Research, Write, Publish | Writing Process

Essay Drafting

Key Concept
Are you ready to write? You learned about narrative writing, researched your topic, and planned the story you want to tell. The time has come for you to use everything you learned to draft your narrative essay.

A draft is a work in progress. It gives you the freedom to try anything you want. Do you have an idea about how to tell your story? Try it! If your first idea does not work, try another one! You do not need to worry about getting all the details exactly right. This is just your first draft. A first draft means that you can try anything once. Are you ready to be creative?

Who will narrate the story? The main character may tell the story in first person, or you may tell the story for the character in third person. Either way, you must maintain a consistent point of view throughout the essay. Remember to include dialogue and details to bring the story to life.

Look Ahead
Task: Draft a narrative essay about the character you created to answer your interview questions.

Goal: Use literary elements to make the story as interesting and meaningful as possible.

You may want to review an example of a narrative essay draft before you begin.

See the example: Narrative Essay Draft
Vocabulary

**Words to Remember**
This page gives basic definitions for some important terms that can help you learn about drafting an essay. You can get a more complete definition of each term from Fact Monster*.

**New Words**
**Draft**: An unfinished version of a creative work.

**Review Words**
**Dialogue**: A type of writing that tells a story in the words of two or more people who talk to each other.

**First Person**: A type of writing that tells a story by using pronouns that refer to the author of the story, such as *I* and *we*.

**Narrate**: Tell a story.

**Narrative**: A type of writing that tells a story about events that someone experiences.

**Narrator**: The person who tells a story.

**Point of View**: The way a person tends to think about people, places, and events based on individual experiences.

**Theme**: The main idea or message expressed throughout a story.

**Third Person**: A type of writing that tells a story by using pronouns that refer to a character in the story, such as *he*, *she*, or *they*.
Exploration

Learning from the Web
Explore some Web sites about writing a first draft. You want your readers to remember the story long after they read it. Think about some good stories you have read. What made them interesting to you? Learn how to draft a memorable narrative essay.

While you explore the following Web sites, think about the guiding questions. You may want to take notes to help you answer the questions. If you think of other questions about writing a first draft, keep those in mind too.

Guiding Questions

- What information does a good story need to contain?
- Can you think of some good examples of setting, plot, or theme in stories you have read?
- How can you use these literary elements to make your story interesting?

Web Sites

- Write a First Draft* from Fact Monster*
- Writing Workshop: Draft* from Scholastic*
- Write It: Draft Short Fiction* from Scholastic*
Information

What to Know
This page summarizes some of the information from the Web sites you explored. This information helps you learn what you need to know for this activity about drafting an essay. You may want to take notes to help you remember the most important points. You can return to the Web sites for more exploration if you want to learn more.

A Draft
A draft allows you to focus on developing the main elements of your narrative with dialogue and details. Remember to be creative when drafting your narrative! Allow your ideas to flow freely and do not be afraid to experiment with your writing. You can think about the mechanics of spelling, grammar, punctuation, or paragraphing after you draft the essay.

A narrative essay can be organized in many ways. One basic way to organize an essay is with an introduction, body, and conclusion. You want to write an introduction that will grab the reader’s attention. You can develop your characters, plot, and setting more fully in the body of your essay. If story includes a conflict or crisis, you can resolve it in the conclusion.

Point of View
Recall that point of view is the way a person tends to think about people, places, and events. A story is told from the narrator’s point of view. In first person, the story is told from the main character’s point of view. In the third person, the story is told from the author’s point of view. Maintaining a consistent point of view throughout a story is very important. You should not switch back and forth between first and third person.

Here are some questions that can help you maintain a consistent point of view:

- Who narrates the story?
- How much do the other characters know about what happens in the story?
- What does the narrator think about the other characters?
- What do the characters think about each other?
- How much does the narrator know about what happens in the story?
- How do the narrator and other characters feel about what happens?

Theme
Recall that theme is the underlying meaning of a story. A narrative theme should not be obvious to readers. Instead, it should emerge from the characters, plot, and setting. An effective narrative theme enlightens without teaching or preaching. A theme is often revealed through ideas that are repeated throughout the story.

Here are some questions that can help you develop a theme for your narrative essay:

- What details about characters or setting have a special meaning?
- What similarities exist among different events in the plot?
- How do the characters, plot, and setting send a common message to readers?
- What important ideas are revealed through dialogue?
Task

What to Do
Complete the following task to show what you have learned about drafting an essay. While you work through the task, think about whether you are achieving the goal. You may want to review an example of a narrative essay draft before you begin.

Task: Draft a narrative essay about the character you created to answer your interview questions.

Goal: Use literary elements to make the story as interesting and meaningful as possible.

See the example: Narrative Essay Draft

1. Review your interview questions and the answers provided by your main character.
2. Start a new document. Always remember to type your name and the date at the top of a new document.
3. Save the document with a filename that indicates the document contains your narrative essay.
4. Write the first draft of your narrative essay.
   - Be as creative as you can in developing characters, plot, and setting.
   - Include dialogue and details that bring the story to life.
   - Try to maintain a consistent point of view throughout the story.
   - Provide enough clues for readers to understand your theme.
   - Use as much information from the interview questions and answers as you can.
5. Review the checklist and revise your draft to make sure it is complete.
6. Remember to save your document often while you work.
7. Share your first draft.
Task Example

Student Name

Date

Our Vacation

The ad in the luxury hotel brochure said, You will experience golden beaches with glistening sand caressed by the gentle roll of the Indian Ocean so I decided that I would spend Christmas 2004 in Sri Lanka at the Palms Hotel. I called my best friend to see if she would like to join me in paradise and she quickly replied, "Count me in!"

We left for Sri Lanka on December 23, 2004. We couldn’t wait to put our toe in the Indian Ocean and feel the gentle roll of the ocean on our feet as promised. Our hotel was on Kalutara Beach. We spent the days at the beach and the evenings sight seeing.

December 26, 2004 started out like any other day in paradise. It was about 10:28 and we were lying on the beach soaking up the sun, when we heard screams. My friend and I jumped up and we couldn’t believe what we saw! What was seconds earlier a gentle rolling ocean turned into a people-eating monster.

We ran as fast as our bodies could carry us. We tried to stay ahead of the water, but it became impossible. The water carried us until we were lucky enough to grab onto a pole. Suddenly the pole gave way and we were slammed into a tree. My friend and I were still together. We were able to climb the tree and look over the devastation that lay before us.

We clung to the tree for dear life. We climbed down carefully and knew immediately that we needed to help. We ran into a Doctor who quickly set up a makeshift hospital in our devastated hotel lobby. We did what we could. Helping others kept us busy so we were not able to dwell on our small problems.
It wasn’t until later that night that we got a name for what happened. It was a Tsunami! It was explained to us as an earthquake under the ocean. It registered 9.2 on the Richter scale. It wasn’t till days later that we learned that approximately 229,000 people were killed, 30,000 in Sri Lanka alone. It was the deadliest disaster in Modern History and my friend and I had been a part of it and survived.

On our way home we realized how lucky we were to be alive. We knew that we would never be the same and in some way that was alright with us. As our lives were passing in front of us we realized that it was not cars, money or jewelry that was important, but family and friends and helping others. Somehow the words, “golden beaches with glistening sand caressed by the gentle roll of the Indian Ocean,” will never again sound the same.