Narrative Writing

Name: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

Strong Grade 7 narratives (1) ESTABLISH a context, narrator, and point of view that pull the reader in, (2) develop events through DIALOGUE, PACING, ACTION, and DESCRIPTION, (3) use a VARIETY of TRANSITIONS to signal time shifts and shifts of setting, (4) use PRECISE words, SENSORY language, and figurative comparisons to convey experiences, and (5) provide a conclusion that follows from the events. *Show, don't tell.*

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Student draft - The Last Lap

The starter's whistle bounced off the tile walls of the natatorium like a coin dropped into a metal bowl. Lane four - my lane - waited under the sharp blue of the pool lights, and the water was so still it looked almost solid. I rolled my shoulders, but the muscles felt like they belonged to somebody else, somebody braver. Six weeks of 5 a.m. practices had brought me here, and now I had to pretend I hadn't spent the bus ride trying to figure out which kind of disappointing I was about to be.

Coach Asha had told me one thing on the bus that morning. 'The 200 is not four 50s,' she'd said, dropping her clipboard on the seat beside me. 'It's one race in four chapters. Don't read ahead.' At the time I had nodded the way you nod when you don't really understand something but don't want the conversation to keep going. Standing on the block now, I finally understood: if I let myself imagine the last 50 before I'd even pushed off, I was going to drown the first one.

The horn went off. I hit the water cleanly, and for a second the cold sealed itself around my ears like a held breath. Stroke. Breathe. Stroke. The first 50 felt like swimming through coffee. The second 50 was when I always lost time - my hips dropped, my kick fell apart - so I narrowed my eyes and pictured Coach Asha's blue clipboard at the end of the lane. Don't read ahead. By the wall I was even with the swimmer to my left, which had never happened before in any race.

Then the third 50, the chapter where I usually let myself believe I was already losing. I made a deal with my body: just hold form until the next turn, and then we can renegotiate. My fingertips touched the wall a half-second after the leader's, but the gap was smaller than at any practice I'd swum that month. I shoved off and broke the surface ready, for the first time, to fight for an ending.

The last 50 was just sound - the slap of water, the muffled crowd, my own breath chopping in and out like a saw blade. I did not pass the leader. I did not win. But when my hand hit the touchpad, I looked up at the scoreboard and saw a new number next to my name - 2:13.47 - five full seconds faster than my qualifying time. Coach Asha was on the deck holding up four fingers, one for each chapter, and grinning like she had just been proven right about something. I climbed out of the pool feeling tired in a way that, for the first time, felt almost like proof.

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 ESTABLISHES the setting AND signals the narrator's state of mind through specific images?

A. I was about to swim a race today.

B. The starter's whistle bounced off the tile walls of the natatorium like a coin dropped into a metal bowl.

C. Swimming is one of my favorite activities to do during the year.

D. Today the swim meet finally happened at the local pool.

2. Read this sentence: *The muscles felt like they belonged to somebody else, somebody braver.* Why is this STRONG narrative writing?

A. It happens to use the word *somebody* twice.

B. It uses long, complicated vocabulary words.

C. It uses a FIGURATIVE comparison to SHOW the narrator's nervousness through the body rather than TELLING the reader directly.

D. It is the longest sentence in the paragraph.

3. How does the writer USE DIALOGUE in paragraph 2?

A. The dialogue mostly summarizes what every character has ever said.

B. The dialogue inserts a SHORT, MEMORABLE LINE from Coach Asha (*It's one race in four chapters. Don't read ahead.*) that becomes a recurring image throughout the race.

C. The dialogue is in a different language with no translation provided.

D. The dialogue is the entire paragraph with no narration in between.

4. Read these two versions of paragraph 5's opening. Which version PACES THE RACE more effectively?

A. The last 50 was just sound - the slap of water, the muffled crowd, my own breath chopping in and out like a saw blade.

B. Then I started to swim the last 50, which was the fourth and final 50 meters of the race, the part that came right after the third 50.

C. The last 50 happened next and many things occurred during this part of the race that I will now describe over the course of several sentences.

D. The last 50 was something I did, and then it ended, and that was it.

5. Which sentence in paragraph 4 BEST shows the narrator's CHARACTER CHANGE through the race?

A. I made a deal with my body: just hold form until the next turn, and then we can renegotiate.

B. Then the third 50, the chapter where I usually let myself believe I was already losing.

C. I shoved off and broke the surface ready, for the first time, to fight for an ending.

D. My fingertips touched the wall a half-second after the leader's.

6. Read this revision of paragraph 1's third sentence: *I was really, really nervous about the race.* Why does the actual draft use BETTER narrative technique than this revision?

A. The draft uses longer words.

B. The draft SHOWS the nervousness through body (muscles that don't feel like hers) and through specific images (the still water that looked solid, the comment about being disappointing) instead of just TELLING the reader the feeling.

C. The draft happens to mention the word *nervous* more often.

D. The draft is shorter than this revision.

7. Which transition would BEST start a NEW PARAGRAPH showing what happens in the parking lot AFTER the meet?

A. Meanwhile,

B. On the other hand,

C. Outside in the parking lot, an hour later, the sun was sharp enough to make me squint at my own reflection in the bus window.

D. In contrast,

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 a race.

B. Suddenly the pool turned into lava and everyone had to evacuate the building.

C. I climbed out of the pool feeling tired in a way that, for the first time, felt almost like proof - proof that one race could really be four chapters, and that I had read every one.

D. I decided I hated swimming forever and never went near a pool again.

9. Read this sentence: *The cold sealed itself around my ears like a held breath.* Which narrative TECHNIQUE does this BEST illustrate?

A. Direct dialogue between two characters.

B. An EXTENDED LIST of every detail in the scene.

C. A SENSORY SIMILE that uses a comparison (*like a held breath*) to make a tactile feeling concrete for the reader.

D. A flashback to an earlier event in the narrator's life.

10. The writer is considering ADDING this sentence to paragraph 3: *By the way, my favorite color is blue and I also like the snack table at meets.* Why should the writer CUT it?

A. The sentence is too long.

B. The sentence is OFF-TOPIC and breaks the pacing of a tense race scene with unrelated personal trivia.

C. The sentence is in the wrong tense.

D. The sentence does not mention swimming.

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	A	B	**C**	D
5	A	B	**C**	D	10	A	**B**	C	D

Explanations

1. B	B places the reader in the setting (tile walls, natatorium) AND conveys the narrator's keyed-up alertness through a precise simile (coin in a metal bowl) - a strong narrative opening. A is bare summary. C is general background. D names the event but adds no scene.
2. C	C names the technique: the narrator's fear becomes a felt experience (muscles that don't belong to her) instead of a label like *I was nervous*. A is wordplay. B is irrelevant. D is irrelevant.
3. B	B names the technique: a tight, image-rich line from a supporting character that the narrator returns to during the race - efficient dialogue that does narrative work. A is false. C is false. D is false.
4. A	A compresses the experience into sound and sensation (slap of water, breath like a saw blade), accelerating the pace at the climactic moment. B over-explains structure. C delays with filler. D is so flat it kills the moment.
5. C	C names the change in plain sight: *for the first time*, the narrator chooses to fight for an ending rather than concede it. A shows a coping move but not the full pivot. B describes the old pattern. D is a fact about position.
6. B	B names the show-don't-tell principle. The draft conveys fear through the body, the setting, and the narrator's self-talk rather than labeling it with the abstract word *nervous*. A is irrelevant. C is false. D is false.
7. C	Narratives use TIME-AND-PLACE transitions. C names a new place (parking lot) AND a new time (an hour later) AND keeps the sensory style of the rest of the draft. *Meanwhile* needs a simultaneous scene. *On the other hand* and *In contrast* belong in argument writing.
8. C	C pays off the central image (four chapters / don't read ahead) and the arc of growth the rest of the draft built. A erases the story. B is unrelated fantasy. D contradicts the hard-earned hopefulness of the ending.
9. C	C names the technique: a simile that turns the feeling of cold water on the ears into a vivid, familiar image (a held breath). A is wrong (no dialogue here). B is wrong (one detail, not a list). D is wrong (no flashback).
10. B	Narrative writing requires every sentence to serve scene, character, or pace. Snack table trivia breaks the building tension of the race for no narrative purpose. A is irrelevant. C is false. D is irrelevant - off-topic is the real flaw.

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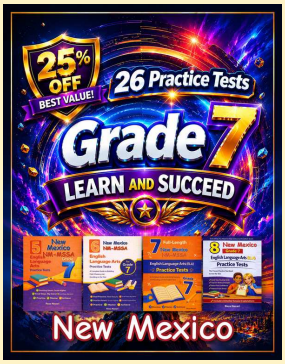

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