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Narrative Writing Prompts

Choose **one of** the narrative writing prompts from the list below and write an essay. A certain number of prompts have model essays in the answer section that you can use to compare and contrast your writing. A scoring guide or rubric is also included in the answer section. You can use this guide to give you an idea of the way your essay may be graded. If you have trouble interpreting the scoring guide, see a teacher or professor for help. Sample responses to the prompts in bold can be found at the end of the section.

- 251.** Movies and books often talk about the importance of loyalty and friendship. Tell about a time in your life when friendship proved to be of great importance to you.
- 252.** It is often said that animals are humans' best friends. Describe a time in your life when this saying proved to be true.
- 253.** Martin Luther King, Jr., said that he wished for the day when his children "would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Write about a time in your life when the content of your character was tested.

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- 254.** People often say “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” Describe a time when you misjudged someone based on his or her appearance or when someone misjudged you.
- 255.** The way a person handles disappointment reveals a great deal about what is important to him or her. Tell about a time in your life when you confronted disappointment and how you handled it.
- 256.** As adolescents, many of us promise ourselves that we’ll never be like our parents. But as we mature, we often find that we think and act a lot like our parents do. Describe a time when you realized you were behaving like your mother or father (or other guardian) and how that experience helped you better understand your parent.
- 257.** When we reflect upon our childhood, we often come back to a few key events that had a major impact on us. Tell about one of those defining events from your childhood.
- 258.** Sometimes lies can have serious consequences. Describe a time when a lie had major consequences for you.
- 259.** There is a saying that you should be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it. Describe a time when you wished for something and got it—and then wished you hadn’t.
- 260.** Major life events like a new job, a new home, the birth of a sibling, or the death of someone we love can have a profound impact on us. Describe a major event in your life and what it taught you about yourself or others.
- 261.** People often say, “What you don’t know won’t hurt you,” but the opposite often turns out to be true. Tell about a time when you were hurt by something you didn’t know.
- 262.** Parents are our first and most important teachers. Describe a time when you learned a valuable lesson from one of your parents.

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- 263.** Recall a time when you found yourself in a perilous situation. Tell the story of how you got into that situation and how you survived it.
- 264.** We often discover something we didn't know about ourselves (or others) when we are forced to handle an unexpected situation. Describe a time when you were faced with something unexpected and what you learned in the process.
- 265.** Many experiences in our lives are memorable because they forced us to examine our basic beliefs and values. Tell about such an experience in your life.
- 266.** Many writers have dealt with the theme of a character losing control and going beyond reason. Describe a time in your life when you lost control, and tell why.
- 267.** Preconceived notions often turn out to be false. Describe a time when you discovered that a preconceived notion of yours (about a person, place, or thing) was wrong.
- 268.** It isn't always easy to do what is right, and sometimes it can even be dangerous. Describe a time when you put yourself at risk (physically, socially, emotionally, or professionally) to do what you thought was right.
- 269.** Some of our richest experiences take place when we travel. Tell about a memorable experience you had when you were traveling.
- 270.** Sometimes we take nature for granted. Describe an experience that made you appreciate the natural world.
- 271.** The first time we try something new can be exciting, frightening, and enlightening. Tell about an important "first" in your life and what you learned from the experience.
- 272.** Animals can sometimes seem remarkably human. Describe an experience with an animal that acted in a very human way.

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- 273.** Most of us have to make many difficult choices throughout our lives. Describe a time when you had to make a tough decision.
- 274.** It has often been said that “Life is a journey, not a destination.” Tell about an important journey (physical, emotional, or spiritual) that you’ve taken.
- 275.** How people handle a problem often reveals a lot about their character. Describe a time you encountered a difficult problem and how you solved it.
- 276.** It has been said that the truth is often stranger than fiction. Describe an experience you had that was so strange others might think you made it up.
- 277.** It is often said that you should never judge another person until you walk in his or her shoes. Tell about an experience that enabled you to better understand another person.
- 278.** We all have things that we are afraid of, and sometimes we find ourselves in situations that force us to face our deepest fears. Tell about a time when you had to face one of your greatest fears.
- 279.** Sometimes we surprise ourselves with what we are able to do. Describe a time when you accomplished something you didn’t think you could do.
- 280.** When we are faced with challenges and difficult situations, we sometimes discover strengths we did not know we had. Tell about a time when you recognized a new strength in yourself.
- 281.** Sometimes change can be intimidating—especially technological change. Describe a time when you had difficulty with a new technology.
- 282.** No matter how well we prepare, sometimes, unexpected things may happen. Other times, we may simply be unable to prepare. Tell about a time when you were unprepared for a situation.

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- 283.** Some of our most memorable moments are when we achieve an important goal. Tell about a time when you accomplished a goal you had been working toward.
- 284.** Sometimes something negative turns out to be positive—a “blessing in disguise.” Describe a time in your life when something bad turned out to be good.
- 285.** Moving can be a very exciting but also difficult time in one’s life. Tell about a time you moved and how it affected you.
- 286.** When we are unhappy with a situation, we can either accept it or do something to change it. Tell about a time when you initiated change.
- 287.** We often learn a great deal from our failures. Describe a time when you failed and what you learned from the experience.
- 288.** As the saying goes, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” Describe a time when you persisted until you achieved your goal.
- 289.** Many people believe that it is better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all. Tell about an experience that shows this statement to be true.
- 290.** Most people believe that there are certain things worth fighting for. Tell about a time when you fought for something you believed in.
- 291.** From the time we are toddlers, we begin to challenge authority to test our limits. Describe a time when you challenged authority.
- 292.** Movies and literature often deal with the theme of “counting your blessings.” Tell about an experience that led you to appreciate someone or something you’d taken for granted.
- 293.** Even if we know money can’t buy us happiness, we are often disappointed when we are unable to afford something we desire. Describe a time when you could not afford something you deeply desired.

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- 294.** Our first foray into the world of work is bound to generate some interesting experiences. Tell about a memorable incident from your first job.
- 295.** We often put people we admire so high on a pedestal that we forget they're human. Describe a time when you realized that someone you admired was imperfect.
- 296.** Though some say, "rules are meant to be broken," breaking the rules often has serious consequences. Tell about a time when you broke the rules and what happened as a result.
- 297.** In many situations, as the saying goes, "two heads are better than one." Describe a time when you accomplished something through teamwork that you could not have achieved on your own.
- 298.** People often say, "It's better to be safe than sorry." Tell about an experience that proves this saying to be true.
- 299.** Sometimes the course of our lives can change in an instant. Describe an experience that changed the direction of your life.
- 300.** Tell about a time when you found something important that you thought you had lost.
- 301.** Once words are uttered, it's impossible to take them back. Describe a time when you said something you wish you had not.
- 302.** First impressions are often very important. Describe a time you got (or gave) the wrong first impression.
- 303.** In one of his most famous lines, Shakespeare's Hamlet says, "I must be cruel, only to be kind." Describe a time when you, too, had to be cruel to be kind.
- 304.** We are often surprised, even awed, by the experiences of our ancestors. Describe a time when you learned something important about your family history.

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- 305.** Unfortunately, conflicts over money have the power to destroy even the strongest of relationships. Describe a time when you had a conflict over money.
- 306.** There are many sides to every story. Tell about a time when many people were involved in a conflict.
- 307.** Have you ever forgotten something very important? Tell about your experience.
- 308.** When we meet someone we haven't seen in a long time, we are often surprised by how much they have changed. Describe a time when this happened to you.
- 309.** Describe a time when you received a valuable gift.
- 310.** Most of us remember exactly where we were and what we were doing when we received shocking or important news. Tell the story of what you were doing when you heard about an important event and how that news affected you.
- 311.** Some people believe that you should seize the day—take every opportunity to live life to its fullest. Describe a time when you decided to seize the day.
- 312.** The quality of our character is often reflected in how much we are willing to sacrifice for others. Describe a time when you sacrificed for someone else.
- 313.** Tell about an experience you had while volunteering your help.
- 314.** Sometimes the extraordinary can happen during the most ordinary of tasks. Describe your experience.
- 315.** It is often both frightening and exciting to do something on our own for the first time. Tell about a time when you first did something on your own.

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- 316.** Holidays are meant to be special occasions, and they are often very emotional. Describe an event from a particularly memorable holiday.
- 317.** For many of us, sports are a big part of our lives, whether we are spectators or participants. Describe a memorable sporting event.
- 318.** It is often said that “The greatest risk is not taking one.” Tell about a time when you took a chance.
- 319.** For many of us, our roles—as parents or children, supervisors or subordinates, teachers or students—are very clearly defined. But sometimes the tables turn, and we end up switching roles with another. Tell about a time when you experienced a role reversal.
- 320.** Many things can interfere with our plans. Sometimes an illness prevents us from doing something we really want to do. Describe a time when you became ill and missed out on doing something you’d really been looking forward to.
- 321.** One of Robert Frost’s most famous poems tells about a man who takes the road less traveled. Tell about a time when you also chose the less-traveled path.
- 322.** We often learn valuable lessons in the workplace. Describe an experience at work that taught you something important.
- 323.** It has been said that we can lie with silence as well as with words. Tell about a time when you “told” a lie by keeping silent about something important.
- 324.** Sometimes a simple misunderstanding can lead to a major conflict. Describe a time when this happened to you.
- 325.** Many of our fondest memories are associated with food. Describe a memorable experience that took place while preparing or eating food.

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- 326.** Some of our most memorable experiences take place outdoors, away from the comforts of home. Write about a memorable experience you had while in the great outdoors.
- 327.** Many people believe that hatred is our most destructive emotion. Describe an experience that proves this statement to be true.
- 328.** Louis D. Brandeis said, “Behind every argument is someone’s ignorance.” Describe a time when someone’s lack of knowledge led to an argument.
- 329.** Most of us have done things we didn’t want to do because of pressure from our peers. Tell about a time that you gave in to peer pressure.
- 330.** There is a bumper sticker that reads, “Perform random acts of kindness.” Describe a time when you performed or witnessed a random act of kindness.
- 331.** Tell about a time when you left the safety of a place or situation to explore or try something new.
- 332.** Sometimes an experience can trigger a powerful memory of someone or something from your past. Describe a time when this happened to you.
- 333.** Tell about an experience that prepared you to help someone in a challenging situation.
- 334.** Baltasar Gracian, a Spanish philosopher, once said that, “The things we remember best are those best forgotten.” Describe an experience you wish you’d never had.
- 335.** The French playwright, Molière, wrote, “The greater the obstacle the more glory in overcoming it.” Tell about a time you overcame a great difficulty.
- 336.** Describe an experience that led you to change a long-held opinion.

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- 337.** As children, our strongest bonds are usually with our parents and then with our siblings. Tell about a memorable experience with one of your siblings or a close relative.
- 338.** Superheroes, like Spiderman, don't use weapons to subdue their foes. Rather, they rely upon a few special tools and their own ingenuity. Describe a time when your quick thinking saved the day.
- 339.** We often have memorable experiences when we are learning a new skill or task. Describe an experience you had while learning something new.
- 340.** There is a saying that states, "You can never go home again." Describe a time when you returned to a place from your past and how you and the place had changed.
- 341.** Try as we might to avoid them, accidents happen. Tell about a time when you were involved in an accident.
- 342.** Describe an experience you had that would be considered a near miss or a brush with disaster.
- 343.** We learn many lessons from many different sources throughout our lives. Tell about a time you learned something that you can't learn from any book.
- 344.** Some of our most difficult experiences are when we find ourselves stuck in a moral dilemma. Describe a time when this happened to you.
- 345.** We are tested in many ways throughout our lives. Tell about a time when you were tested.
- 346.** Describe a time when you enjoyed something you thought you would not like.
- 347.** Television shows often depict family conflicts. Describe a time when you had a conflict with a family member.

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- 348.** Describe a time when you witnessed something unbelievable.
- 349.** Many stories and essays describe the writer's school days. Tell about a memorable experience from your formal education.
- 350.** Ours is a highly competitive society. Describe a time when you were involved in a heated contest.
- 351.** Throughout our lives we may be asked to do things we do not want to do. Tell about a time when this happened to you.
- 352.** As we grow older, we take on more and more responsibility. Describe a time when you were given a responsibility that you were not ready for.
- 353.** In Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall," a man tells his neighbor, "Good fences make good neighbors," suggesting that we need clear boundaries to get along. Describe an experience that proves this statement to be true.
- 354.** It has often been said that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. Describe a time when you overcame one of your fears.
- 355.** Sometimes when we meet someone, we have no idea how important that person will become to us later in our lives. Describe the time you first met someone who later became very important to you.
- 356.** People sometimes say, "Either you're with us, or you're against us." Tell about a time when you had to choose between two sides.
- 357.** It isn't always easy to be ourselves, especially when we are worried about what others may think of us. Tell about a time you pretended to be someone or something you were not.
- 358.** Oscar Levant, a pianist and movie actor, said, "Happiness is not something you experience, it's something you remember." Describe an event that you are happy to remember.

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- 359.** We all need help from others from time to time. Tell about a time you helped someone in need.
- 360.** Describe an experience that shows the accuracy of the following quotation: "Your luck is how you treat people."
- 361.** Write about a time when you found something of significant emotional or monetary value.
- 362.** Every culture has its own rites of passage. Describe your experience with a rite of passage in your culture.
- 363.** As much as we may love our friends, we sometimes find ourselves very angry with them. Tell about a time when you had a conflict with a close friend.
- 364.** Some people prefer to play it safe; others are always ready to take chances. Describe a time when you decided to take a chance.
- 365.** If you have ever been treated unfairly, you may have been told, "Who ever said life has to be fair?" Describe a time you were treated unfairly and how you handled the situation.
- 366.** Have you ever befriended someone simply because he or she looked like he needed a friend? Describe your experience.
- 367.** When parents set limits and discipline their children, they often say, "Someday, you'll understand why I'm doing this." Tell about a time when you realized that your parents were doing what they thought was best, even though it made you very angry at the time.
- 368.** If you could be invisible for one day, what would you do? Write a story detailing the events of this imaginary day.
- 369.** P.W. Litchfield, founder of Goodyear Tire & Rubber, wrote, "One realizes the full importance of time only when there is little of it left." Describe an experience in your life that proved this statement to be true.

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- 370.** Many stories, like Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat," talk about the indifference of nature to human needs and desires. Talk about a time in your life when you experienced nature's indifference to your needs.
- 371.** Alexander Maclaren, a Baptist minister, said, "The man who has not learned to say *no* will be a weak, if not a wretched man, as long as he lives." Describe an experience when you should have said *no*, but did not.
- 372.** Our dreams often reflect our subconscious fears and desires. Tell about a time you had a very troubling or enlightening dream.
- 373.** Certain key experiences help us mature from children into young adults. Describe one of those key experiences in your life.
- 374.** Few things give us as much pleasure as creating something beautiful. Tell about a time when you created something.
- 375.** Many conversations begin with the introduction, "You'll never guess who I bumped into today . . ." Chance meetings can make for very interesting experiences. Describe a time when you bumped into someone, and it led to a memorable conversation or event.
- 376.** Music can often trigger powerful memories. Describe a memorable experience associated with a particular song or piece of music.