



English
Language Arts

Name:

Date:

Homeroom:

Unit 2: Personal Narrative

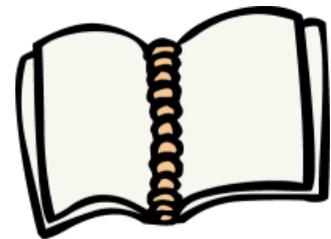
CW 16 - Narratives

Essential Question: How do authors make their writing interesting to readers?

Bigger Picture: High schools and colleges ask you to write a personal narrative when you apply – they are judging your writing skills and also how well you self-reflect.

KEEP THIS PACKET!

Welcome to the Personal Narrative!



Today we begin our study of a very special kind of essay called the *personal narrative*. You will encounter this essay many times in the next couple years as you apply for high schools, colleges and scholarships or extra-curricular programs. All of these changes in your life require that you write an essay about an important moment in your life and how it affected you. Just like Esperanza, who reflects on her childhood and eventually learns to grow, you need to share your inspiring story!

What makes the personal narrative different from other kinds of essays?

- * It tells a story about _____
- * It is focused around _____
- * It tries to establish a _____ about a lesson learned.

How is a personal narrative structured?

There are three distinct parts to a personal narrative that make it unique. These include:

* **Lead** _____

* **Personal Reflection** _____

Narrative One:

Beautiful

By Jason Shen

Grand-prize winner

Woodbridge High School

Irvine, Calif.

I can't remember the first time the bullies called me Kermit. Or Froggy. Or Toad. It has become such an integral¹ part of me that I can't imagine myself without the nicknames.

It's not easy being ugly. OK, not ugly. That's too harsh. Not facially endowed. What else can you call a guy who resembles an amphibian? People say you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but among teenagers, the cover is what sells the book. I watched from the sidelines as my more attractive friends matched up and broke up without a care. For me, one glance from a girl was enough to feed my heart, which was shrunken from deprivation² like a hunger-stricken stomach. I'd lie in my room, listen to Sister Hazel's "Change Your Mind" and swear it was about me: "If you wanna be somebody else..."

At the beginning of my senior year of high school, I joined the mock-trial team. I needed a better way to spend my time than idling in front of my computer trying not to think of what my best friend was doing on his date with his girlfriend.

At the tryouts, in order to gauge my speaking skills, one of the lawyers who would coach the team looked me in the face and asked, "What do you think of the HIV epidemic in Africa?" Somehow, I stammered out a comprehensible answer. Surprisingly, I was awarded one of the six coveted³ attorney positions, while the rest of my 19 teammates were relegated⁴ to witness or clerk roles.

It was clear from the start that our training would be intense. One of the lawyer-coaches put it bluntly: "At work we charge 500 bucks an hour. We're

¹ *integral adj.* necessary

² *deprivation n.* not having

³ *coveted adj.* wanted

⁴ *relegated v.* stuck with

with you guys at least 10 hours a week. You do the math. Now you want to shut up and listen?"

At every practice, the coaches would cruelly criticize our every mistake and call us everything short of complete idiots. Our opening statements were too short, our direct examinations were too long and our cross-examinations just plain stank. Then, just before we'd break down, they'd build us back up by showing us how much we had improved. Before long, we were flexing our mental muscle like true lawyers.

After our two months of training, the first competition rolled around. Before we entered the county courtroom, one of our coaches offered us some not-so-gentle encouragement: "Winning's not everything. It's the only thing."

When I walked to the podium in my suit to stand before the real-life superior-court judge and examine the "witness," a new sensation⁵ grabbed hold of me. It took me a minute to realize that it was confidence, a feeling I had never fully experienced, definitely not while conversing with a girl or sitting alone at a party. At the end of the trial, I gave my closing argument. I forget exactly what I said that made the audience, and even the other team, stand up and applaud. I just remember smiling so much that it hurt, especially as the judge singled me out as a "silver-tongued devil."

The next month seemed the shortest of my life, as my team turned in a whirlwind of amazing performances. Before we knew it, we were in the sweet 16, the elite group that remained from the original 64 teams. Three rounds later, we advanced to the final match to determine who would go on to the state championships.

The opposing team was as polished and impressive as a real dream team of lawyers. They countered all of our normally impressive arguments with even more impressive arguments of their own. As I got up to give what I thought would be my last closing statement of the year, I told myself to relish every second of it. After this, it was back to the real world, where my speaking skills were of little value to my superficial peers. I practically cried during the best closing I ever gave.

I actually did cry when, after I finished, the judge announced that my team had won and the room exploded in a roar of celebration. I hugged my co-counsels to the brink of suffocation, then rushed around congratulating the rest of my teammates. One of my coaches heartily shook my hand and admitted with a grin, "Even I was impressed." Then I heard it. "Kermit!" I whipped around to see who had teased me. My best friend stood in front of me, beaming. To my

⁵ *sensation n. feeling*

surprise, he had come to watch me compete. "Jason," he said, "I've never heard such an articulate⁶ frog."

The team began to chant, "Silver-tongued frog! Silver-tongued frog!" In that moment I realized that I was no different from teenagers everywhere who struggle to be accepted; I won the struggle because I learned to accept myself. In that moment I was actually proud to be an amphibian. That moment was beautiful.

Class Discussion | *Consider the following questions. Jot down some ideas and be ready to share.*

- *What **circumstances** does the author face?*

- *How do you **relate** to the author?*

- *What **message** does the essay send?*

- *What does the **title** have to do with the essay?*

Directions | *After class discussion, we will copy the sentences that best express the four elements of the personal essay.*

BIG IDEA _____ *used to* _____, *but now he* _____

Lead: _____

Personal Reflection: _____

Universal Connection: _____

⁶ *articulate* adj. well-spoken

Narrative Two:

"Why couldn't I have been named Ashley?"

By Imma Achilike
Naaman Forest High School
Garland, Texas

"Ashley!" exclaimed Mrs. Renfro, and simultaneously three heads whipped around at attention towards the perturbed teacher. At the same time, all three Ashleys proudly replied, "Yes, ma'am?"

When I was a fourth grader, I remember sitting in class that day just before the bell rang for dismissal. I remember thinking of all the names in the world, how I could have possibly been stuck with such an alien one. I thought about all the popular kids in the class. I figured that I wasn't popular because of my weird name. I put some things together in my mind and came up with a plausible equation: COOL NAME = POPULARITY. The dismissal bell rang. As I mechanically walked out to catch my ride, I thought to myself, "Why couldn't I have been named Ashley?"

I was born, on July 7th, 1986, at Parkland Hospital of Dallas, Texas. I was the first American-born Nigerian in both of my parents' families. I was my parents' first joy, and in their joy, they gave me the name that would haunt me for the rest of my life, Immaculeta Uzoma Achilike.

The first time I actually became aware of my name was on the first day of first grade. I went to school loaded with all my school supplies and excited to see all of my old kindergarten friends. I couldn't wait to see who my new teacher was. As I walked into the classroom, all my friends pushed up to me, cooing my name: "Imma, Imma I missed you so much." The teacher walked in with the attendance sheet. She told everyone to quiet down so she could call roll. Before she started, she said something I thought would have never applied to me. She said, "Before I call roll, I apologize if I mispronounce anyone's name." with a very apologetic look on her face. She looked down at the attendance sheet, paused for a minute, and then looked up with an extremely puzzled look on her face. I remember thinking that there was probably some weird name before mine; although, my name was always the first name to be called in kindergarten. Suddenly, my palms started sweating and then she began to hopelessly stutter my name, "Im-Immaculet Arch-liki, I mean, Achei..." Here, I interrupted. My ears burned with embarrassment and droplets of perspiration formed on my nose. "Did I say it right?" she said with the same apologetic look on her face. Before I responded, the laughs that the other kids in class had been holding back suddenly exploded, like a volatile vial of glycerin, into peals of laughter. One kid thought it was so funny his chubby face started turning red and I could see a tear gradually making its way down his face. I found myself wishing I could sink into the ground and never come back, I hated being the laughing stock.

I never really recovered from the shock of that day. From that day forward, the first day of school was always my most feared day. I didn't know what to do; all I could do was to tell my teachers, "I go by Imma."

I felt so alone when all the other girls in my class had sparkly, pink pencils with their names printed on them. You know, the ones they sell in the stores along with name-embossed sharpeners, rulers and pencil pouches. Every year I searched through and rummaged around that rack at the store, but I could never find a pencil with my name.

The summer of my seventh-grade year, my family and I took a vacation to our "home" in Nigeria, where my parents were born. My cousin and I were playing cards, talking girl talk, and relating our most embarrassing moments. Each tried to see whose story could top whose. I told one story of how I wet the bed at a sleepover, and she told me how she had farted in class during a test. That was a hoot. Then, I told her the story of how I was laughed at because of my weird name. I thought it was pretty funny, but she didn't laugh. She had the most serious look on her face, then she asked me, "Immaculeta Uzoma Achilike, do you know what your name means?" I shook my head at her and that's when she started laughing. I thought she was making fun of me, and as I started to leave she said: 'Immaculeta means 'purity', 'Uzoma means 'the good road' and...'. Having heard her words, I stopped walking away and turned around in amazement. "What does Achilike mean?" I asked. After a long pause she calmly said, "Archilike means 'to rule without force". I was astonished and pleased. I never knew what my name meant.

My name is Immaculeta Uzoma Achilike. I am the daughter of first-generation Nigerian immigrants. I am the daughter of hardworking and brave parents. My name means "to rule without force." My grandfather was a wealthy man of generous character. When I say my name in Nigeria, people know me as the granddaughter of a wealthy man of generous character. They know me by my name. There my name is not embossed on any pencil or vanity plate. It is etched in the minds of the people.

My name is Immaculeta Uzoma Archilike.

Partner Discussion | *Consider the following questions. Jot down some ideas and be ready to share.*

- *What **circumstances** does the author face?*
- *How do you **relate** to the author?*
- *What **message** does the essay send?*
- *What does the **title** have to do with the essay?*

- How is this story similar to “Beautiful?”

Directions | *After class discussion, we will copy the sentences that best express the four elements of the personal essay.*

BIG IDEA _____ *used to* _____, *but now he* _____

Lead: _____

Personal Reflection: _____

Universal Connection: _____

Review | *Now that you have the Big Picture of “Why couldn't I have been named Ashley?”, write a summary that includes all the most important parts of this personal narrative. The lines above should serve as your guide. Don't forget to include a topic sentence and a conclusion that links back to the topic sentence!*

Narrative Three:

"The Rose that Grew from Concrete"

By Morice Martinez

Grandview High School

Born in the slums, a child does not have any hope to grow because of the darkness that prevails⁷ in everyday life. He takes after what he sees in his neighborhood and becomes another victim of the streets. Born and raised in East Los Angeles, I was once the desperate child, looking for a light to shine the way out. I grew up with sirens resounding over schoolyard play and distant gunshots echoing through the air. I was raised another young Hispanic male destined for gang violence and a future statistic in a state penitentiary⁸. I grew up in a drug-laden neighborhood where fighting was "right" and knowledge was unacceptable. It was easy to fall into this twisted way of thinking because it was the only option that one saw available. The only knowledge that passed through the neighborhood was news of another friend or relative who had fallen victim to gang violence. Although I grew up in the shadows, I always had a sense of what was right and wrong because of what my parents taught me through their hard work. Working 50 hours a week was the only way they could survive and keep food on the table. I saw that working hard and believing in what you did kept your mind positive and free of the demons lurking outside.

As I entered my middle-school years, I was torn between gangs and my parents' love. I was looked up to in my neighborhood because I was cunning and was always ready to defend myself or my friends. I was also a beacon of light to my parents because I had excelled in school throughout the bloodshed and the tears. My motivation to stand out in academics was the passing of my grandfather in 1997. He taught me that knowledge was indeed greater than physical strength and that respect could be earned by what one did with his life. I slowly got out of the "thug life" mentality and become a more astute⁹ student. At first my friends rejected the person I had become because I dedicated more time to education and less to the streets. They saw my improved grades and the recognition I received from the school board because I was truly a standout from the gloom that was Canoga Park Middle School. I tried to convince my friends that knowledge was indeed powerful. While most of them backed away,

⁷ Wins

⁸ Jail

⁹ sharp, good

a few of my friends followed in my footsteps and went down the same path I did.

My friends and I would help each other on daunting assignments and projects throughout middle school. We would visit each other's homes to study for Mrs. Clemons' renowned vocabulary quizzes and Mrs. Perez's math tests, instead of skipping school. We had a new reputation at school as the "smart kids" given to us by our old friends. They were still caught up in the same mess and turmoil that we saved ourselves from. Although bullets still rang and sirens still pierced the night, there was always peace to be found in a good book or a math problem.

In August 1998, my entire family moved out of the dissipation that East Los Angeles had been to us and settled down in Washington State. Everything about Washington was clean and crisp and unblemished. It was like a pristine pastel for a new artist, ready to impress the world with what he envisioned on the easel. I was given an opportunity to succeed by the new society because the stress of the "streets" was gone, only replaced with the stress of high school. High school was nothing compared to gang violence. I used the newfound stress as a fuel to excel in school. I acquired a 4.0 GPA my first semester of freshman year and have continued to work hard at everything I do.

My friends ask me how I work so hard and never grow tired. In the last two months I have worked 25 hours per week while maintaining a 3.6 GPA. I am the only Hispanic male in the top 10 of my class, in which 70 percent of the students are of Hispanic origin. People say I work too hard and I tell them I am still young. I believe that good things will only come through hard work. All of my labor will eventually pay off in the future. I have endured much over the years and I have blossomed nonetheless. I am indeed a rose that grew from concrete. As Nasir Jones said, "You can be whatever you want to be, whenever you are ready to be it." I believe I am ready for anything.

Directions | *After class discussion, we will copy the sentences that best express the four elements of the personal essay.*

BIG IDEA _____ *used to* _____, *but now he* _____

Lead: _____

Personal Reflection: _____

Narrative Four:

"My Chinese Family of Four"

By Isabelle Kao

At my house, where toilet seats are always down and women do the barbecuing, ESPN is just a channel between Headline News and the Food Network.

Consisting of Grandma, Mom, younger sister Victoria, and me, my purely female family lacks a paternal influence. I haven't seen my father in years; he doesn't know that I could die for chocolate milkshakes, that my mouth hangs open while I sleep, or that I wear flip-flops year round.

Although not divorced, my parents have led separate lives on opposite sides of the world for as long as I can remember. In my family, Grandma is the traditional "Mom" while Mom is the traditional "Dad." Mom works late into the night to sustain us while Grandma cooks and cleans.

Grandma keeps the rice cooker on "stay warm" and starts stir-frying in the wok around nine p.m when Mom gets home. Grandma fills dinner conversations with remarks in Chinese: "Why won't you eat the eggs? Do you know that when your mother was growing up in Communist China, we were rationed eggs only once a year and saved them as birthday treats? And eat the shiitake mushrooms! They lower cholesterol!"

Grandma offers the wisdom and support of a strong sovereign. With the power and age to lecture and scold, she is Queen; if I seek permission to do something, the matter ultimately ends in Her Majesty's hands.

Mom's "yes" may very well be Grandma's "no," and the Queen's resounding "no" always prevails. Grandma's wisdom is that of a sage; aside from the cultural clashes, she has always pointed me in the right direction and given me the right answer. I've learned that I don't need to lose my sense of values and morals to succumb to peer pressure.

I don't need to eat dinner "on the go," watch Monday Night Football, or attend the prom just because everyone else does. By listening to my problems and conveying a Chinese proverb with each solution, Grandma also helps me see the truth in the various Confucius sayings displayed prominently throughout the house.

Mom has taught me to be strong and independent. Never complaining of her stress level or fatigue, she only strives to work harder. We devour The New York Times each morning to "be aware of global issues and to be free from

ignorance." She is not at all embarrassed to take me as her "date" to company functions. Despite the numerous times Victoria and I tell Mom that Buicks are generally driven by ol' folks, she stubbornly refuses to drive any other car.

Mom and Grandma, whom I instinctively call my parents, raise my sister and me in the strict, old-fashioned, Chinese manner. Unable to date, wear clothes of our choosing, or bring home grades lower than A's, growing up as Chinese-Americans can be a challenge.

Grandma derides the innocent Disney Channel whenever Victoria watches it because it features the "unacceptable behavior" of girls who wear makeup, have boyfriends, and listen to rap music. Mom chastises me whenever I write with red pen (because red ink symbolizes impoliteness), and when I wear white hair ties (because they symbolize a mother's death). Although frustrated at times, my sister and I generally end up in hysterics when we joke about the things that set apart our parents from other American parents.

We laugh at how our friends are forced to take off their shoes and wear slippers when entering our house while trying to comprehend Grandma's broken English.

American journalist Jane Howard once said, "Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one."

Throughout the years, friends have called my family the network of "the four chicas," the tribe of "the three generations," and the clan of "Grandma's children."

I don't need a high testosterone presence in my house to make me a better person, and I wouldn't trade my unconventional family for any other in the world. After seventeen years, I have come to realize that today's households aren't powered by the traditional mother and father, sister Jane, brother John, and dog Spot; rather, they are powered by love.

I have come to realize that the typical American family I once wished to have is unnecessary in guiding the family's prized vehicle down the road of life. All I need is our Buick, driven by Mom's will, steered by Grandma's protection and support, and fueled by all our love.

Directions | *After class discussion, we will copy the sentences that best express the four elements of the personal essay.*

BIG IDEA _____ *used to* _____, *but now he* _____

Lead: _____

Personal Reflection: _____

Narrative Five:

"The Silence that Changed My Life"

By Christopher Gagne
Canadaigua Academy
Canadaigua, New York

As we walked down the street to the arcade where my parents had forbidden me to go, it crossed my mind that I should not be doing this. It was a beautiful day and it was going to be a blast, but I knew deep down that Keith and Krista had lured me into something regrettable. We passed Atwater Park on our journey and they spotted Ralph inside.

Ralph was an old homeless guy who usually hung out in the park in the middle of town. Not a threatening man, he spent his days sitting on a park bench, smiling, and feeding the birds. Ralph was the kind of street-folk who never frightened anyone, never irritated anyone, never even annoyed anyone, and still people talked about him. Whether in or out of earshot, the masses that walked Main Street scoffed as they cast furtive looks of pity mingled with contempt at Ralph, but Ralph never seemed to notice.

Keith thought it might be fun to talk to Ralph, and started to walk over, but Krista stopped him. She was afraid Ralph might freak out and turn into one of those hobos who kill people, and I wouldn't have been surprised myself. Making what he thought was a compromise, Keith threw a pine cone. It struck Ralph squarely in the forehead, but still the undeserving pariah sadly smiled. As the clouds smothered the sun, Krista found a half-eaten sub in a bag on the ground, which she threw at Ralph. Ralph had turned away from his persecutors a little, and the sandwich connected with the back of his head.

Birds stopped chirping, people stopped talking, and the weak and vulnerable Ralph fell forward onto the ground, promptly followed by the jeering laughter of Keith and Krista.

Silence ensued, broken only by the raucous, ignorant chortling of my two fellow eighth graders. Eventually, they realized the deafening quiet that surrounded them, and their sounds of ill begotten joy ceased. Nothing

disturbed the harsh, accusing silence that descended on the scene. As Ralph struggled to rise, first on one knee, then straining on the arm of the park bench for support, his grunts and labored breathing were the only sounds to be heard. The teens stood wishing for some noise, any noise, to break the thick, choking silence. They prayed for a car horn, a baby cry, hopeful even for the caw of a raven. Finally, a siren sounded in the distance and set them free.

Life had returned to normal in Canandaigua. Ralph had managed to lift himself back onto the bench, and was breathing heavily from the exertion. We stared at Ralph's heaving back. After a long, guilty moment, awestruck and depressed, they silently started to make their way back to Keith's house. As I walked towards Ralph, Keith called to me to ask if I was coming. I ignored him.

I sat next to Ralph, wanting to say that I was sorry, but before I could, he turned around. He looked me in the eye, managed a smile behind wet, bleary eyes, and said, "I forgive you," without my speaking a word. I felt a lump swelling in my throat and stayed to talk for a while.

I walked to the forbidden arcade and sat in silence, waiting for my parents to find me. My own personal form of penance, I wanted to be punished for letting it all happen. I had stood aside, taking part in the deeds by not halting them, and through my lack of action, I was lowered to the pitiful level of the assailants. I felt terrible, and I needed to feel the ramifications of my act.

Ralph died last week. I read in the paper that he was hit by a car driven by a girl in my grade. As I looked back at the terrible event that seems so long ago, I was ashamed. I felt disgraced that I could have let that happen to a man no more deserving of it than myself. That night, I cried and prayed, not only for Ralph, but for myself.

Before we discuss, write down the FIRST thoughts you have about this story in the space below:

Directions | *After class discussion, we will copy the sentences that best express the four elements of the personal essay.*

BIG IDEA _____ *used to* _____, *but now he* _____

Lead: _____

Personal Reflection: _____

Universal Connection: _____

Narrative Six:

UNDERLINE the lead and the lines that BEST represent the personal reflection and universal connection in the following essay.

Life Lessons Learned From Fast Food

By: Jessica Becker, Orlando, Fla.

I work at McDonald's. It is great job—it really is. Long shifts, hard manual labor, listening to customers complain endlessly. At times, it tests my nerves, but mostly, I enjoy it. It is the one place where I feel relaxed, which is ironic, considering it is a high-stress job. I suppose it is because it offers me a break from my reality, and instead provides me with a forum where I can study people.

"Hi, how are you today?"

The standard response is "good," an answer with little depth, said with no meaning behind it. But every now and then, somebody actually talks to me. Maybe about the weather—usually about the weather—but I take what I can get. Or they tell me how they were up until talking to a friend who is having a family crisis and that is why they are so tired, often blurted out so quickly I can barely catch it, as if conversing with me is a sin, and telling a story is a guilty indulgence. My favorites are the people who say my name. I know, I wear a name tag, but saying "Thank you Jessica," makes it personal. And in a land full of Big Macs and large fries, I like when it gets personal.

"Hi, how are you today?"

"Why thank you for asking—I'm supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." And this father, with the crinkly eyes and childish Disney humor, never ceases to make me smile. I can recognize him now, not by name, but by face, and I consider him an almost friend, in a strictly pleasant casual sense. He makes me giggle and after helping him, making another stack of Happy Meals suddenly does not seem quite so daunting.

There are the usual frustrating customers. The ones who wait to ask for ketchup after you hand their bag out the drive-thru window. There are the people who take their trays with them to the drink station, so I end up stuck holding their food. I "meet and greet" hundreds of customers a day and I take pride in the fact that I can recognize certain individuals. I feel as if our 30-second interactions allow me to know something about them. Perhaps I do not know their whole life story, but I know enough, and filling in the gaps becomes a way to stretch my imagination.

There is the 10-year-old developmentally disabled boy who comes in at least once a week with his grandmother. She orders him a small orange juice and a cheeseburger with no mustard. He smiles when his food comes up, and gazes at his "gramma" lovingly. That is devotion, and she reveals patience that is incomprehensible to most individuals. I imagine that this boy's mother was not up to the daunting task of raising a child with Down syndrome, so instead, the grandmother stepped up to the plate and raised her grandson as if he were her own son. There is the elderly couple who make my heart melt: he with his cane, and she with her walker. He walks her to a table, and slowly ambles over to order a sandwich to share. In my mind, they are high school sweethearts, married straight out of college, and despite fights and accusations of infidelity, they are still together, some 50 years later. True love never dies. There is the business man who comes in every morning at six, buys a cup of coffee, and sits in the lobby to read the newspaper. I can see him coming home to an empty apartment every night—he is a workaholic, constantly searching to find something, someone, to fill the void in his life. None of these customers have names, but knowing their faces is enough.

These people have stories. And while I do not know them as individuals, I feel as we have a connection. Every order, every word exchanged between us, allows me a glimpse into their lives. Their choice of food gives me insight into who they are. Working in a business where customer satisfaction is our top goal has taught me to shatter stereotypes.

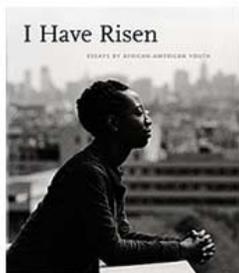
There is Kenneth, high school senior, with a buzz cut and pierced ear, the epitome of ghetto. He is one of the sweetest, soft spoken individuals I have ever met. There is rocker Stephanie, with jet-black hair and nine earrings in one ear alone. She is outgoing and loud, yet with class seen in few young women. There is Mike, who is working his way through college and struggles to pay rent, and Gabe, who graduates from community college this spring and wants to be a criminal-justice lawyer—and he will be. There is Toccara, big and black, who makes fun of her race like nobody's business, and sings opera to the customers.

They are my coworkers, and they have shown me not to judge, but rather to look beneath the surface.

I have learned that the ideas we form in our heads about people are not always right. Behind the golden arches and pasted smiles, I have met some of the most genuine people I will ever encounter in life. And behind the countless orders and constant clang of the register, the customers are real people too. When I take a step back, I realize how lucky I am to have fast food in my life. Most people will never know or understand this type of diversity, will never hear the stories I do, and will never have the chance to brighten someone's day a little.

I speak honestly when I say that at McDonalds, we appreciate your business. And next time, when I say "Hi, how are you today?" ...talk to me. Because I really do want to listen.

Narrative Seven:



I Have Risen is a collection of essays by outstanding African-American high school students chosen for the Ron Brown Scholarship program.

When the essay was written, the author, Brent E. Cash, was studying mechanical engineering and economics at Duke University and proud that he continues to return to his neighborhood where his family continues to live.

Bang! I heard the gunshot, but was unsure if it was real or not. Thump! I saw the body crumble, but wondered if it really happened. Rather than hearing and seeing these atrocities¹⁰ for myself, I had heard the gunshot and seen the body vicariously, through a friend's story. Joseph was the victim. He saw a girl he liked, he asked for her phone number, and was consequently shot by someone else who liked the girl. Lately, he associated with the wrong crowd, but his actions that night did not merit death.

Joseph was a friend, someone that I guarded on the basketball court whenever we played. Chills crept down my spine; I could still feel his cold sweat splashing on to me when we struggled for the ball. And suddenly I could remember no more. There was strange smell in the room. This time my senses were not imaginary, because the scent was definitely real. "Put that out!" I screamed at Daniel. He had finished his story on Joseph, but had started something else – smoking marijuana. He offered me some, but to his disappointment, I scowled, narrowing my eyes into miniscule¹¹ slants and snorting gruffly.

Such were the fates of my childhood friends. Unmotivated in school, either gang life or drugs took their toll on them. I ended communications with them

¹⁰ atrocity – n. a wicked or cruel act

¹¹ miniscule – adj. extremely small

and became an outsider to my neighbors, a stranger to longtime buddies. I know my challenge was to remain focused in school. Highly motivated by the possibility of becoming the first four-year college student in my immediate family, and the only one within my group of “friends” to pursue higher education, learning became a passion. I devoted my energy to study in the library, participating in activities, and avoiding the neighborhood’s negativity.

Yet, I was disheartened and unsatisfied; I had abandoned my “friends” and believed that they too, should have the same opportunities that I did, no matter their horrible decisions. Motivated to prevent kids from self-destructing, I instituted¹² a tutoring program at the neighborhood elementary school designed to counter the evils that destroyed my friends. They had told themselves “I can’t” too many times, even when they could; ultimately, they just gave up. My goal is to prevent this from happening to my students. “I can’t do that math problem,” a student told me. To his shock, I told him to come to the blackboard, and with a little help he finished the problem to perfection.

This program has inspired youngsters to realize their potential, a thought that makes me smile broadly because I know that they will not commit the same glaring mistakes as my childhood friends. The program, which has lifted my conscience, is a response to my old friend’s decisions; it is my attempt to save others who, possibly, are like them. I am proud that I have played a part in shaping the futures of so many youngsters.

QUIZ REVIEW

Go back and look at your annotations. Then, answer the following questions.

1. **BIG IDEA** _____ *used to* _____, *but now he* _____

2. ***Underline*** the lead.

3. ***Find*** the sentence/paragraph that BEST represents the personal reflection. What experience does the author reflect on? What happens to the author?

4. ***Circle*** the universal connection.

¹² instituted – v. started

HOW WILL I BE GRADED?

CATEGORY	4- TARGET	3- APPROACHING TARGET	2- EMERGING	1- BASELINE
Argument & Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I wrote a thesis that is clear, arguable, relevant, and specific. ➤ I gave plenty of context so that my reader could easily follow my writing. ➤ I provided a sufficient amount of evidence to convince my reader of my thesis. ➤ I explained my evidence to my reader with enough logic to convince him/her to see my point of view. ➤ I convincingly responded to opposing points of view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I wrote a thesis that is missing one of these characteristics: clear, arguable, relevant, specific. ➤ I gave enough context for my reader to follow my writing. ➤ Even though I provided good evidence to convince my reader of my thesis, I needed more evidence or more relevant evidence. ➤ I explained my evidence, but without enough logic to completely convince my reader to see my point of view. ➤ I responded to opposing points of view, and I was usually convincing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I wrote a thesis that is missing two of these characteristics: clear, arguable, relevant, specific. ➤ Even though I gave some context, my reader still had a hard time following my writing. ➤ I provided some evidence, but not enough to convince my reader of my thesis. ➤ I explained my evidence, but I did not use good logic and I was not convincing. ➤ I responded to other points of view, but I was not convincing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I did not write a thesis or my thesis is missing three of the characteristics. ➤ I did not give context. My reader could not follow my writing. ➤ I did not provide evidence to support my thesis or my evidence was off-topic. ➤ I did not explain my evidence, or I did not show logical thought in my explanation. ➤ I ignored opposing points of view.
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I wrote a clear introduction, body, and conclusion that allowed my reader to easily follow the development of my ideas. ➤ I consistently ordered my ideas in a way that built a strong case for my argument. ➤ I used purposeful transitions that smoothly moved my reader from one idea to the next. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I wrote a beginning, middle and end, but they did not always do the job of an introduction, body or conclusion. ➤ I usually ordered my ideas in a way that built a strong case for my argument, but not always. ➤ I used purposeful transitions to move my reader between ideas, but some of them were not smooth or were confusing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I wrote a beginning, middle and end, but their purpose was not clear. ➤ I put my ideas in a noticeable order, but that order rarely helped to build a strong case for my argument. ➤ I used transitions, but they often did not fit well or they were confusing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ My writing jumped around and my ideas were very difficult to follow. ➤ I did not put my ideas in a logical order. ➤ I did not use transitions between my ideas or my transitions detracted from the quality of my writing.
Language, Style and Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I consistently used the best words to communicate my ideas. ➤ I consistently used sentences that made my meaning clear and that made my reader want to keep reading. ➤ I clearly brought out my own voice and connected with my reader. ➤ I used language that was appropriate for this assignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I used words that communicated my ideas well, but I could have chosen words that were clearer and more appropriate. ➤ I used sentences that made my meaning clear and that made my reader want to keep reading, but not consistently. ➤ I brought out my own voice, but I did not always do it clearly or fully connect with my reader. ➤ I usually used language that was appropriate for this assignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ My words sometimes made my meaning difficult to understand. They did not hold my reader's interest. ➤ I sometimes used clear and interesting sentences, but too many of my sentences were dull or confusing. ➤ I tried to bring out my own voice, but I struggled to be clear or connect with my reader. ➤ I often used language that was not appropriate for this assignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ My words made my meaning unclear and caused my reader to lose interest. ➤ I used dull or confusing sentences. ➤ I did not bring out my own voice. ➤ I did not use language that was appropriate for this assignment.
Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I wrote a flawless or nearly flawless paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I made a small number of mistakes in grammar, spelling or punctuation, but not enough to distract my reader from my ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I made enough mistakes in grammar, spelling or punctuation that my reader was distracted from my ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I made enough mistakes in grammar, spelling or punctuation that my reader was seriously distracted from my ideas.