

Integrating Writing Personal Narratives With Identifying Sensory Words in Text

In this lesson sequence, students read realistic, fictional narratives as a lead in to writing personal narratives. We focus on the temporal order of stories in our reading and retellings and use a first-next-then-last framework to recall the events and details of our own stories. Students learn to add onomatopoeic elements to their writing by studying its use and effect in stories and poetry.

Although this sequence is designed for first grade, many of the instructional elements are suited for kindergarten and second grade; only small tweaks are necessary (see grade level adaptations on pages 31 and 32).

This sequence is intended as an introduction to narrative writing. Though students may eventually write a variety of narratives that venture into fiction (e.g., fantasy stories), we focus here on personal narratives. Young writers are generally successful at recalling events that have actually happened to them, so I find this a good place to start. Since this may be students' first attempts at writing personal narratives, we keep things simple, with most of our focus on retelling the events in our stories in sequential order. We use the temporal words suggested in the standard, *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last*, to talk out and plan. As we move through the sequence, we add in onomatopoeia as a simple craft element to liven up our compositions.

Naturally, we immerse ourselves in reading the genre we're writing. We read several realistic stories containing real-lifelike characters and situations. We mine these models for topic ideas and study how the authors sequence their events and use onomatopoeia.

The teacher models throughout and makes use of student volunteers to make the steps in the process explicit. Students constantly talk out their stories, share their thinking, and receive feedback from one another. They draft using a recursive model: writing a bit, then rereading, making any changes needed, talking it out a bit more, then continuing to draft.

This sequence was written with first grade in mind, but can easily be adjusted up or down by eliminating the focus on onomatopoeia or adding an additional focus (several are noted in *Extending the Work* on page 47).



Rick Harrington Photography

Young writers get so much out of peer feedback!

Core Connections

Focus Writing Standard 3
integrated with Reading
Literature Standard 4

Reading Literature
Standards 1, 2, 4, 7,
and 10

Writing Standards 5
Speaking and Listening
Standards 1, 2, 4, 5,
and 6

Task

Write a story about something that has happened to you. Tell your story in order: what happened first, next, then, and last. We'll share our stories with friends and family.

What Teachers Guide Across the Week

LESSONS	READING Speaking and Listening	WRITING Speaking and Listening
1	<p>Lesson 1: Narrative Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the task. Identify purposes for reading. Read <i>Knuffle Bunny</i>. Orally retell story using the words <i>first, next, then, and last</i>. 	<p>Lesson 1: Quick Sketch Retelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have students sketch the events from <i>Knuffle Bunny</i> in four boxes labeled <i>First, Next, Then, and Last</i>. Have students label and jot in the boxes. Share.
2	<p>Lesson 2: Narrative Reading, Brainstorm Topics, Tell Stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify purposes for reading. Read <i>Stella Tells Her Story</i>. Start Topics List with class. Model telling a story. Have volunteers tell their stories (additions are made to the topics list). Study <i>First, Next, Then, and Last</i> illustrations. Have students talk out their stories in temporal order. 	<p>Lesson 2: Story Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan stories in boxes labeled <i>First, Next, Then, and Last</i> using pictures and labels and jottings. Model. Have student volunteer model. Have all students plan in boxes.
3	<p>Lesson 3: Narrative Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify purposes for reading. Read <i>Shortcut</i>. Identify onomatopoetic elements and discuss their effects on the story. Record words on chart. Revisit other texts from the week to identify the onomatopoeia. Make connections for future personal narrative writing. 	<p>Lesson 3: Review Story Plan, Add Onomatopoetic Element(s), Begin Drafting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model reviewing story plan and adding onomatopoetic words. Have students do the same. Retell stories emphasizing the onomatopoeia. Discuss effect on stories. Make other additions to story plans. Begin to draft.
4	<p>Lesson 4: Compare Narrative Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify purpose for reading. Read <i>Bedhead</i>. Have collaborative conversation about how this story is like the other stories we've read. Begin to create a personal narrative anchor chart. Discuss how observations relate to our own personal narrative writing. 	<p>Lesson 4: Continue Drafting, Connect Anchor Chart to Our Own Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model drafting using story plan. Debrief about strategies observed during modeling. Have students continue drafting their stories. Have students connect their writing to our fledgling anchor chart.
5	<p>Lesson 5: Poetry Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read selected poems from <i>Noisy Poems</i>. Read twice chorally emphasizing sounds. Add words to onomatopoeia chart. Read third time, eliminating the onomatopoeia. Discuss effects. 	<p>Lesson 5: Quick Write Noisy Poems, Finish Stories, Share, Celebrate (This may take more than one session.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm subjects and onomatopoetic words for noisy poems. Model writing a noisy poem. Have students quick write and share. Have students finish writing their personal narratives. Share in small groups. Decide outside audience for personal narratives. Debrief.

What Students Do Across the Week

Students read realistic narratives to get ideas for writing their own personal narratives. We focus on how stories are told in temporal order and model our writing after the mentor texts. Students walk away with a completed draft of a personal narrative that they are proud to share!

While reading a variety of realistic narratives, students pay close attention to how stories unfold in a logical sequence. In other sequences and other narrative reading, we've focused on basic story elements and structure: setting, characters, problem, events, and solution. Given our focus here, students practice retelling the stories they read using the words *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last*. This becomes the structure they use when preparing to write their own personal narratives.

We begin a class topics list to keep track of our story ideas. Students **talk out their ideas** with one another, often spending about five minutes on this step. In Grades K–2, oral rehearsal before writing is critical, as many children can access their narrative abilities verbally more easily than when writing. Once students settle on a topic, they **plan their stories** using sketches and words in four boxes labeled *First*, *Next*, *Then*, and *Last*. The intent is to get the bones of their stories recorded so they can go back and add more details later. Using their plans, they talk out their stories again as a rehearsal for writing. I model the processes all along the way, and confer with students as I circulate to respond to their efforts.

Additionally, we add some flair to our writing by adding onomatopoeic elements. We **study stories and poetry** to help us understand and incorporate these elements. Students **add an onomatopoeic word** or two to their story plan and talk it out again, emphasizing (and relishing!) these fun words. Onomatopoeia is a clear-cut device, which lays the foundation for then introducing alliteration and other craft elements.

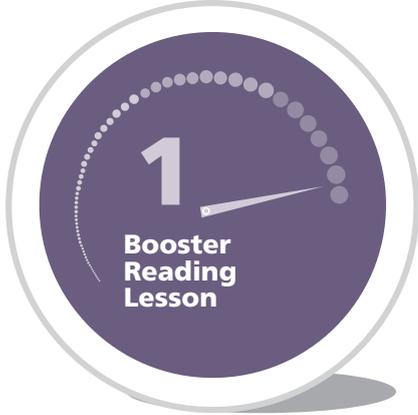
The intent of the sequence is to give students a solid first experience with personal narrative writing. Their writing is not “formally published.” It is not revised and edited, though revision and editing do occur when students plan their stories, talk them out, add onomatopoeic elements, share and talk with peers while writing, and when I confer with them.

To culminate the sequence, we **share our stories** with each other and students are invited to take them home to share with their families. When we debrief, we focus on new possibilities for personal narrative writing and extending into other types of narratives.

Literacy Moves

- Widely read the genre
- Focus study of craft element
- Sketch, label, jot
- Begin an anchor chart for the genre
- Modeled writing
- Independent writing
- Talk it out
- Discuss

Notes



Core Connections

Grade 1

Reading Literature

Standard 1

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Reading Literature

Standard 2

Retell stories, including key details.

Reading Literature

Standard 7

Use illustrations and details in a text to describe its characters, setting, or events.

Reading Literature

Standard 10

With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.

Speaking and Listening

Standard 1

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

Speaking and Listening

Standard 2

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud.

Speaking and Listening

Standard 6

Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.

Narrative Reading

Getting Ready

The materials:

- Copy of the task (page 1) to display
- *Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems
- The words *First*, *Next*, *Then*, and *Last* written on a chart

Context of the Lesson

After discussing our task, we read a fun, realistic story about an event most students can relate to. We then have an open-ended conversation. Though we are accustomed to pointing out story elements and thinking about narrative structure in terms of setting, characters, problem, events, and solution, we reread looking for story highlights that stand out first, next, then, and last. We retell the story using those temporal order words.

The Lesson

“As you can see, (*pointing to the task*) we will be working this week toward writing a story about something that has happened to us. These are called *personal narratives*. We know narratives are stories. Personal narrative means they are true stories about us. They don’t have to be about big events or happenings in our lives, they can be about something small. We’ll come up with lots of examples together so you get the idea.

“We’ll start out by reading a narrative about a child who, though younger than you, goes through something I bet you can relate to. I’ll read the story aloud to you. Let’s just enjoy it. If you have any questions or observations that come up, keep them in your head, so we can come back to them after reading.”

(*After reading aloud*) “Did anyone have a question or observation about the book?”

(*Discuss these with the students, encouraging peers to respond to one another.*)

Examples:

S: I didn’t know what a laundromat was, but then I saw what it was in the pictures.

S: Me, too! I figured it out in the pictures, too!

T: Great observations. Yes, often by reading on, we can figure out words we’re not sure about. And, we can’t forget how useful illustrations can be. Study them carefully!

S: Why didn’t the dad understand Trixie? I knew what she wanted right away!

S: I did, too! She was so upset because they left the bunny at the laundromat!

S: Yeah, I saw the bunny was missing in the picture as soon as they left.

T: Okay, so does anyone have an idea why Trixie’s dad didn’t understand?

S: He didn’t see the bunny was missing. And, she couldn’t talk right. She was making all those sounds and throwing a fit. My mom and dad get mad at my little brother when he throws a fit.

S: It was good that Trixie’s mom saw Knuffle Bunny was missing.

T: How do you think Dad felt then? Let’s look back for clues in the illustrations.

Continue . . .

This kind of open-ended collaborative conversation is a perfect way to get students involved in asking their own questions about the story elements and details. The questions and answers they model for one another push everyone’s thinking.

“Thank you so much for your insightful questions and comments! We’re going to switch gears now and reread the text. Our purpose for rereading will be to identify the high points in the events. If you were going to tell someone about this book, and could only tell briefly about what happened first, next, then, and last, what would you tell them? Basically, we’ll work together to create a short, sequential summary using those key words (*I list the words first, next, then, and last on a poster for students to reference*). As we go, we’ll put sticky notes in the book to help us remember where these important points are (the sticky notes are labeled with the key words *first, next, then, last*).”

We reread and stop to talk about key events, referring to our First-Next-Then-Last poster. We put the *First* sticky note on the page where Trixie and Dad leave for the errand, we put *Next* on the two-page spread where Trixie puts money into the washing machine at the laundromat and they leave Knuffle Bunny in a machine, we put *Then* on one of the pages where Trixie is throwing a fit, and we put *Last* on the page where Mom, Dad, and Trixie return to the laundromat and find Knuffle Bunny.

“We’ve taken time to identify first, next, then, and last because authors can use these key words and the idea of sequential order to plan their stories. We will be using this strategy when we plan our personal narratives. It’s good to practice with stories we read aloud first.

“Now, I’d like you to turn to your neighbor and retell what happened in the story using the key words on the poster. I will turn to the pages we marked in the book, and you can look up here and use them as hints to help you if you need them. One partner takes a turn then it’s the other partner’s turn. I’ll page through a second time, in case the other partner needs help.”

Students retell the story using the words *first, next, then, and last*. If they have trouble, I model it for them, emphasizing use of the temporal words and talking it out in whole sentences as I retell.

Core Practices

- Define the Task
- Define the Writing Genre
- Read First for Enjoyment and Gist, Then Again to Highlight Key Events in Order
- Question the Text
- Collaborative Conversation
- Retell the Story

FYI

An open-ended conversation like this, which is prefaced by students being asked to watch for questions or observations during the reading (they can also be invited to jot notations in their think pads [a notebook for students to record informal notes or thoughts] or on scratch paper), can be insightful formative assessment. What kinds of observations are children making? Hence, what type of think alouds may you need to instigate to ratchet up the level of their thinking? What kinds of questions are they asking? Are they only surface level questions or inferential, deeper questions? Again, these observations will lead you to teaching points for your think alouds. Open-ended, collaborative conversations are one of my favorite teaching and learning tools!

Quick Sketch Retelling



Getting Ready

The materials:

- Copy of *Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems (with sticky notes inside)
- Think pads or scratch paper
- First-Then-Next-Last poster, available on the companion website
- Document camera

Context of the Lesson

Students will practice the concept of temporal order using the words *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last* through another modality: sketching. They fold a paper into four boxes, then sketch, jot, and label about the key events we identified in *Knuffle Bunny*.

The Lesson

“Now we’ll practice the structure of this simple story one more way using the words on our poster, *first*, *next*, *then*, *last*. The author, Mo Willems, may have actually planned his story out just like this. Fold your paper into fours. Label each box in order: first, next, then, last (*I model under the document camera*). Now draw a quick sketch of the most important happening that occurred first, next, then, and last. Also add jottings and labels, if you can. This way, we’re showing the *bones* of the story—the highlights of what happened in the order that things took place. Watch me. (*I model sketching, jotting, and labeling in the first box, looking back at our first sticky note in the book*).”

Next, I differentiate: “If you’d like to continue to stay up here on the rug to work with me, you can. We will work through each box together and look at the book if we need to. If you feel ready, you can return to your desk and work on your other three boxes yourself. We’ll share afterwards.”

When students finish, they find a peer to share. Their comments and work in boxes is useful formative assessment. I can quickly see who understands the concept of temporal order and who might need more support.

Recap: Key Lesson Steps

1. Model sketching the first key story event, adding jottings and notes
2. Have students complete boxes independently or with teacher guidance
3. Revisit the book as needed
4. Have students share

Core Connections

Grade 1

Reading Literature

Standard 2

Retell stories, including key details.

Reading Literature

Standard 7

Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

Speaking and Listening

Standard 5

Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Core Practices

- Revisit Text
- Modeling
- Guided Practice
- Differentiated Support
- Sketch, Jot Notes, Label
- Discussion

