

Introduction and Pretest

Your students should be familiar with the proofreading and technology skills in the advanced level of the Writer's Guide before beginning this unit.

PREPARATION Each student will need lined paper, a copy of BLM A and a copy of BLM B, and a folder to use as a writing portfolio in which to keep writing assignments.

Introduction

Introduce the students to the unit with an explanation like the following: *We're going to have fun learning to be authors who can write many different kinds of things. Sometimes authors work with other authors to produce a piece of writing. Authors who write together work in a cooperative group to produce a piece of writing. They enjoy sharing ideas. Sometimes we'll work cooperatively to write stories, or narratives. A narrative is a story or an account of an event. When we work together to write a narrative, I'll write our ideas and our story on a chart for the whole class. Everyone will contribute ideas to the class story.*

Sometimes authors work alone. After we practice together, you'll produce a piece of narrative writing of your own.

For the next few lessons, you'll be learning about narrative writing. When you write a narrative, you answer the question "What happened?" Hero quests and historical fiction are two examples of narrative writing. Hero quests tell about a hero's struggle to accomplish a difficult task. In a hero quest, the hero overcomes obstacles and finally achieves his or her goal. The hero is a strong character who is brave, honest, and determined. Historical fiction stories are stories that are made up about a particular time and place in history. Part of the story tells facts, and part is imagined by the author. This kind of story is set in the past and tells events that happened or could have happened.

Beginning Writing Sample

PREPARATION Write the following starter on the board:

During the American Revolution, many men in the American colonies left their families to join militia units. They had to help fight the British. Your father was one of these men. Young boys and girls, along with their mothers, were left to take care of themselves. Write a story telling how you saved your family from British soldiers when they raided your farm for food and supplies.

Explain to the students that before they learn more about writing historical fiction narratives, you'd like a sample of their writing. Tell them you'll save these samples so you and they can see how their writing improves as they learn more about narrative writing. Remind them that when they write historical fiction, they must include details that describe the time period they're writing about. Read aloud the information passages on BLM A and BLM B. Then read aloud the starter on the board. Ask the students to write a historical fiction narrative on lined paper. Tell them they may use the two information articles for help with the facts in their stories but they must use their own words. Allow the students time to plan and write. Ask them to edit, proofread, and write a final copy of the story. Evaluate the students' writing using the rubric on page 5.

RUBRIC

Pretest

Posttest

Scoring the Samples

Give the student a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.

Give the student a score of 1 for each element at the emergent or minimum level.

Give the student a score of 3 for each element at a satisfactory level.

Give the student a score of 5 for each element at the mastery level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Piece of Narrative Writing		
	The author of this historical fiction narrative . . .	Points Earned
O R G A N I Z A T I O N	Writes an introductory paragraph that draws the reader into the story (beginning).	
	Writes several related paragraphs to develop the plot (middle).	
	Writes a concluding paragraph that provides a denouement (outcome).	
	Follows a logical sequence of events.	
	Has an attention-grabbing title related to the story.	
C O N T E N T	Includes details about the setting (where and when the story takes place).	
	Develops major and minor characters by describing both physical appearance and personality attributes.	
	Develops a plot with a beginning that includes characters, setting, and conflict.	
	Develops a plot through rising action.	
	Presents a believable climax and denouement.	
S T Y L E	Maintains an appropriate balance between narrative and dialogue.	
	Maintains a consistent point of view.	
	Uses a variety of sentence structures (simple, compound, complex).	
	Uses descriptive language to bring characters and setting to life.	
	Uses command of language to differentiate characters.	
M E C H A N I C S	Uses the conventions of capitalization.	
	Writes dialogue in standard form.	
	Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
	Uses standard English, including contractions and possessives.	
	Indents paragraphs.	
Total Points		

If the student scores . . .	
85–100 points	The student has mastered the skills and concepts taught in the advanced level of Narrative Writing.
20–84 points	The student is properly placed in the advanced level of Narrative Writing.
0–19 points	Administer the pretest for the intermediate level of Narrative Writing.

The American Revolution

By the 1760s, English settlers had been in the American colonies for one hundred fifty years. Although some people had left England to find a new life in America, others had left because of religious beliefs or problems with the law. Most colonists were quite independent in their thinking. During this time, they became less and less British and more and more American. Many British people in America thought they should have their own country. In the 1760s and 1770s, many things happened that helped lead to a war between the American colonies and Britain. This war was called the American Revolution or the War for Independence.

Most American colonists believed they should have the same rights as the British people, but they often questioned the laws the British were making to control their lives in the colonies. The main areas of concern for the colonists were taxes and the right to make their own laws. Conflict over taxation became the main cause of this war. King George III of Britain and his lawmakers in the British Parliament wanted to tax the colonists in America to help pay for a war with France that had just ended. Many American colonists believed that the British king and his lawmakers had no right to tax them. The king and his lawmakers thought the colonists should follow their laws. They passed many laws that taxed the American colonists. These taxes angered the Americans because they saw these laws as unfair.

Fighting began at Lexington and Concord in April 1775 between the colonists who wanted to make America a country of its own and the British who wanted to keep control of the American colonies. Britain's army was made up of well-trained soldiers. The colonial army was mostly militia units made up of ordinary men who owned their own guns and who had only a little bit of military training. They were called to duty whenever they were needed or when their homes and families were in danger from British soldiers. These militiamen would remain with the army units as long as necessary. Their time in the army varied from a few days to two or three months.

In times of battle or during bad winter conditions, life was very hard for the militia soldiers. They were poorly supplied. Their clothes were ragged and dirty. Many wore out their shoes and had no replacements. The soldiers should have received daily food rations of bread or flour, beef or pork, peas or beans, and sometimes milk or vegetables, but these food rations often didn't arrive. There were times when the soldiers went for days without anything to eat. Cold and hungry, many soldiers became ill. Out of every ten soldiers who died during the war, nine died from disease, and only one died from wounds received in battle.

Life was hard for the soldiers on both sides. It was particularly hard for the British soldiers who had to fight in the countryside away from their lodgings and the comforts of the cities. While they were in the cities, life was easier for them because ships from Britain brought them supplies. But while they were in the countryside, food and supplies were a problem. Often the British army was forced to survive by raiding farms for food and supplies. Sometimes the farms they raided were the farms of the very militiamen they were fighting. This made people even angrier with the British and helped convince the militia to fight even harder to defend their property and their families.

Life of a Farming Family during the American Revolution

In the 1700s, most people in the colonies were farmers. Farming families usually included a husband, a wife, and four to ten children. Some lived in a one-room or two-room wooden house with a loft. Others, whose families who had been in America for a hundred years or more, had comfortable homes and good barns for their animals. Most homes had a wood or dirt floor. A fireplace kept the family warm. An upstairs loft was used for storage. A separate kitchen, a smokehouse, and storage buildings were nearby. Most farmers living in the colonies at the time of the Revolution were working hard to take care of their families and to provide them with the necessities of life. Everyone in the family had many duties and responsibilities. Hard work was needed to help the family survive and prosper.

The farming family's duties were to plant and harvest the crops and to take care of the animals. The family might grow wheat, rye, oats, corn, or flax. They also grew beans, peas, carrots, and cabbage. They kept horses as work animals and raised pigs, cows, goats, and chickens for food. They raised sheep for wool and for food. The men and the older boys hunted for deer, ducks, turkeys, and geese. The family repaired buildings, fences, and tools; felled trees; shucked and ground corn; fertilized the fields; and shipped crops to market.

The main responsibility of the wife and the girls was to run the household. During the winter and spring, they spun wool into yarn and flax into thread. They kept a vegetable garden and grew herbs for medicinal purposes and for flavoring food. In late summer and fall, the women dried and stored fruits and vegetables for the coming winter. When the pigs were slaughtered, the women smoked the meat and made sausages, candles, and soap. Every day the women cooked, knitted, sewed, and looked after the younger children.

Boys in the family learned from their father. As soon as they were old enough to help, they were working in the fields or helping with the slaughtering of animals for food. They learned to repair equipment and to build fences and buildings. In the evenings, when it was too dark to work outside, boys learned to read, write, and do arithmetic so that one day they would be able to run their own farms. If there were enough children in a family to keep the farm running efficiently, a boy who reached fourteen could be apprenticed to a master craftsman to learn a trade. After five to seven years, he became a blacksmith, a furniture maker, a printer, or a cobbler.

Girls learned the skills necessary to become wives and mothers. They cooked, spun, knitted, and sewed. They gardened, dried and stored food, and made candles and soap. They fed the chickens and gathered the eggs. They learned to treat common illnesses and injuries. A girl might learn to read and to sign her name.

During the Revolution many farmers were called to serve in the militia. All healthy men between the ages of sixteen and sixty were required by law to serve. They had to attend training known as muster days and serve whenever they were needed. Although the men expected to be away from their farms for only a few days, they often did not return for months. All the duties and responsibilities on the farm fell on the shoulders of the wives and children.