



“But I don’t want to go to a new school!” I whined to my mother. “I liked my old school!” She just shook her head and told me to get ready for the bus.

It didn’t matter what I wanted, of course. We had moved over the summer to a new neighborhood, and I was going to have to start sixth grade at Beecher Elementary, a new school where I didn’t know anybody. There was nothing I could do about it.

As I waited for the bus, a little roller coaster circled around in my stomach, rising up and shooting down steep hills. As I walked on the bus, I felt all the strangers’ eyes drilling into me, wondering who I was and where I came from. No one said a word or offered a smile. I put my “I don’t care” face on and walked to an empty seat, where I slumped and lay my backpack on the seat next to me, so no one would sit there. I stared out the window, and quick as a nightmare, we were there at school.

I walked down the bus steps and saw immediately that I was dressed all wrong. No one else was wearing Chuck Taylors. Most girls had their hair up, but no one except me wore braids. My clothes were wrong, wrong, wrong. I was all wrong. I felt like a loser, like I was wearing a sign that said “Clueless New Girl.” I wanted to run home and change, start over. But I had to go forward.

As I walked onto the playground, a tall, mean-looking girl with red hair and a black leather jacket came over to me. I got tense and looked around, searching for an escape route. She stood in front me, with her hands on her hips. At the last minute, she looked over my shoulder and smiled. “Gina!” she yelled. “What’s up, girlfriend? How was your summer?” She



bounced over to another girl and the two of them ran off, giggling and talking.

I guess I had dodged that bullet. But I knew that I was going to have a hard day. I sat on an empty bench next to the basketball court, got out my headphones, and tried to lose myself in my favorite song, Taylor Swift's "Blank Space." She sings, "So hey, let's be friends," but I don't think I'm going to be making any friends today. I feel so different. I miss my old friends.

I stood up when I saw all the kids flowing like a slow stream of syrup toward the school doors. I guess the bell had rung, although I didn't hear it because I had the volume up high in my headphones. I stayed in my music. I moved with the crowd, but I was separate from it.

Yes, I was surrounded by people, but no one talked to me. People looked at me, but no one really saw me. There were hundreds of kids my age all around me, laughing, hugging, playing with each other, telling jokes, teasing each other. They all knew where to go, what to do, what to say, who to be. Except me. I was alone.

Optional instructions: Underline the details in the story that make it come alive to you. In the margins, identify what each noted detail is (a simile? An image? A sensory detail?) and explain why you like it.



PROMPT: Write about a time you felt like an outsider. Make sure the story tells ONE specific experience or event in your life, one moment in time. Keep your voice natural and honest. Add figurative language and strong details, so your reader will see what you saw and feel what you felt.

Steps in the writing process

- Identify an incident (a single event occurring over a short period of time). Jot some notes before you start drafting,

• What happened in the incident? _____

• Who was there? _____

• Where did it occur? _____

• Outline the sequence of events: What happened first? _____

Second ? _____

Third? _____

• Why was it significant to you? _____

Begin your first draft. Be sure to include the information from the lines above. Also tell what you heard, saw, smelled, etc., at the scene.

PSSA GRADES 3–5 NARRATIVE SCORING GUIDELINES

Score Point	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctly established situation/theme that orients the reader and introduces the narrator and/or characters • Effective narrative pattern that sequences events and provides a conclusion • Thorough elaboration that effectively supports the storyline • Effective use of narrative techniques to develop experiences and events • Effective use of transitions • Precise control of language that conveys experiences and events using concrete words, phrases, and sensory details* • Consistent control of sentence formation • Few errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation; errors present do not interfere with meaning
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly established situation/theme that orients the reader and introduces the narrator and/or characters • Narrative pattern that generally sequences events and provides a conclusion; interruptions to the sequence may occur • Sufficient elaboration that supports the storyline • Adequate use of narrative techniques to develop experiences and events • Clear use of transitions • Adequate control of language that conveys experiences and events using concrete words, phrases, and sensory details* • Adequate control of sentence formation • Some errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation; errors present seldom interfere with meaning
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague situation/theme that inconsistently orients the reader and introduces the narrator and/or characters • Weak narrative pattern that inconsistently sequences events and may or may not provide a conclusion • Weak elaboration that somewhat supports the storyline • Limited use of narrative techniques to somewhat develop experiences and events • Inconsistent/limited use of transitions • Limited control of language that conveys experiences and events using limited concrete words, phrases, and sensory details* • Inconsistent control of sentence formation • Errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation; errors present may interfere with meaning
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal evidence of a situation/theme • Minimal sequencing of events that may or may not establish a narrative pattern • Minimal elaboration that may or may not support the storyline • Minimal use of narrative techniques • Minimal use of transitions • Insufficient control of language (words, phrases, and sensory details)* • Minimal control of sentence formation • Many errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation; errors present often interfere with meaning

*This bullet point does not apply at grade 3.

PSSA GRADES 6–8 NARRATIVE SCORING GUIDELINES

Score Point	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctly established context and point of view that effectively orient the reader and introduce the narrator and/or characters • Skillful narrative pattern/storyline that clearly sequences events and provides a conclusion • Thorough elaboration that effectively supports the writer's purpose • Effective use of narrative techniques to develop characters, experiences, and/or events • Effective use of a variety of transitional words and phrases • Precise control of literary devices, sensory language, and sentence structure that clearly conveys experiences and events • Consistent control of sentence formation • Few errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation; errors present do not interfere with meaning
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly established context and point of view that orients the reader and introduces the narrator and/or characters • Adequate narrative pattern/storyline that sequences events; minor interruptions to the sequence may occur • Adequate elaboration that supports the writer's purpose • Adequate use of narrative techniques to develop characters, experiences, and/or events • Appropriate use of transitional words and/or phrases • Appropriate control of literary devices, sensory language, and sentence structure that conveys experiences and events • Adequate control of sentence formation • Some errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation; errors present seldom interfere with meaning
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakly established context and point of view that inconsistently orients the reader and introduces the narrator and/or characters • Weak narrative pattern/storyline that inconsistently sequences events; interruptions to the sequence may detract from the story • Weak elaboration that somewhat supports the writer's purpose • Inconsistent/limited use of narrative techniques • Inconsistent/limited use of transitional words and/or phrases • Limited control of literary devices, sensory language, and sentence structure that inconsistently conveys experiences and/or events • Limited control of sentence formation • Errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation; errors present may interfere with meaning
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimally established context and/or point of view • Minimal narrative pattern/storyline that may or may not sequence events • Minimal elaboration that may or may not support the writer's purpose • Minimal use of narrative techniques • Minimal use of transitional words and/or phrases • Minimal control of literary devices, sensory language, and sentence structure • Minimal control of sentence formation • Many errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation; errors present often interfere with meaning