

Narrative

Grade 7

Dust Storm

My family thought our lives were absolutely perfect. My twelve year old mind thought so, too, until our Sunday paper arrived. I heard the clunk of the mail slot, and sprinted to get the first peek of the paper. People on the first page were being interviewed by frantic news reporters, wanting to know reasons for our year long hot weather. I thought they were crazy, until they were right.

Days went by, and the hot temperatures got worse. Hot baths were long gone, replaced with iced cold water. We had all ate the cold foods we could eat, no more ovens or fires, if you were rich enough. Our family had a fire, and a pan. We stopped doing that yesterday. I slipped out of my thoughts as my younger sister, Leesh, yelled out names. "Mom! Dad! Mary! Come see this!"

The yell was far distance, followed by a scream **so high pitch**, I sprinted outside, into the woods to find Leesh. Mom and Dad followed, pale with panic and worry. I smelled my own blood, from all the thorns in our woods. I felt the trickling on my legs, my bare legs, and arms, lucky my sundress hasn't yet ripped. "Leesh! Leesh - where are you?" I saw our fallen treehouse, and something a little beyond the trees.

Engages and orients the reader by establishing a context for the narrative to follow, and by **introducing a narrator and characters:** The arrival of the storm becomes the focus/conflict of the narrative, which is told from the perspective / point of view of a first person narrator

Uses the narrative technique of foreshadowing **to develop events**

Uses a transitional clause to convey **sequence and signal a shift from one time frame to another**

Uses the narrative technique of **dialogue to develop events and characters**

Uses precise descriptive sensory language to **convey experience**

"Mom, Dad, get Leesh down. I think I see something beyond the trees!" They opened their mouths to say something, but they were lost for words, as I ran. Tree branches, sticks, thorn bushes, and stumps were my **obstacles**. I noticed the animals all ran the **opposite** way, with fear and shock in their faces and eyes. I got to the end, staring in shock at the terrifying sight in front of me.

Uses precise descriptive sensory language to convey events

Over the hills, rather **then** sun and clouds, I saw it. A big, pitch black cloud, thousands and thousands of feet tall, making any tree look like action figures. It moved with the wind blowing its way towards me. It came up the last hill, the one I stood on. The dust cloud swallowed me, and it whipped me in the face, stinging me like needles piercing every inch of my helpless body. I still sprinted, as fast as my legs could take me, swallowing the dust in my mouth, nose, and burning eyes. I wheezed, coughed, and barely breathed. I felt myself suffocating, **remembering** my name, will myself I would make it. You can do this Mary, you can get out of this. I opened my mouth to scream, instead filling myself with gallons of dust in my throat and lungs. I realized I was finally back in the woods, almost reaching my terrified family. I **took huge** rock, and wrote with **siliva** and dust. My vision blurred and I tripped over tree branches, rocks, and anything in my way. I tumbled, over my head, crashing on the ground. I felt myself suffocate before my head hit the rock, never seeing light or dust, as my body shut down.

Uses precise descriptive sensory language to convey experience; language captures the action going on here, as the dust swallows the narrator

Provides a conclusion which follows from the events and focus / conflict of the narrative, the dust storm of the Dust Bowl days

Spelling problems including typos are in yellow

Missing or incorrect apostrophes are in blue

Punctuation problems, including missing punctuation marks, are green.

Grammar and word choice problems are in pink

Student writing, even at a high level, is rarely perfect! As children learn to write, many times they will make errors because they are learning new words, phrases and writing skills. Creativity and exploration should be encouraged!

In this on-demand narrative, the writer tells the story of a girl and her family caught in a dust storm during the days of the Dust Bowl. She focuses it around the narrator's conflict with the huge storm. The protagonist/narrator is a girl who is terrified by the storm as she is caught up in it.

The writer organizes an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically, including a bit of effective foreshadowing at the beginning of the narrative, which strengthens the piece. The writer uses minimal dialogue; most of the detail is provided through description. There is a significant amount of precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive detail, and sensory language used to portray events. The narrative concludes with the narrator falling and losing consciousness—perhaps a bit overly dramatic for an ending but reasonable for this grade level. Because the narrator is losing consciousness, she understandably cannot reflect on the experience (as the Standards require).

This sample of student writing, aligned to the Common Core and annotated to show its strengths, is drawn from the **In Common** project. You can find more writing samples and learn more here:

<http://achievethecore.org/page/507/in-common-effective-writing-for-all-students>