



**BECAUSE WRITING MATTERS**

**MY Access! Writer's Workshop**  
**Upper Elem & Middle School Narrative Writing**  
**Prompt: *Special Day***

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## **Notes:**

## **Prompt: A Special Day**

Is there a day or an event in your life that was so special that you wish you could live it over again? What day would you like to relive? What happened that made it so special?

Write a story about this special event or special day.

As you write your story, think about these questions:

- Did you write a story about the assigned topic?
- Did you use details to describe the characters, places, and events?
- Did you organize your story clearly with an introduction, body, and conclusion?
- Did you use a variety of words and well-written sentences?
- Did you use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation?

Use any of the tools available to you, such as the **Checklist**, **Spellchecker**, or **Graphic Organizer**.

# MY Access! “My Special Day” Teaching Ideas

## Prewriting

*Preparation: Draw the following T-Chart on the board or in Word:*

Special Days	Why?

- Begin by reading the prompt as a whole class.
- Have students draw the T-Chart above on a piece of blank paper.
- Give students several minutes to list their most special days on the left side of the T-chart. As students write, complete your own list of special days on the board or in Word.
- Share your list with students. Instruct students to add any new ideas to their personal list if something you shared triggers a memory.
- Have students share with a partner and continue to add to their lists. Remind them that the purpose of this activity is to get as many ideas down as possible.
- Share as a whole class:
  - As students share, teacher fills out the left side of the T-chart. After memories are shared, ask students to tell you WHY—what made these days so special? Fill out the right side.
  - Discuss the importance of the “why.” This is going to help students find the purpose of their story.
- Have students fill out the right side of their personal T-Chart.
- Have them look at their T-Chart and put a star next to their top THREE “special days.”

## Beginning to Draft

- Initially, simply have students do a “quickwrite” for 8-10 minutes about one of their starred ideas on the T-chart. Have them write as quickly as possible without stopping to think—they just need to get their ideas down. Tell them not to worry about grammar or spelling. If they run out of ideas on one topic, they should choose another starred idea and begin writing about that.

## Narrowing Focus, Revising and Reflecting

- After students get something down on paper, have them try “looping” as described on page 4 as a way to narrow their focus.
- As students are writing, use pages 5-11 to teach the features of a strong narrative.
- After students submit their first draft, complete the “Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment” on pages 15-27 to prepare them for revision.
- As students are writing, use the “MY Access! Writing Domains” handout on page 13 to break down the MY Access! rubric. Students can read the description of each writing domain on the rubric, and then put it into language they understand. You may have to guide this activity.
- After students understand the rubric, have them use it to score and discuss the student samples provided on pages 9-11. They can also refer back to the “Features of a Strong Narrative” handout on page 5.
- Page 27 has a sample Revision Plan (a tab located in “My Writing Space”). Students should complete a Revision Plan after each draft.
- Page 28 has guidelines for peer response. After every peer response session, be sure students fill out another “Revision Plan.” Page 29 provides students with questions to guide them in their reflection about how the peer response session went.

# LOOPING

*Looping is an exercise many writers use to narrow the focus of a piece. Often, in early drafts we write anything and everything that comes to mind about our topic (and this is okay!). As we revise, we want to “zoom in” on only the most important and interesting parts of our narrative. We need to discover our PURPOSE for writing.*

**Tell Students:**

**Step 1:** Re-read your entire piece.

**Step 2:** Choose one line that stands out to you. Maybe it is an extremely important moment in your story, maybe it is the most exciting point, or maybe you just like the idea you are trying to express.

**Step 3:** Underline or highlight that line.

**Step 4:** On a blank piece of paper, write ONLY that line at the top of the paper.

**Step 5:** Now, for next ten minutes, write as QUICKLY as you can about only that line.

**Step 6:** Think about what happened. Do you like what you just wrote more than your first draft? If so, you now have a NEW and more specific focus for your story. At the very least, one part of your story has been “exploded.”



# Narrative Texts: Telling a Story

## Types of Narratives:

- Novels
- Short stories
- First person autobiographical incident
- Personal memoir or essay
- Myths, legends, folk tales, fairy tales, tall tales
- Epic poems

## Purposes of Narratives:

- To entertain and relate an event within a time sequence.
- Can (but not always) share personal reflections or express thoughts and feelings.

## Characteristics of Narratives:

- **Setting:** Where and when the story takes place.
- **Characters:** Described in detail so reader knows not only what they look like, but also what they think, say, feel, etc.
- **Plot:** What happens—the sequence of events. Strong plots have the following elements:
  - **Conflict:** Moments that create suspense or anticipation for the reader. Conflict doesn't always have to be dramatic or scary (even happy stories have conflict).
  - **Climax:** The turning point of the story—the point where the greatest emotional involvement for the reader takes place.
  - **Resolution:** The final outcome of the story. It doesn't have to be happy, but it should give the reader some sense of closure.
- Narrates (tells) a sequence of events and scenes with sensory details.
- Develops plot and character.
- Has rising action and conflict that leads to a climax.
- Can be in 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person point-of-view.

## Using the MY Access! Narrative Topic Outline to Teach the Elements of a Narrative

1. Distribute the following materials to your students:
  - A professional or student narrative text
  - A hard copy of the *MY Access! Narrative Topic Outline*
  - A marker, crayon or highlighter
2. Place students in groups of four. Give each student in the group a different colored marker/highlighter and assign each student an “expert” role.
  - Student 1 will read the text and highlight only the **setting**.
  - Student 2 will read the text and highlight details about the **characters**—physical descriptions as well as anything they do, say, or think.
  - Student 3 will read the text and highlight only the **conflicts** they see in the story.
  - Student 4 will read the text and highlight the **climax** and the **resolution**.
3. Read the story as a whole class. Each student is to highlight his or her “expert” area as you read. After, discuss the various elements and how/why they worked. For example, why were the character descriptions important? What did you see the characters doing? What did the setting add to the story? How did the author make the climax exciting?

### An Extension of This Activity

This activity can also be used as a form of peer response. This time, however, students in the group will bring their own narratives. They will read the first narrative, and each student will highlight his or her area of expertise. Then, have students pass to the right and read the second narrative doing the same thing. They should also write any questions they have in the appropriate section of the *MY Access! Narrative Topic Outline*. When students get their own narrative back, have them check to make sure they have all colors highlighted. If not, time to revise!

## MY Access! Narrative Topic Outline

**Setting:** Where and when does your story take place? Describe your locations in detail.

**Characters:** Who is in your story? Describe these people in detail. For example, what do they look like? What do they say that is important (dialogue)? What are they feeling?

**Plot:** What happens in your story? Create pictures for your reader to see, hear, and feel by using a great amount of detail in every scene you describe. **Show**, don't tell.

**Conflict:** A good story has to create suspense, anticipation, or a sense of wonder for your reader; otherwise, why would your reader keep reading? Even if your story is about a happy time in your life, remember to include something that will arouse your readers' emotions and make them excited about what will happen. Show your reaction to the conflict.

**Climax:** What is the turning point of your story—the point where you have your readers' greatest interest and greatest emotional involvement in your story?

**Resolution:** What is the final outcome of your story?

**Introducing your story:** How will you begin your story so that your readers will get really excited about reading on?

The following are some suggestions.

**Dialogue**—“It’s perfectly clear why she wants it,” said Marge, as she cut through the store, making sure she would beat out Jessica.

**A flashback**—Erin was a hundred yards from the finish line and knew she shouldn’t look back. The problem was that she couldn’t help herself.

**A startling statement**—My town of Newbridge was a village of fools, fools young and old.

**A puzzling statement**—Across the street lived old Johnson, blind as a bat, but kept my house safe from the zombies who visited every night.

**A description of your main character and your setting**—Erica pulled back her hair and put on her glasses. Now that she was running for class president, she wanted to look the part.

**Putting your story in order:** How will you tell your story? Will you start from the beginning and describe each scene until you get to the end? Or will you start at the end of your story to create interest and then after the first paragraph begin at the beginning?

Most importantly, make an outline of what happens in each scene of your story in the order that it happened before you begin writing. Then follow the sequence of events when you write your story. Otherwise, you can confuse your reader about what is happening.

Words and phrases that can substitute (synonyms) for “then”

All of a sudden,	Suddenly,	At that moment,
Just then,	Meanwhile,	All at once,
In a few hours,	The next day,	After that,
At that time,	Afterward,	Without warning,
Unfortunately,	Surprisingly,	Next,
Amazingly,	To my surprise,	Unexpectedly,
At that point,	In the meantime,	For the time being,
Later,	After that,	Sadly,

## Elements of a Strong Narrative

1. **Directions:** Read Sara's story. Based on our discussion that centered on the elements necessary for writing a good story, is this a strong story that will appeal to a reader?

### Sara's story:

On my 9th birthday was so special to me because I got a lot of presents and a brand new bike. That was my first time to get a big girl bike and I was so happy. When i got that bike I wanted to ride it right away. I had a bike before when I was little but it was a Barbie bike. I loved that bike but someone stole it. The first time i got to use my bike was not until around summer. The only reason I didn't use it was because i didn't know how to ride a mountain bike. My sister Blanca taught me how to ride the bike and she got mad at me because I kept on pedaling backwards in stead of frontward.

One other thing I got on my birthday that was special to me was my \$80. That was special to me because I got it from my grandfather. At that time i was living in Massachusetts so it was special because my grand father was over here at that time and i haven't seen him in a long time. It was a very special birthday.

### Comments Box:

2. **Directions:** Read the following stories. Based on our discussion that centered on the elements necessary for writing a good story, are these strong stories that will appeal to a reader? Use the rubric to score each story, and then give the writer feedback.

### Kristine's story:

Everybody in their lifetime had a special day or going to have one. My special day was when I started elementary school. I started elementary school 7 years ago and haven't had one single bad memory of school yet.

I remember I was 4 years-old and I was so nervous. For one thing I was younger than everybody and only knew a few people like Michelle and Wallie. I knew Michelle and

Wallie through my mother. My kindergarten teacher Ms. Brooks was and still is one of my favorite teachers. I also remember I spent more time inside during recess than outside. Elementary school is also a place for you make friends and associate .

Elementary school was a place where you didn't have to be afraid of the other older kids. Like the only time you would see them was after leaving recess. Elementary was also a place that would prepare you for the years of middle school and High school and to help you shine. Elementary is a place that not only helps you to learn but also to make friends. In my experiences at elementary school, I didn't have a hard time making friends but it was hard seeing other people to try and try to fit in or associate with peers.

In conclusion I hope this explains that elementary will and still be a memorable place for you. Also it helps you learn about the life lessons of life to come. I hope you had a good time there like I did. Like I said before school is a place to help you learn and also help you with your communication skills to prepare you to take the social wild person out into a people's person.

**Your Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback to the Writer:**

### **Paul's story:**

The dimly lit room sparkled as the Christmas tree lights blinked and glowed in the far corner. Brian arranged the oatmeal cookies and glass of milk for Santa on the glass table next to the tree. My mom and dad were huddled on the couch with a blanket wrapped around them. I watched them as I glided smoothly back and forth in the rocking chair while reading a book. Christmas Eve seemed to bring a sense of comfort and calmness to the ever busy house of my family.

We all went to bed that night anxious to wake up the next morning. I stayed up most of night with a million thoughts racing through my head. I was nervous wondering if I was to receive everything I had asked for. When I finally fell asleep, it seemed as if I woke up the next moment. A ray of light entered my room as I gloomily slid out from under the bed sheets. Rubbing my eyes, i realized that it was Christmas morning. I sprang through the door and down the hall into my parents room. Only after leaping onto their bed and pulling them out of their slumber did they agree to get up.

Brian was waiting in the hall when I emerged from our parents room. We waited discontently while mom and dad brushed their teeth and made their way down the hall. As a group we all hurried down stairs and into the living room. A feeling of awe and amazement passed over us as if we had just witnessed a miracle. The tree sparkled with lights and presents under its outstretching limbs of needles and bark. My dad rushed to get the camera and take a picture before my brother and I brought havoc to the beautiful sight.

Brian was the first to open a present. Holding the book he had asked for, Brian looked up at the ceiling and mouthed thank you Santa. It was my turn next, and anxious to get to the good stuff, I reached back behind the tree and pulled out the biggest box with a blue bow. Within seconds all of the wrapping lay on the floor. Ripping open the box, I caught sight of my first present. An enormous GI Joe set sat at the bottom of the box. My face was enlightened with glee and I paused to think of who gave me the gift. I saw the tag on the box and immediately ran up to my mom and dad and gave them each two big hugs.

After everyone had opened their presents and said their Thank you's, we all entered the kitchen for breakfast. The living room was a mess like a tornado had passed through. I scarfed down my food and ran back out to get my toys. That Christmas had been so memorable for me and I will never forget it.

**Your Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback to the Writer:**

### MY Access! 6-Point Narrative Writing Rubric

	Focus & Meaning	Content & Development	Organization	Language Use & Style	Mechanics & Conventions
	<b>The extent to which the response establishes and maintains a controlling idea (or central idea), an understanding of purpose and audience, and completion of the task.</b>	<b>The extent to which the response develops ideas fully and creatively using extensive, specific, accurate, and relevant details (<i>plot, setting, characters, conflict, dialogue</i>).</b>	<b>The extent to which the response demonstrates a unified structure, direction, and unity, paragraphing and transitional devices.</b>	<b>The extent to which response demonstrates an awareness of audience and purpose through effective sentence structure, sentence variety, word choice and usage.</b>	<b>The extent the response demonstrates control of conventions, including paragraphing, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.</b>
6	<b>Very effective Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>thorough</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are all relevant to the story.	<b>Very Effective Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides a <i>thoroughly</i> detailed and developed plot and setting. Creates complex characters. Clearly establishes tension/conflict/problem that heightens the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used very effectively to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Very Effective Organization.</b> Captures the reader's attention by cleverly opening the story. Story flows very smoothly because of excellent transitions that support sequential development. Has a conclusion that pulls the entire story together.	<b>Very Effective Language Use and Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>precise</i> language and word choice, a <i>defined</i> voice, and a <i>clear</i> sense of audience; uses <i>well-structured and varied</i> sentences.	<b>Very Effective control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Few or no</i> errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling.
5	<b>Good Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>general</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are all relevant to the story.	<b>Good Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides a <i>well-developed</i> plot and setting. Creates believable characters. Establishes tension/ conflict/problem that heightens the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used effectively to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Good Organization.</b> Opening of story excites readers' to continue reading. Story flows smoothly from one event to another with effective transitions that support sequential development. Conclusion provides reader with a sense of completeness.	<b>Good Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>appropriate</i> language and word choice, with <i>some evidence</i> of voice and a <i>clear</i> sense of audience; uses <i>well-structured</i> sentences with <i>some variety</i> .	<b>Good control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Few errors</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>do not interfere with the message</i> .
4	<b>Adequate Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>basic</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that are relevant to the story.	<b>Adequate Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides a <i>reasonably</i> developed plot and setting. Creates believable characters. Establishes tension/ conflict/problem that holds the reader's suspense for what will happen in the story. Dialogue may be used to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Adequate Organization.</b> Provides an interesting opening to the story that keeps the reader reading. Story generally flows smoothly from one event to another with transitions to support sequential development.	<b>Adequate Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>appropriate</i> language and word choice, with an <i>awareness</i> of audience and control of voice; generally uses correct sentence structure with <i>some variety</i> .	<b>Adequate control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> Some errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>do not significantly interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
3	<b>Limited Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>limited</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that may not be relevant to the story.	<b>Limited Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides an <i>adequately</i> developed plot, setting and characters, but lacks sufficient detail to make this more than a summary of what happens in the story. Tension/ conflict or a problem may be stated, but not developed. Some dialogue may be used to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Limited Organization.</b> Provides an adequate opening that may not hold the reader's attention. The flow of the story may be broken by haps in time and sequence. Transitions may be weak. Provides the reader with some sense of closure.	<b>Limited Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>simple</i> language and word choice, <i>some awareness</i> of audience and control of voice; relies on <i>simple</i> sentences with <i>insufficient</i> sentence variety and word choice.	<b>Limited control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Several noticeable</i> errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>may interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
2	<b>Minimal Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates a <i>minimal</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides description and details that may stray from the point of the story.	<b>Minimal Content &amp; Development.</b> Provides a <i>minimally</i> developed plot and setting. Characters are only described rather than developed. Narrative may include details or information that detracts from the story. Lacks tension or conflict to make the story interesting. Little dialogue is used to reveal characters' thoughts.	<b>Minimal Organization.</b> Provides an opening that may repeat the title of the prompt. Flow of story may be difficult to follow because of gaps in time and sequence. Demonstrates little evidence of a conclusion.	<b>Minimal Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>poor</i> language and word choice, with <i>little awareness</i> of audience; makes <i>basic errors in</i> sentence structure and usage.	<b>Minimal control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Patterns of errors</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that <i>substantially interfere</i> with the communication of the message.
1	<b>Inadequate or no Focus &amp; Meaning.</b> Demonstrates <i>almost no</i> understanding of the purpose, audience and task. Provides very little detail, some of which may not be relevant to the story.	<b>Inadequate or no Content &amp; Development.</b> <i>Lacks</i> an identifiable plot and setting. Characters are introduced but not developed. Lack of tension or conflict makes the story uninteresting to follow. Not much happens.	<b>Inadequate or no Organization.</b> May have an opening that does no more than repeats the title of the prompt. Story lacks basic organization (beginning, middle and end) with serious gaps in sequencing of brief ideas.	<b>Inadequate Language Use &amp; Style.</b> Demonstrates <i>unclear or incoherent</i> language and word choice, <i>no</i> awareness of audience, and <i>major errors</i> in sentence structure and usage.	<b>Inadequate or no control of Conventions &amp; Mechanics.</b> <i>Errors so severe</i> in grammar, mechanics, punctuation and spelling that they <i>significantly interfere</i> with the communication of the message.

## MY Access! Writing Domains

Type of Writing: \_\_\_\_\_

Your writing will be evaluated on the basis of five domains or trains of writing. Study each domain on the rubric and USE BULLET POINTS to take notes so that you can define each one. The feedback you receive will use the language on this chart.

Focus & Meaning	Content & Development	Organization	Language Use & Style	Mechanics & Conventions
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Piece is paragraphed</li><li>• Grammar errors do not interfere with the message</li><li>• Uses proper punctuation</li><li>• Excellent spelling</li></ul>

## Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment

**Group Members:**

**Writing Domain: Focus and Meaning**

### Instructions:

**Step 1:** Read Sara's story and decide as a group how you would score it.

**Step 2:** Carefully read the MY Tutor feedback attached to this handout and follow the MY Tutor instructions. You can highlight directly on this paper.

**Step 3:** Discuss how Sara can revise the *Focus and Meaning* portion of her piece. Then, as a group, pretend you are Sara and revise her story based on the feedback for only **Focus and Meaning**. Be prepared to share your revision!

### **Sara's story:**

On my 9th birthday was so special to me because I got a lot of presents and a brand new bike. That was my first time to get a big girl bike and I was so happy. When i got that bike I wanted to ride it right away. I had a bike before when I was little but it was a Barbie bike. I loved that bike but someone stole it. The first time i got to use my bike was not until around summer. The only reason I didn't use it was because i didn't know how to ride a mountain bike. My sister Blanca taught me how to ride the bike and she got mad at me because I kept on pedaling backwards in stead of frontward.

One other thing I got on my birthday that was special to me was my \$80. That was special to me because I got it from my grandfather. At that time i was living in Massachusetts so it was special because my grand father was over here at that time and i haven't seen him in a long time. It was a very special birthday!

# Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment

**Group Members:**

**Writing Domain: Content and Development**

## **Instructions:**

**Step 1:** Read Sara's story and decide as a group how you would score it.

**Step 2:** Carefully read the MY Tutor feedback attached to this handout and follow the MY Tutor instructions. You can highlight directly on this paper.

**Step 3:** Discuss how Sara can revise the ***Content and Development*** portion of her piece. Then, as a group, pretend you are Sara and revise her story based on the feedback for only ***Content and Development***. Be prepared to share your revision!

## **Sara's story:**

On my 9th birthday was so special to me because I got a lot of presents and a brand new bike. That was my first time to get a big girl bike and I was so happy. When i got that bike I wanted to ride it right away. I had a bike before when I was little but it was a Barbie bike. I loved that bike but someone stole it. The first time i got to use my bike was not until around summer. The only reason I didn't use it was because i didn't know how to ride a mountain bike. My sister Blanca taught me how to ride the bike and she got mad at me because I kept on pedaling backwards in stead of frontward.

One other thing I got on my birthday that was special to me was my \$80. That was special to me because I got it from my grandfather. At that time i was living in Massachusetts so it was special because my grand father was over here at that time and i haven't seen him in a long time. It was a very special birthday!

# Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment

**Group Members:**

**Writing Domain: Organization**

**Instructions:**

**Step 1:** Read Sara's story and decide as a group how you would score it.

**Step 2:** Carefully read the MY Tutor feedback attached to this handout and follow the MY Tutor instructions. You can highlight directly on this paper.

**Step 3:** Discuss how Sara can revise the **Organization** portion of her piece. Then, as a group, pretend you are Sara and revise her story based on the feedback for only **Organization**. Be prepared to share your revision!

**Sara's story:**

On my 9th birthday was so special to me because I got a lot of presents and a brand new bike. That was my first time to get a big girl bike and I was so happy. When i got that bike I wanted to ride it right away. I had a bike before when I was little but it was a Barbie bike. I loved that bike but someone stole it. The first time i got to use my bike was not until around summer. The only reason I didn't use it was because i didn't know how to ride a mountain bike. My sister Blanca taught me how to ride the bike and she got mad at me because I kept on pedaling backwards in stead of frontward.

One other thing I got on my birthday that was special to me was my \$80. That was special to me because I got it from my grandfather. At that time i was living in Massachusetts so it was special because my grand father was over here at that time and i haven't seen him in a long time. It was a very special birthday!

# Understanding and Applying MY Tutor Feedback Group Assignment

**Group Members:**

**Writing Domain: Language Use and Style AND Mechanics and Conventions**

## **Instructions:**

**Step 1:** Read Sara's story and decide as a group how you would score it.

**Step 2:** Carefully read the MY Tutor feedback attached to this handout and follow the MY Tutor instructions. You can highlight directly on this paper.

**Step 3:** Discuss how Sara can revise the ***Language Use and Style AND Mechanics and Conventions*** portion of her piece. Then, as a group, pretend you are Sara and revise her story based on the feedback for only ***Language Use and Style and Mechanics and Conventions***. Be prepared to share your revision!

## **Sara's story:**

On my 9th birthday was so special to me because I got a lot of presents and a brand new bike. That was my first time to get a big girl bike and I was so happy. When i got that bike I wanted to ride it right away. I had a bike before when I was little but it was a Barbie bike. I loved that bike but someone stole it. The first time i got to use my bike was not until around summer. The only reason I didn't use it was because i didn't know how to ride a mountain bike. My sister Blanca taught me how to ride the bike and she got mad at me because I kept on pedaling backwards in stead of frontward.

One other thing I got on my birthday that was special to me was my \$80. That was special to me because I got it from my grandfather. At that time i was living in Massachusetts so it was special because my grand father was over here at that time and i haven't seen him in a long time. It was a very special birthday!

# MY Tutor Feedback – Focus and Meaning

Sara, on a scale of one to six, your response to **this assignment was rated a 3 for focus**. Focus relates to your ability to present a consistent, unified message and stay on topic.

Your focus is adequate. Typically, a response at this level gives a fairly clear statement of purpose and wanders only slightly from the topic.

Sara, now that you are ready to revise, try some of these ideas to help improve focus and meaning in your writing.

## **Revision Goal 1:** Understand the purpose, audience, and task.

1. Read the prompt. Find the topic, purpose, and audience. Write them on your focus checklist or on a blank sheet of paper.
2. Read your own writing and think:
  - What is the main event in my story? The topic of YOUR story should be the SAME as the topic of the prompt.
  - Why did I write my story? Am I writing to describe, to inform, to persuade? The purpose of YOUR story should be the SAME as the purpose in the prompt.
  - To whom am I writing? The audience to whom YOU are writing should be the SAME as the audience in the prompt.

### **Example:**

**Topic:** Write about [a special day in your life](#).

*I wrote about the day I was in the talent show because that was a special day for me.*

**Purpose:** [Describe the day](#).

*I used many details to describe the talent show.*

**Audience:** Write a story for your [friends and family](#).

*I included important details that I think will be interesting to my family and friends like how I felt before the talent show, what I did for my talent, how well I performed, and how I felt afterwards.*

## **Revision Goal 2:** Narrow your focus.

1. Highlight the main event in yellow.
2. Underline events and details that are NOT about the main event.
3. Move or remove the events and details that are NOT about the main event.

### **Example:**

**Before Revision:** **I will always remember the day I sang a song in the talent show.** [Jake and I watched a scary movie that night.](#)

**Frank's Strategy:** *The topic of my story is the talent show; watching a scary movie is not. I need to delete details that are not related to the main event.*

**After Revision:** I will always remember the day I sang a song in the talent show.

**Frank's Reflection:** *I removed "Jake and I watched a scary movie that night" because it has nothing to do with the main event, the talent show.*

**Revision Goal 3:** Use details to support the purpose of the story.

1. Highlight, in green, details about the main event.
2. Add key details about the main event: Where did the event take place? What did the scene look like? How did people act?

**Example:**

**Before Revision:** The school auditorium was **packed for the show.**

**Frank's Goal:** *I need to add more important information and details about the talent show, such as: Where did it take place? What did it look like? What happened?*

**After Revision:** The decorated school auditorium was packed with parents and students standing shoulder to shoulder.

**Frank's Strategy:** *I added colorful details about the auditorium, the place where the main event took place.*

# MY Tutor Feedback – Content and Development

Sara, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 2 for content and development**. Development relates to your ability to provide content that supports your main idea or controlling point and your ability to provide supporting details, examples and/or evidence.

Your development is limited. Typically, a response at this level shows support of ideas presented with some use of examples, evidence or other supporting details.

Sara, let's add more detail to your story!

## **Revision Goal 1:** Create a detailed setting.

1. Highlight, in green, the words that tell when and where your story took place. Now, add more specific details about where your story took place and when it happened. For example, you can describe the place, the weather, the time of day or year, or the season.
2. Now use your five senses to describe your setting. How does the setting look, feel, smell, or sound? Use your five senses to add more details to your setting.

### **Example:**

**Before Revision:** On Halloween, we got ready in my house.

**Annie's Strategy:** *I need to add more specific details about where and when my characters are getting ready. I also need to describe how the setting smells, looks, feels, and sounds.*

**After Revision:** On a crisp, fall Halloween night, we put on our costumes in my big, dark, cold kitchen.

**Annie's Reflection:** *I replaced "house" with "in my kitchen" and added "crisp, fall" and "night" to "Halloween" to make the setting more specific. I also added "big, dark, cold" to describe how the kitchen looked and felt.*

## **Revision Goal 2:** Create realistic characters.

1. Underline the people in your story. Give them names if they do not have them.
2. Highlight, in green, details about your characters. Add more details to help your reader "see" and "hear" your characters: How do they look, sound, and act?

### **Example:**

**Before Revision:** On Halloween night, my little brother and I got ready in our kitchen.

**Annie's Strategy:** *I want to add specific details about my characters. What is the little brother's name? I need to describe the little brother. How does he act?*

**After Revision:** On Halloween night, my annoying little brother Mikey and I put on our ghost costumes in our big kitchen. Since we were young, Mikey has always copied everything I do. So, this Halloween, we were both dressing up as ghosts.

**Annie's Reflection:** *I named the little brother, "Mikey," and added "annoying" to describe him. I also gave more details about what the main character and Mikey were doing on Halloween night.*

3. Dialogue (what your characters say) makes your characters seem more real. Find a place in your story where your characters could talk or think out loud. Add dialogue to show what your characters would say to themselves or to each other.

**Example:**

**Before Revision:** My annoying little brother, Mikey, wanted to be a ghost for Halloween just because I was going to dress up as one. Because he is younger than I am, our mom said that he could.

**Annie's Strategy:** *I want to include dialogue to make my characters seem more life-like. What would my characters say? How would they say it?*

**After Revision:** My annoying little brother, Mikey, wanted to be a ghost for Halloween just because I was going to dress up as one. When I said I was dressing up as a ghost, Mikey whined, "I want to be a ghost, too!"

"NO! I said I wanted to be a ghost first!" I cried.

"Let your little brother be a ghost too," my mom said.

So, this Halloween, we were both dressing up as ghosts.

**Annie's Reflection:** *I added dialogue to make Mikey and his older brother seem more real and to help the reader know the characters better.*

**Revision Goal 3:** Build a well-developed plot.

1. Highlight the main event (what you most want your reader to know about) in yellow. Add important information about what happened during the event. For example, you can describe how the characters feel, how they act, and what they say.

**Example:**

**Before Revision:** On Halloween, my little brother and I put on our ghost costumes in our big kitchen. Once we were dressed in our ghost costumes, it was time for trick-or-treating. I was excited to go trick-or-treating.

**Annie's Strategy:** *I want to find my main event and add important information to describe it. What is important or interesting about the main event?*

**After Revision:** Once we were dressed in our ghost costumes, it was time for trick-or-treating. I was still excited to go trick-or-treating, even though Mikey and I had the same costume. Nothing would make me less excited to get candy!

**Annie's Reflection:** *I added more details about how the older brother felt and why he felt that way. The reader needs to know this information in order to understand why the main event is important.*

2. Highlight, in green, details about the main event. Highlight your verbs (the action) in red. Add details and strong verbs to make the main event come to life! Use the word bank to help you.

**Example:**

**Before Revision:** Mikey and I got our bags for the candy and ran outside. It was almost dark, and there were a lot of people in costumes trick-or-treating already.

**Annie's Strategy:** *I want to use sensory details to help the reader picture the setting. I can add strong verbs to make the action exciting.*

**After Revision:** Mikey and I grabbed our bags for the candy and raced outside. The sun was setting, and it was getting darker and spookier. The street was already filled with witches, pirates, and monsters who were already trick-or-treating.

## MY Tutor Feedback – Organization

Sara, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 2 for organization**. Organization relates to your ability to present your ideas in a logical and ordered fashion.

Your organization is limited. Typically, a response at this level shows an appropriate organizational structure (beginning, middle and end), but is missing or lacks transitions and is not unified and consistent throughout.

Sara, now that you have some ideas, let's work on putting them in order. Let's work on organization!

**Revision Goal 1:** Put your events in order.

1. Number each event in your story.
2. In the beginning, did you tell what took place first? In the middle, did you tell what took place next? At the end, did you tell what took place last? Make sure nothing is out of order.

**Example:**

**Before Revision:** (1) First, Sarah got out of bed. (2) Then, she ate cereal. (3) She ran out the door. (4) She heard her bus coming down the street.

**Oscar's Strategy:** *I need to put my events in the correct order. Sarah heard her bus coming down the street before she ran out the door.*

**After Revision:** First, Sarah got out of bed. Then, she ate some cereal. She heard her bus coming down the street. She ran out the door.

**Oscar's Reflection:** *I put the events in the correct order: Sarah got out of bed, ate some cereal, heard her bus coming down the street, and then ran out the door.*

**Revision Goal 2:** Use transitions to show your reader how events and ideas are connected.

1. Highlight, in orange, the transitions (words such as first, second, last, next, yesterday, today, in addition) in your story.
2. Add more transitions to show how your events go together. Use the word bank to help you!

**Example:**

**Before Revision:** First, Sarah got out of bed. Then, she ate some cereal. She heard her bus coming down the street. She ran out the door.

**Oscar's Strategy:** *I need to add transitional words or phrases to help my reader follow the events in my story.*

**After Revision:** First, Sarah got out of bed. Then she ate some cereal. A few minutes later, she heard her bus coming down the street. She ran out the door.

**Oscar's Reflection:** *I added the transitional phrase, "A few minutes later" to show when the events took place and to make the sequence of events flow together.*

# MY Tutor Feedback – Language Use & Style

Sara, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 3 for language use and style**. Language use relates to the decisions you make as a writer to create "style" in your writing. Style is created through sentence variety, word choice and usage.

Your language use and style is adequate. Typically, a response at this level is readable, but shows errors in sentence structure, usage and word choice.

Sara, let's work on your style and language use. Try some of these ideas to make your story more interesting!

## **Revision Goal 1:** Choose words carefully.

1. Underline the nouns (people, places, and things) in your story. Use specific words to tell how people, places, and things look, sound, feel, or smell.

### **Example:**

**Before Revision:** Because it was cold out, he didn't buy the ice pops. Instead he bought hot chocolate, marshmallows, and cookies.

**Larry's Strategy:** *I need to add sensory details to describe the things in my story.*

**After Revision:** Because it was cold out, he didn't buy the ice pops. Instead he bought hot chocolate, fluffy marshmallows, and chocolate chip cookies.

**Larry's Reflection:** *I added "fluffy" to describe the marshmallows and "chocolate chip" to describe the cookies. Specific details will help my reader picture my story.*

2. Highlight your verbs in red. Use strong verbs (for example, run, walk, scream, cook, bolt, jump). Tell when and how people and things act: Did they act now, yesterday, this afternoon? Did they act slowly, loudly, quickly? Use the word bank to help you.

### **Example:**

**Before Revision:** The boy **put on** his gray wool coat **to walk** to the grocery store. When he got to the store, he **looked** at the ice pops. Because it was cold out, he didn't buy them.

**Larry's Strategy:** *I need to replace weak action words with strong action words. I also need to add details about when and how characters acted.*

**After Revision:** The boy slipped into his gray wool coat to walk quickly to the grocery store. When he got to the store, he stared at the ice pops. Because it was cold out, he didn't buy them.

**Larry's Reflection:** *I replaced my weaker action words, "put on" and "looked," with stronger, specific action words "slid into" and "stared." I also added an adverbs (-ly word), "quickly," to describe how the boy walked.*

## **Revision Goal 2:** Write short and long sentences.

1. Highlight short sentences in pink. Highlight, in purple, long sentences that include more than one idea. Be sure to use both long and short sentences.
2. Combine short sentences with conjunctions, such as "and," "but," and "or."

### **Example:**

**Before Revision:** He paid for the food. Then he walked home.

**Larry's Strategy:** *I need to combine ideas in short sentences using connecting words like "and" or "but."*

**After Revision:** He paid for the food and walked home.

**Larry's Reflection:** I connected two sentences by replacing "then he" with the conjunction "and."

**Revision Goal 3:** Make the beginnings of your sentences more interesting.

1. Underline the first three words in each sentence. Do all of your sentences start the same way?
2. If sentences begin the same way, add details such as *when* or *where* something happened to change how some of your sentences begin.

**Example:**

**Before Revision:** He paid for the food and walked home. He was thinking about his yummy winter snack.

**Larry's Strategy:** *Variety is the key to interesting writing. I need to change the beginnings of sentences that sound the same.*

**After Revision:** After he paid for the food, he walked home. He was thinking about his yummy winter snack.

**Larry's Reflection:** *I added the transition word "after" to tell when the action took place and to change the beginning of my first sentence.*

# MY Tutor Feedback – Mechanics and Conventions

Sara, on a scale of one to six, your response **was rated a 3 for mechanics**. Mechanics has to do with your ability to apply the rules of standard American English, including grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Your use of mechanics is satisfactory. A response at this level contains few errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and spelling.

Sara, the better the mechanics, the easier it will be for the reader to enjoy and understand your writing.

**Revision Goal 1:** Eliminate errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and spelling.

1. Read your writing. You may want to read out loud (to yourself) so that you can hear many of your mistakes and correct them.
2. Correct any spelling errors using the spell checker. Then, make your reader SMILE by doing the following:

**S**entences: Make sure each sentence has a subject and an action.

**Before Revision:** My house on Halloween.

**Marcy's Strategy:** *I noticed that this sentence does not have an action. I need to add a verb to make this fragment a sentence.*

**After Revision:** We put on our costumes in my house on Halloween night.

**Marcy's Reflection:** *I added a verb to make the sentence fragment a complete sentence.*

**M**arks: End each sentence with a punctuation mark.

**Before Revision:** My five-year-old brother and I were putting on our costumes in the kitchen how funny Mikey looked wearing his costume, which was too big for him what was my mom thinking when she bought it

**Marcy's Strategy:** *I noticed that this paragraph does not have any punctuation. I need to put punctuation marks at the end of each sentence to make my writing clearer.*

**After Revision:** My five-year-old brother and I were putting on our costumes in the kitchen. How funny Mikey looked wearing his costume, which was too big for him! What was my mom thinking when she bought it?

**Marcy's Reflection:** *I put punctuation marks at the end of each sentence. If the sentence was exciting, I added an exclamation point. If the sentence was a question, I added a question mark.*

**I**ndents: Indent when you begin a new paragraph.

**Before Revision:**

As my five-year-old brother, Mikey and I were putting on our costumes in the kitchen, Mikey yelled, "I can't wait to go trick-or-treating!" Yesterday, we mapped out the entire neighborhood and planned where we wanted to go trick-or-treating. We better get started soon or we will never make it to all of the houses.

**Marcy's Strategy:** *I noticed that I did not indent the beginning of this paragraph. I need to indent each paragraph.*

**After Revision:**

\_\_\_\_\_As my five-year-old brother, Mikey and I were putting on our costumes in the kitchen, Mikey yelled, "I can't wait to go trick-or-treating!" Yesterday, we mapped out the entire neighborhood and planned where we wanted to go trick-or-treating. We better get started soon or we will never make it to all of the houses.

**Marcy's Reflection:** *I indented the beginning of the paragraph.*

**Letters:** Start each sentence with a **capital letter**.

**Before Revision:** it was Halloween night. my brother and i got ready in the kitchen.

**Marcy's Strategy:** *These sentences do not begin with capital letters. I need to capitalize the words at the beginning of sentences.*

**After Revision:** It was Halloween night. My brother and I got ready in the kitchen.

**Marcy's Reflection:** I changed all of the lowercase letters in the beginning of sentences to capital letters. I need to remember that I always have to capitalize the pronoun, "I."

**Editor:** Click on MY Editor for more ways to improve your writing.

# Sample Revision Plan

**Name:** Sara Mills  
**Class:** Narrative Writing  
**Prompt:** A Special Day

## **My Goals:**

### Focus and Meaning:

I must focus on my 9<sup>th</sup> birthday and the gifts and events that made that day special.

### Content and Development:

I will write about the people I spent my birthday with and the great presents I received.

## **Writing Strategy:**

### Focus and Meaning:

I will begin my story just before I open my presents. I will only write about the people that were there and the presents that I got on my 9<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Content and Development:

In my revised story, I will first describe two of the smaller presents I received then surprise my readers with my favorite gift—the bicycle. Adding details and dialogue to my story will allow my readers to share in my anticipation of the last “big” gift. I hope building suspense will help my readers to feel the same excitement that I felt on my birthday.

## **Reflection:**

I started writing without planning. Next time I will outline my ideas and select the details before I start writing my story. I want to include more details about my special birthday and remove the details about my old bike, since that is not the topic of my story.

# Writers' Workshop: Testing Your Writing on an Audience

1. Assemble in groups of three (3)---a writer and two peer responders
2. Print 3 copies of your paper: one for you and one for each of your two editors

*Goal: To strengthen your introduction, conflict and conclusion of your story*

## The Process

- Read your writing out loud...slowly. Your peer responders should not comment on your writing while you are reading aloud.
- Your peer responders should read your paper at least once more to themselves. During the second reading, they may mark up your paper with questions/comments that they will share with you verbally.
- During the time your responders are commenting on your paper, you are to take notes, NOT SPEAK.
- Once they are completely finished, you may ask your responders questions to further clarify their comments, as needed.

## **The Revision Plan, the Revision and the Reflection (3Rs)**

- Write a revision plan that reflects the goals and strategies suggested by your peers.
- Revise your essay
- Highlight the changes and describe the reasons for those changes
- Write a reflection that describes your thinking throughout the writing process
- Reassemble with your group to share your revised draft and your reflection
- Submit the revised draft, revision plan with a reflection to your teacher for credit

## Suggested comments:

- You have an engaging introduction. I like the way...
- Your introduction tells or informs rather than excites. Perhaps you can...
- I like the way you used conflict to .....
- Consider adding a scene in your story where.....
- Consider adding more emotion to your characters so that readers can identify with what characters are feeling
- Consider adding more dialogue so that your readers can hear the characters thinking.
- Tell me what you mean by "....."
- I would suggest that you .....(add, remove, rearrange, reword, rephrase, etc)
- Consider concluding your story by leaving your reader with a strong impression of the main point or message you are expressing. You may even want to end with dialogue.

## Questions to Prompt Reflection

1. What thoughts did you have about your paper before the writers' workshop?
2. What did you become aware of during the session?
3. What did you change? Why?
4. What did you keep the same? Why?
5. Which suggestions were most helpful? Least helpful?
6. What thoughts do you have about your revised draft?
7. What have you learned about yourself as a writer that you will take into consideration for your next focused writing?

Revision Plan (you can complete this in MY Access!)

My goals:

My strategy:

Reflection (complete after you revise your story)