

EVALUATING A NARRATIVE ESSAY USING THE SIX WRITING TRAITS

Directions: A student responded to the narrative prompt below. Read the student's essay and the completed evaluation on the next page. Then, answer the questions that follow.

Narrative Prompt: *Think of an important event or incident in your life. What lesson did you learn? Write a well-developed personal narrative that describes the experience and reveals why it was important to you.*

Sometimes my imagination takes off too quickly. One day my parents, my sister Elena, and I were driving to Virginia for a long weekend. I was looking at a brochure for the place we were going to stay. "Hey, Mom," I said, "they have hot-air balloon rides." Dad asked whether we would like to try it. Without hesitating, I said, "Sure." Mom offered to call for reservations. "Goody," squealed Elena.

I imagined the balloon ride. What had I been thinking? I had agreed to go up in a little basket attached to a balloon. "There is no way of steering the vehicle," the brochure explained, "so it just goes with the wind." Panic set in. I comforted myself with the thought that Mom probably couldn't get reservations so late.

When we got to the hotel, Mom called about the balloon ride. Elena stood beside her, looking eager. I was thinking, "Please say you don't have room for us." Mom got off the phone and announced cheerfully, "We meet the balloonist at 6:30 a.m." Elena was thrilled. I was imagining what my friends would say when they heard how I had drifted away into the pillowy clouds or worse, slammed into a building.

I tossed and turned all night and dreamed of crash landings in the desert. Never mind that there are no deserts in Virginia. Finally, morning came. My last hope was that it would rain, but a peek out the window took away that hope. Soon people would be rescuing me from a tree.

We waited outside. My fears quadrupled when I saw the balloonist drive up. The basket on the back of the truck couldn't possibly hold all of us. We drove to a field as the sun popped over the horizon. The team prepared the balloon. Everyone else in my family was fascinated. I felt sick. Finally, we climbed into the tiny basket with the balloon pilot. Once we were settled, the team let go of the ropes. In no time, we were softly gliding upward over the velvety, rolling hills. "Hey, this is great!" I yelled. I had to laugh when I realized how much time I had wasted worrying. Sometimes I need to listen to my imagination.

One Reader's Evaluation

A reader used the rubrics on pp. 20–21 to evaluate the narrative essay above. Below are her scores and comments.

Narrative Essay: Six Trait Scores	
Ideas and Content	5
Organization	5
Voice	5
Word Choice	5
Sentence Fluency	5
Conventions	5

A Closer Look
Think about the writer's purpose when you give scores for organization. For example, the purpose of a narrative is to tell a story. Usually the events should be organized in the order that they occur. If they are out of order or hard to follow, you need to give a lower score for organization.

One Reader's Comments

Ideas and Content: *A clear idea—overcoming fear—governs the narrative. The reader receives a clear idea of the character of the narrator and his or her sister. Appropriate details about the parents are required for plot development. The writer obviously learned a lesson and shares it with the readers.*

Organization: *The organizational structure effectively incorporates internal dialogue and suspense to move the plot along, and the narrative builds to an effective resolution that suggests a lesson about life.*

Voice: *The writer's voice is clear and engaging and demonstrates a thoughtful approach to the writing task.*

Word Choice: *Word choice is specific and effective.*

Sentence Fluency: *The narrative uses a variety of sentence types and structures. The sentences flowed nicely and had a nice pace, speeding up or slowing down the action as appropriate.*

Conventions: *The writer demonstrates a strong command of the conventions of the English language.*

Sum It Up: *Overall I thought the paper was insightful, clear, and fun to read. I could tell the writer understood how the experience affected his or her life.*

Your Turn

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Now answer the questions below. Use the rubrics on pp. 20–21 to figure out how you would score the preceding narrative essay (p. 30). How do your responses compare to the scores shown above?

1

1. I do/ do not agree with the evaluator's score on the writer's ideas and contents because

2

2. I do/ do not agree with the evaluator's score on the writer's organization because

3

3. I do/ do not agree with the evaluator's score on the writer's voice because

4

4. I do/ do not agree with the evaluator's score on the writer's word choice because

5

5. I do/ do not agree with the evaluator's score on the writer's sentence fluency because.

6

6. I do/ do not agree with the evaluator's score on the writer's conventions because

7

7. If you were to give the essay different scores from the ones on p. 31, what would they be? Why do you think different scores should be given?
