Things happen related to the problem
(The problem gets bigger? There is another problem?)
- ~A resolution