Narrative Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

Strong Grade 6 narratives (1) HOOK the reader and establish setting and characters, (2) develop events through DIALOGUE, ACTION, and DESCRIPTION, (3) use a variety of TRANSITIONS to show time and place, (4) use PRECISE words and SENSORY language, and (5) provide a conclusion that follows from the events and the narrator's experience.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Student draft - The Audition

The folding chair outside the choir room squeaked every time I shifted my weight, which was about every four seconds. Ms. Akinyemi's voice drifted through the door - cheerful, encouraging, then a long pause, then the same exercise again. The girl inside had been singing for nine minutes. I knew because I had been counting on the second hand of the cracked clock above the water fountain.

I had practiced 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' for six weeks. My mom had recorded me on her phone every night so I could listen back and fix the wobble in my breath. My older brother, who used to sing in the same choir, had walked me through where to stand and how to plant my feet. I knew the song. I just did not know if my voice would do what I had told it to do.

The door opened. Ms. Akinyemi smiled the kind of smile teachers smile when they want you to relax but you cannot relax. 'Whenever you're ready,' she said. I stood up. My knees felt as if they had forgotten how to be knees. The pianist played the opening chord, and for one second I almost said I couldn't do it.

Then I remembered my brother's voice in the kitchen last Tuesday: 'Just give them the first line. Once you give them the first line, the song already lives in the room.' So I gave them the first line. My voice was thinner than I wanted, but it was there. By the second verse my hands had stopped shaking. By the bridge I was not thinking about my hands at all. I walked out twelve minutes later with no idea whether I had made the choir, but with the clear feeling that I had finally let the song out of my own throat.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Read the student draft. Answer the questions about narrative technique, pacing, dialogue, and revision.

1. Which sentence is the BEST HOOK because it places the reader inside the scene without simply naming the setting?

A. I had practiced 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' for six weeks.

B. The folding chair outside the choir room squeaked every time I shifted my weight, which was about every four seconds.

C. Today I had to do an audition at school.

D. Singing is one of the things I have done since I was little.

2. Read this sentence: *My knees felt as if they had forgotten how to be knees.* Why is this STRONG narrative writing?

A. It uses long, complicated vocabulary words.

B. It uses a FIGURATIVE comparison to SHOW the narrator's fear instead of stating it directly.

C. It is the longest sentence in the paragraph.

D. It happens to use the word *knees* twice.

3. Which sentence uses DIALOGUE to develop a CHARACTER (the brother) without an entire flashback scene?

A. The pianist played the opening chord.

B. I knew because I had been counting on the second hand of the cracked clock above the water fountain.

C. Then I remembered my brother's voice in the kitchen last Tuesday: 'Just give them the first line. Once you give them the first line, the song already lives in the room.'

D. Ms. Akinyemi smiled the kind of smile teachers smile when they want you to relax but you cannot relax.

4. Which transition would BEST start a new paragraph showing what happened the next morning at the choir list posting?

A. Meanwhile,

B. On the other hand,

C. In contrast,

D. The next morning at 7:45, I stood in front of the bulletin board outside Ms. Akinyemi's office.

5. The writer wants to ADD a sentence that PACES UP the moment between the door opening and the first note. Which sentence does that BEST?

A. I walked to the X taped on the floor, took one slow breath in, glanced at the piano, and nodded.

B. I thought about many things, including all of my hobbies, the weather outside, and what I had eaten for breakfast.

C. Slowly and carefully, I described in great detail every step from the chair to the piano.

D. Ms. Akinyemi sat down, stood up, sat down, and then sat down again before saying anything more.

6. Read this sentence: *I was very nervous and scared about the audition.* Why does the actual draft use better narrative technique than this revision?

A. The draft is longer than this sentence.

B. The draft uses fancier vocabulary than this sentence.

C. The draft SHOWS the narrator's nervousness through action and image (squeaking chair, forgotten knees, almost saying 'I can't do it') instead of just TELLING the reader the feeling.

D. The draft happens to use the word *nervous* more often.

7. Which sentence in paragraph 4 BEST shows the narrator's CHANGE from the start of the story?

A. So I gave them the first line.

B. My voice was thinner than I wanted, but it was there.

C. By the bridge I was not thinking about my hands at all.

D. I walked out twelve minutes later with no idea whether I had made the choir, but with the clear feeling that I had finally let the song out of my own throat.

8. Which ENDING would BEST follow from the draft as written?

A. Then I woke up. It was all a dream and there had never been an audition.

B. Suddenly a dragon flew into the choir room and ate the piano.

C. Walking past the bulletin board the next morning, I saw my name in the second row of names - but even before I read it, I already knew the part of me that had been afraid was gone for good.

D. I decided I hated singing forever and never went near a choir room again.

9. Write ONE sentence that uses a SPECIFIC SENSORY DETAIL (sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch) to set the scene for a story moment of your choice.

_____

_____

10. Write a 1-2 sentence ENDING that follows from your sensory scene above. The ending must SHOW (not just TELL) what the narrator feels at the end of the moment.

_____

_____

Answer Keys

1	A	**B**	C	D	6	A	B	**C**	D
2	A	**B**	C	D	7	A	B	C	**D**
3	A	B	**C**	D	8	A	B	**C**	D
4	A	B	C	**D**	9	See below			
5	**A**	B	C	D	10	See below			

Explanations

1. B	B uses a SPECIFIC, sensory detail (squeaking chair, every four seconds) that shows the narrator's anxious waiting without telling us he is nervous - that is a strong hook. A is exposition. C is a bare summary. D is general background, not a scene.
2. B	B names the technique: a figurative comparison that lets the reader feel the narrator's fear through the body, not through a label like *I was scared*. A is irrelevant. C is irrelevant. D is wordplay, not the reason the line works.
3. C	C drops in a single remembered quotation that shows the brother's calm, practical wisdom - a tight way to develop a supporting character. A is action. B is the narrator's habit. D shows the teacher, not the brother.
4. D	Narratives use TIME-and-PLACE transitions. D names a new time (the next morning at 7:45) and a new place (the bulletin board) - perfect for moving the story forward. *Meanwhile* needs another scene happening at the same time. *On the other hand* and *In contrast* belong in argument writing.
5. A	A compresses several actions into ONE short, fast sentence - that is pacing sped up. B drifts off topic and slows the moment. C explicitly slows the pace. D adds slow, repetitive movement that doesn't advance the moment.
6. C	C names the show-don't-tell principle. The draft demonstrates fear through behavior, body, and dialogue rather than labeling it with the abstract words *nervous* and *scared*. A, B, and D are not the reason.
7. D	D ties together the narrator's earlier fear AND new confidence - he doesn't know the result but has changed inside. A is one moment of action. B is partial progress. C is one beat of change, but D names the full arc.
8. C	C pays off the arc the draft built (preparation, fear, finally letting the song out). A cancels the story. B is unrelated fantasy. D contradicts the hopeful change the narrator describes.
9.	**Answer:** Examples: (1) The locker room smelled like wet rubber mats and the leftover orange peels someone had dropped in the trash. (2) Snow tapped the bus window in a quick, uneven beat as we pulled away from the stop. (3) The cafeteria pizza was still hot enough to burn the roof of my mouth, but I bit into it anyway because the line had been long. Accept any single sentence that names AT LEAST ONE SPECIFIC sense detail (a sound, a smell, a touch, a taste, or a specific image - not just 'it was a nice day'). NOT acceptable: a sentence that only names a feeling (I felt nervous), a sentence with only vague descriptions (it looked good), or a label-only sentence.

10.	**Answer:** Examples: (1) The bus eased into the parking lot, and I tucked my hands inside my sleeves before stepping out. (2) I dropped the pizza crust on my tray and finally let myself laugh at something Marco had said three minutes ago. (3) The bell rang, and for the first time all morning my shoulders felt lighter than my backpack. Accept any 1-2 sentence ending that (a) LOGICALLY FOLLOWS from the scene the student set up and (b) SHOWS the narrator's emotion through action, body language, or image rather than naming it. NOT acceptable: 'It was all a dream,' a sudden fantasy not set up earlier, an ending that contradicts the mood, or an ending that only names a feeling (*I felt happy*).

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