

Grade 6 Playlist: Context, Narrator, and Characters

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.A*:

- Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

Welcome

Some narratives are fictional stories, and some are personal stories based on real experiences. In a personal narrative, a writer includes the people involved, where and when it took place, and how he or she feels about the event or events. Since the narrative is about the writer's experience, he or she narrates the story. In order to make the narrative interesting for readers and to orient them, the writer establishes the context, introduces him or herself as the narrator and other people involved in the experience. The writer may choose to include a lot of details to pull readers in, making them interested in the experience the writer is describing. The writer also organizes the events—most likely chronologically—so that the reader can follow along. These aspects are important for readers to fully understand the sequences of events, the meaning of the story, and the surrounding influences of the story.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- understand how context and a narrator and/or characters engage and orient the reader.
- organize the narrative for a natural and logical flow.

Review

Key Terms

- The **narrator** is the speaker of the story who relays the events and experiences described in a piece of text. In most personal narratives, the narrator is also the main character of the story. The writer establishes the fact that he or she is the narrator by using the first-person pronoun (“I”).
- Supporting characters** are characters that are not the focus of the main storyline, but may help provide context, a back-story or subplot, or aid the main character along his or her journey through events.
- When writers **orient** readers, they establish the context so readers understand the background information and know when and where the narrative is beginning and introduce the characters so readers know who will be involved.
- Context** within a narrative refers to the surrounding information or set of circumstances around the story, such as the setting (time and place). Context can often influence the meaning or effect of the story.
- Conflict** is the main problem in the experience the writer is sharing.



Listen!

This song helps students remember the important elements of a story to keep in mind when writing:

<http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=31711&CategoryID=5236>

Exploring the Standard

Often, the purpose of writing a personal narrative is to share an experience and what the writer has learned from it. Orienting the readers through establishing a context, introducing the people/characters involved, and organizing the events logically helps to pull readers into the narrative, allowing them the opportunity to get to know the writer/narrator and make a decision regarding how they feel about what the writer has chosen to share.

A Closer Look: Context and Characters

Developing the context and characters is an important part of orienting readers. The context reveals the details readers need to know to understand the conflict that the writer is describing. For example, context reveals setting (time and place), including whether the events of the narrative are taking place in the present or the past. Context reveals any important background information, such as what led to the conflict.

Hint!

Keep in mind that context does not need to be stated in one solid sentence or paragraph, but can be revealed naturally through the telling of events.

A Closer Look: Outlining the Personal Narrative

It may be helpful to outline a personal narrative before beginning to write it. It is important for the writer to orient him or herself first! Outlining can simply be a chart explaining some of the main components of the narrative, such as who is involved, when and where the events take place, etc.

Example 1

Alex wants to write a story of what it's like growing up with an older sibling and what he learned in the process. He pinpoints an event that best shows the relationship with his sibling, and maps out his narrative below:

Experience/Event	My brother and I had a food fight while making a big brunch feast one morning.
Purpose	Describing the food fight I had with my brother and how we handled getting in trouble taught me to appreciate having a sibling.
Narrator	Me (the author)
Characters	My brother, parents
Context	This experience is from the past, when I was 10 and my brother was 14. It happened in my house, primarily in the kitchen.
Sequencing	I will describe the events in chronological order because each event directly led to the next.

