

# Narrative Example Essays

## Grades 7-8

*Essay scores are produced for the following grade ranges: 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, and 11-12. Thus a seventh grade essay is compared to models for both seventh and eighth grades.*

**Prompt for Essays 1-4:** *Write a story about a gift you received that was very special. Explain why the gift was special and the circumstances leading up to receiving it. Use dialogue to enhance your narrative.*

### **Narrative Essay 1: A Pool!**

One day my mom said we were getting a pool. I was so excited I jumped for joy. My borther and siter jumped for joy too. We had to wait until the rain stopped and it was dry. Tehn we had to wait until we planted flowrs and bushes. Tehn we bought furniture and put chemical in the water to make it healthy. Finally we went swimming and it was great! One day my mom said we were getting a pool. I was so excited I jumped for joy. My borther and siter jumped for joy too. We had to wait until the rain stopped and it was dry. Tehn we had to wait until we planted flowrs and bushes. Tehn we bought furniture and put chemical in the water to make it healthy. Finally we went swimming and it was great!

*Annotation: This draft would not be scored due to the amount of repetition. The writer has used the same six sentences twice.*

### **Narrative Essay 2: A Pool!**

I really wanted pool for my back yard I needed one so my friends could come and go swimming with me when its hot. If my parents would put in a pool I would be so very excited and happy. Then one day they said I could have a pool! My brother and sister and I were so excited, we jumped for joy! Then the pool builders came and started digging. It rained so much we thought the pool would be built of mud. Finally, it was finished. We bought furniture and plants and put up towel hooks. We were ready. Then it rained again so we had to wait again. Finally, we got to go in and wow! It was so much fun! I love my pool.

*Annotation: This is a paragraph rather than an essay. It needs further development of ideas to become an essay.*

### **Narrative Essay 3: A Pool!**

I always really wanted a swimming pool for my back yard. I needed one so my friends could come and swim with me when its hot. I thought that if my parents would buy me a pool, I would be so very excited! I always really wanted a swimming pool for my back yard. I needed one so my friends could come and swim with me when its hot. I thought that if my parents would buy me a pool, I would be so very excited and happy. I begged and begged, but thought it would never happen. Then one day in the winter, my family were sitting around the supper table when my mom said she had some news. We all looked at her, and she said, "After a lot of thinking, your dad and I have decided we will put a pool in the back yard this year."

I screamed with delight! My sister screamed. My brother yelled. I just threw myself in my mom's arms. I hugged her neck so hard.

Then they started talking about rules. All these rules to be sure everyone was safe. That was fine with me. I was so happy!

That spring, it seemed that the pool would never be finished. Then we had to plant flowers and bushes and had to buy furniture. Then we had to fill the pool and put in chemicals. The water had to sit awhile and then finally we could swim, but there was a thunderstorm so we had to wait. On May 28, 2010, we got to jump in. It was wonderful!

*Annotation: This essay has more development, but still falls short of the kind of development and word choice expected at this level.*

#### **Narrative Essay 4: A Pool!**

My sister, brother, and I had always wanted a swimming pool. We were all on the swim team, and we loved to swim. We had plenty of room behind our house, and we just knew that having a swimming pool there would be the best thing ever. We could invite our friends to swim. We could practice our strokes without having to compete for room in the public pool, and we could invite our friends to swim any time. We'd be the most popular kids in town!

All three of us had begged and begged. We had campaigned hard. We made a bulletin board with pictures of pools in different shapes and sizes. We looked up articles about how good swimming was for your health. We made a chart showing how much we could save on pool fees, food, and transportation if we had our own pool. Every time one of our parents had to take us to a friend's house or to the pool, we'd sigh loudly and say, "You know, if we just had a pool, you wouldn't have to drive us anywhere.

We'd stay home and invite our friends over, instead." Both Mom and Dad would just smile at us. We didn't give up, but truthfully, we thought it would never happen. Then one freezing winter day when I was twelve, my family had just finished supper table when my mom said she had some news. She looked over at my dad and smiled. He looked back at her and winked. Curious, we all waited impatiently, thinking she was going to tell us some news about her job or suggest we go to a movie the next night. But none of us was prepared for what she actually said.

"After a lot of thinking," she said slowly, "Your dad and I have decided to put a pool in the back yard this year."

I struggled to swallow at first, thinking I hadn't heard her correctly. My sister screamed. My brother yelled. My heart was hammering in my chest and all of a sudden I just threw myself in my mom's arms. I hugged her neck so hard. Then she looked at me and wiped my happy tears away. She smoothed my hair back out of my face and looked at me and then at the rest of the family. She said, "We decided this would be good for the whole family. All of you can invite friends over to swim. That way, you'll always have something to do here at home in the summer. And your dad and I will enjoy being with you while also getting some exercise."

I screamed with delight! I was shaking, I was so excited. My sister ran to hug my mom, and then my dad, and then she hugged me. My brother was pounding the table and leaping up to try to touch the ceiling. We three ended up dancing around the kitchen, singing, "We're getting a pool, we're getting a pool!" My dad just chuckled.

Then they got serious and talked about rules and responsibility. We had to have a fence a certain height so that little kids didn't fall in the pool accidentally. We could never get in the pool alone. We had to make sure Mom or Dad was outside watching us, and we always had to be sure to ask before inviting a friend. All that didn't matter to me. It sounded just fine. In fact, it sounded great!

All that spring, there was scraping, digging and cement-pouring in our back yard. It was a really rainy spring, and the rain and mud created delay after delay. It seemed that there was always mud everywhere and that the pool would never be finished. It was almost May before the pool was finally in, but then we had to plant grass, flowers and bushes all around to make sure the surrounding dirt didn't just slide into the pool. We bought chairs and a table and umbrella to put on the surrounding patio, and Dad hung hooks right inside the back door for towels. Then we had to fill the pool with water and add the chemicals to make sure the ph. balance was right. Even then, we couldn't get in the water yet. The water had to sit for a while to be sure it was ready. And then, on the day we were supposed to get to swim, there was a huge thunderstorm, so of course, we still couldn't swim. I thought we'd never get to finally try out our new pool! But the day did come, and on May 28, 2009 we finally were able to jump in.

It was wonderful! We swam and swam and jumped and dived – in fact, we all looked like prunes when we finally got out. It was a dream come true. At last, after wishing and praying and begging, we had our pool.

*Annotation: The writer of this essay has fleshed out the story of how the pool came about and fully describes her excitement. Including higher level vocabulary, figurative language, and more complex sentences would improve the essay even more.*

**Prompt for Essays 5-7:** Now that you have read “All Summer in a Day,” write what happens next. After the children finally let Margot out of the closet, and the teacher returns, what happens? What does Margot do? What does the teacher do? Be careful to retain all the elements of the original story.

#### **Narrative Essay 5: “All Summer in a Day”**

Margot walked out of the closet. She saw all her classmates and she immediately knew what happened. she let out a wail. For the past 7 years, she had waited and waited to feel the sun. But it had all been ruined because of her mean classmates. She was mad, and her blood was boiling. She pushed them away and ran past the teacher who was heading toward the kids to find out what was going on. “Margot!” she called out trying to stop her, but Margot didn't care about anybody right now, she had had enough. “Why is Margot running down the hall” she asked demandingly. “We didn't mean to make her miss out on the sun” said somebody. “Well you better say sorry, and come back here so that I can think of a punishment for this class” said the teacher.

*Annotation: This draft does not really add anything new to the story, nor does it fully address the prompt. The writer needs to add specific actions and events to build this new ending.*

#### **Narrative Essay 6: “All Summer in a Day”**

Margot's pale face came into view as she slowly walked out of the closet. She saw that all her classmates had a somber look on them, and she immediately realized what had happened. Her hands started trembling, and she let out a wail. For the past 7 years, she had waited and waited to feel the sun warm her skin and make her shout with delight, but it had all been ruined because of her mean classmates. She was infuriated, and her blood was boiling. She pushed them away and ran past the teacher who was heading toward the kids to find out what was going on. “Margot!” she called out trying to stop her, but Margot didn't care about anybody right now, she had had enough.

“Why is Margot running down the hall” she asked demandingly. “We didn't mean to make her miss out on the sun” said somebody. “Well, you better say sorry, and come back here so that I can think of a punishment for this class” said the teacher.

Margot's special place was this lake near her house. Since it's always raining and storming on the surface of Venus, they had to live underground. This caused them to have plants, trees, grass and other various natural stuff to keep it fresh. They also had lakes, hills, plains, etc. so that it would feel like Earth. she used to fish at the lake with her father every Saturday until her father went on an exploration mission to Mars and never came back. She sat there heartbroken, and cried until her eyes were dry. She sat there, looking into the lake, until she decided that she was done with this nonsense. She knew her mom couldn't afford to be able to go back to Earth, so Margot made the choice to secretly stowaway on the next rocket leading to Earth. It was due time to see the Sun.

*Annotation: This essay does add interesting details to the story. A better essay would further develop these ideas, using figurative language, high-level vocabulary, and specific, rather than general descriptions.*

### **Narrative Essay 7: "All Summer in a Day"**

Margot's face was pale and streaked with tears as she slowly walked out of the closet. At first, she thought her classmates had relented and come to get her so she, too, could play outside in the sun.

But when she looked at their expressions, she realized her mistake. Instead of joy and expectation, she saw embarrassment and regret. Margot's lip trembled, her eyes filled, and she let out a high-pitched wail. She had waited so long, anticipating the feel of the sun's warmth on her skin, its shining yellow light setting everything aglow. She had always loved the sun, had always gloried in its heat and brightness. But it had all been ruined because of this cruelty of her classmates. Such cruelty! She was devastated by what they had taken from her, yet embarrassed to be the brunt of such viciousness. She pushed through them, running past their teacher down the hall.

"Margot!" Ms. Adams called out, but Margot didn't stop. She could only run blindly away, away from what was so painful she could not bear to even acknowledge it.

Margot's face was pale and streaked with tears as she slowly walked out of the closet. At first, she thought her classmates had relented and come to get her so she, too, could play outside in the sun.

But when she looked at their expressions, she realized she was mistaken. Instead of joy and expectation, she saw embarrassment and regret. Margot's lip trembled, her eyes filled, and she let out a high-pitched wail. She had waited so long, anticipating the feel of the sun's warmth on her skin, its shining yellow light setting everything aglow. She had always loved the sun, had always gloried in its heat and brightness, and she missed it so very much in this dreary world of constant rain. But today had all been ruined because of the cruelty of her classmates. And such cruelty! She was devastated by what they had taken from her, yet embarrassed to be the brunt of such viciousness. She pushed through them, running past their teacher down the hall.

"Margot!" Ms. Adams called out, but Margot didn't stop. She could only run blindly away, away from what was so painful she could not bear to even acknowledge it.

"Why is Margot running down the hall? What happened here?" demanded Ms. Adams, turning accusing eyes to the group of students huddled near the open closet door.

"Well, she got stuck in the closet," William burst out defiantly.

"And just how did that happen?" William shuffled his feet and looked at the floor, but said nothing. Finally, Finn mumbled, "We tricked her and locked her in."

"But we didn't mean for her to miss out on the Sun!" exclaimed Madeline, her usually sallow cheeks flaming.

“But why? Why would you do that?” Again, there was silence.

“She’s just a know-it-all! She was always saying that she knew about the sun and that she remembered what it felt like. I can’t stand her!” William shouted.

Finn continued, “So we locked her in the closet so we didn’t have to listen to her, and then . . .”

Sarah, with tears running down her cheeks, finished his sentence in a whisper. “We forgot about her.”

Margot stumbled through the underground corridors leading to the center of the city. In a carefully engineered park, she sat on a low bench and tried to catch her breath. Her sobs had diminished as she had moved further away from the scene of her devastation, but she felt sick with the churning of her stomach. Her tears continued to flow, but she wiped her eyes and began to look around at her surroundings. The park looked almost like parks back home, but no matter how well the engineers had designed it, it wasn’t the same. The air was different, with an almost-muggy, stale feeling. However, the flowers bloomed all year, and there was a little fountain that poured into a pond. It was a beautiful place, if you had never seen Earth. There were trees ranging from common oak and pine to massive redwoods. The spectrum of plants and flowers varied just as much, with bright, beautiful sunflowers and creamy gardenias to flamboyant orchids and dry, spiky cactuses. The park was a popular spot for families to hang out, fish, play, read, have picnics, and relax.

So, that brings us back to Margot who was at her most favorite place in the park. She loved this place. She and her father had come here often to pretend they were back on Earth. It already seemed so long ago, but she vividly remembered all the fun she had had with him. Her father was a well-built man in his late forties. He had black hair with some grey streaks running through and sparkling blue eyes. He always smiled and stroked his perfectly trimmed grey beard when he was thinking. He was one of those people who couldn’t stand untidiness and wanted everything to be neat. She loved that about him. In fact, she loved everything about him. They had gone fishing in the park every Saturday and they always caught something to cook at home. It was a good life, until one day, her dad, a well-respected astronaut, and some others had gone on an exploration mission to Saturn and never came back. Margot kept thinking that one day he would return, but she knew now that it was never going to happen.

So, there she was, sitting on a bench, crying until she had no more tears. Even then, she continued to whimper. Why did the others pick on her? What had she done to make them hate her so much? Her father was gone. She had missed the sun. Her classmates were malicious. What next? She stared at the calm water and the ripples caused by the fish, her mind lost in space. Then she heard the clicks that indicated a newscast. Intercoms placed throughout the underground were used to distribute news releases and notifications. Margot idly listened to the news of the day, when suddenly she sat up straight. Yes, it was true. She had heard correctly. The announcer had stated that a supply rocket was returning to Earth tomorrow to gather supplies. The thought came to her as fully-formed plan. She would go along on that ship. She would stow away on the supply rocket and return to Earth. It was due time to see the sun.

*Annotation: This essay demonstrates specific detail and great style. The description of Margot’s father helps the reader understand her desolation and loneliness and creates sympathy for her.*

**Prompt for Essays 8-10:** Write a journal entry that records a typical day in the life of a person during the Middle Ages. You may choose from any of the social classes (nobility, knights, peasants, clergy, merchants, etc.) for your main character. Use the information gained in the resources provided to illuminate the daily ritual and the character you create in your narrative. Be sure that your journal entry is historically correct.

### **Narrative Essay 8: Life of a Serf, Part I**

I am a serf and I hate my lord so I snuk into his house to steal some stuff. But he came in and I had to hide under a table. Then someone, his wife came in and they talked about an attack that was coming so then when they left I took the plaes and ran home and left them on the table. I went to bed. Then heard loud nose and so I woke up and it was wair.

*Annotation: This draft is a paragraph, not an essay. Further development of ideas is necessary.*

### **Narrative Essay 9: Life of a Serf, Part I**

I am a serf. My house is nothing special. It is a one room hut made of sod. The roof is made of thatch, and the ground is just dirt. Inside we have one bed that we all have to share, we also have two pigs one cow and a dog.

My dog's name is Scoot. I hated working for my lord. I was sick of it! I hated weeding the garden, feeding the animals, milking the cow, and plowing. I don't really like doing that kind of stuff so the next morning I decided to go sneak into my lord's house. I didn't really like my lord. All the stuff we did was not good enough for him. He would punish us if we broke one of His tools by accident. The other reason I don't really like Him is because it seems like He gets all the good stuff!!! He had a castle and didn't have to work. He got better food then us! Also he acted like He was so much better than us!

So I decided to pay him a visit!! When I got to the door I listened to see if I could hear anybody in there, I didn't. I had never been in my lord's house before, I looked around. I saw a table with fruit and a couple of books on it, a cupboard, and a nice fire.

"Oh no" I said.

I heard someone opening up the door. I thought quickly and dashed under the table. It was my lord!! That was a close one, I thought to myself! But It wasn't over yet!

Another person came in, I assumed it was my lord's wife.

I overheard them speaking about Lord Gilbert, and my lord said " And you know why Lord Gilbert wants to attacks us? Because he doesn't think that the King is being fair with His knights!"

I couldn't really understand this. But just then a door slammed and interrupted my thoughts. This is the time to leave I thought!

I got up and opened a cupboard and grabbed four nice plates. I knew what I was doing was wrong , but he had plenty of plates and it wasn't like he was going to miss them! When I got home I put them on the table and went to bed.

That night while I was sleeping I heard a horrible sound, I suddenly realized it meant that a attack was coming. So all of us got up and went to a room in the castle.

*Annotation: The addition of details and dialogue are great improvements to this essay. At times, development is uneven, making it difficult for the reader to follow.*

### **Narrative Essay 10: Life of a Serf, Part I**

I had found the pages in an old trunk. I pulled them out. They were made of some sort of thin parchment, and it was clear that they were old. Puzzled and curious, I began to read the spidery writing.

Now that I serve the monks of the Abbey, I have learned to read and write. My master suggested I practice my new skills by writing down my life story as it happens. First, of course, I must give you the history of my life. Only then can the reader understand how fortunate I am to be here at the abbey.

I was born a serf in a family of four brothers. I was the youngest, and by the time I was old enough to begin earning my keep, my brothers were all living on their own with their own families. My house was nothing special. It was one room hut made of sod. The roof is made of thatch, and the ground is just dirt. Inside we have mats of rush to sleep on and that we can roll up to make more room during the day. We also have two pigs, one cow and a dog named Scoot.

One night while we were sleeping I got pushed out of bed and ended up sleeping right next to my cow. Since we had to keep them in our house I didn't smell too good! So I got up and went to a stream I knew of and bathed there. I was so bored, all we did it seemed was work for our lord, then come back and work some more at our own house! I was sick of it! I always wanted to do other things. Not just work all day long, doing the same things over and over again! Weeding the garden, feeding the animals, milking the cow, and hauling water. I wanted to do something else, but I knew it was hopeless.

One morning, I decided to sneak into my lord's house. I didn't really like my lord. All our hard work was not good enough for him. He would punish us for any reason, and while he lived in a grand house and ate fine food, some of us were almost starving. He did not care as long as we worked to make him richer. So I decided to pay a visit! So off I went. When I got to the door I listened to see if I could hear anybody in there, I didn't. I had never been in the lord's house before, and I had to admit it was nice. I looked around. I saw a long table with fruit and a couple of books on it, and there was a warm fire with benches in front.

"Oh no," I said, as I heard someone opening up the door. I thought quickly and dashed under the table. It was my lord! That was a close one, I thought to myself! But it wasn't over yet! Another person came in; I assumed it was my lord's wife. There were some soft murmurs, and then I overheard them speaking about Lord Gilbert. Lord Gilbert was the lord nearest us. He, too, had a huge amount of land. I knew my lord had never liked him, and rumors were that they had always been sworn enemies. Then my lord began speaking again.

"And you know why Lord Gilbert wants to attacks us?!" said my lord.

"Because He doesn't think that the King is being fair with His knights!" I couldn't really understand this. Attack us? This made me extremely nervous, so nervous that I started shaking! I didn't know what to do.

But just then I realized the two were leaving, and I waited until I heard the door shut. I waited some more and then thought, "This is the time to leave!" But, shaken as I was, I didn't want to go away empty-handed. I got up and opened a cupboard. I grabbed four wooden plates. I knew what I was doing was wrong, but he had plenty of plates and it wasn't like he was going to miss them! Then I filled my pockets with fruit from the bowl and snuck out.

I didn't tell my mother where the fruit or plates came from. I just shrugged, and she was glad enough to let it go. That night while I was sleeping I heard a horrible sound; I suddenly realized it meant that an attack was coming. We got up and ran to the safe hold in the castle. I had an aunt and uncle who had three kids, and we met them at the room. We had no idea what was happening. The room was dark and crowded, and soldiers came in and ordered all the men out to help them fight. My father went out, with my mother trying to hold on to him, crying. All the other women were crying too. They were so afraid they would never see their husbands and sons again.

It was a long, bloody battle. I only know that because of afterwards. We lost so many men, and at the end, all of our cottages were burned. My father was safe, but he never was the same. He had a terrible look in his eyes for the rest of his life. My uncle lost his leg, and one of my brothers lost a foot. But there were people worse off. Our lord was taken prisoner.

*Annotation: The beginning of this essay is engaging, making the reader want to know more about the pages found in the trunk. Some events are unexplained, such as the theft of the plates. Motivation of the character for his actions needs to be clear. Higher-level vocabulary, figurative language, and more dialogue could improve the essay even more.*

*For more examples of student essays, see the Common Core State Standards Initiative site, which includes samples of actual student essays for all three writing genres and for all grades. Each essay includes helpful notes and explanations. The first set of essays is from an on-demand writing assignment. The second set shows a range of writing, usually with one or more short essays and one or more longer ones.*

*Link: <http://achievethecore.org/page/505/common-core-narrative-writing>*