

Every student has a story worth telling. The trouble is they usually try to tell the whole day. These organisers help them find one small, true moment, slow it right down, and show how it felt.

What's inside

- Page 2 Memory brainstorm grid: firsts, scary, funny, proud, lost and found, people
- Page 3 Zoom in on one small moment: from a whole day down to about 10 minutes
- Page 4 Before, during and after: what happened, feelings and senses
- Page 5 Show, don't tell: feeling, what my body did, what I said or thought
- Page 6 Ending reflection: what I learned, how I changed, why it matters
- Page 7 Model plan and model paragraph: the high diving board

How to use it

- 1 Brainstorm wide. Students fill the memory grid, then talk to a partner about their two best ideas. The one they tell with the most detail is usually the one to write.
- 2 Zoom in and plan. Use pages 3 and 4 to shrink the memory to one moment and sort it into before, during and after.
- 3 Add the magic. Pages 5 and 6 build the feelings and the ending. Share the model on page 7 before students draft.

A tip from the classroom

Tell your own small moment first, out loud, with all the boring bits left out. When students hear a teacher talk about the time they locked the keys in the car, they suddenly remember a hundred moments of their own.

A strong personal narrative...

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ is about one small, true moment | ☐ is told in first person (I, me, my) |
| ☐ happens in the order it happened | ☐ shows feelings instead of naming them |
| ☐ uses details from the senses | ☐ ends by showing why it mattered |

Mini-lesson: the camera game

Show a photo of a busy scene, like a market or a sports day. Ask students to 'zoom in' on one person and describe only the next ten seconds of what that person does, hears and feels. Then do the same with their own memory.

Want the full unit? The Narrative Writing Unit

Lessons, mentor texts, planning pages, checklists and rubrics for personal and imaginative narratives.

[See it on TpT](#)

Moments I Remember

LITERACY IDEAS

Jot a few words in each box. Quick notes, not sentences!

Firsts

First time you rode a bike, lost a tooth, flew, slept away from home...

Scary

A storm, getting lost, a big dog, a hospital visit, the dark...

Funny

A mix-up, a pet doing something silly, a joke that went wrong...

Proud

Winning, finishing something hard, helping someone, being brave...

Lost and found

Something you lost, something you found, a friend you missed...

People

A grandparent, a friend, a new baby, a teacher, a neighbour...

My best memory to write about

Star it in the grid. Which one could you tell a friend with the most detail?

Zoom In on One Small Moment

A whole day is too big. Find the best 10 minutes.

Writers don't tell everything that happened. They zoom in like a camera on one small moment and slow it right down. Look at how this one shrinks:

THE WHOLE EVENT

Our holiday at the beach

ONE PART OF IT

Swimming in the waves

MY SMALL MOMENT (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

The wave that knocked me over

The small moment is the one with the most feelings in it.

Now try yours

THE WHOLE EVENT

ONE PART OF IT

MY SMALL MOMENT (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

The 10-minute check

- ☐ It took about 10 minutes or less.
- ☐ I remember what I saw and heard.
- ☐ Something changed or mattered.
- ☐ I can tell it in order.

My moment in one sentence

Who, where, and what happened?

Before, During and After

LITERACY IDEAS

Plan your moment in the order it happened

BEFORE

What was happening just before? Set the scene.

What happened

How I felt

What I saw, heard, smelled...

DURING

The main moment. Slow it right down.

What happened

How I felt

What I saw, heard, smelled...

AFTER

What happened straight after? How did it end?

What happened

How I felt

What I saw, heard, smelled...

Show, Don't Tell

Let the reader work out how you felt

Telling: "I was nervous." Showing: "My hands were sweaty and I whispered, 'I can't do this.'" Showing lets the reader feel it with you.

nervous

excited

scared

proud

embarrassed

angry

relieved

sad

surprised

jealous

The feeling

Nervous

EXAMPLE

What my body did

My knees wobbled and my hands felt sticky.

What I said or thought

"Please don't pick me," I thought.

Ending With Meaning

Don't just stop. Show why this moment mattered.

A strong ending looks back at the moment. Choose one or more of these, then write your last sentences. Avoid 'The end' and 'Then I woke up and it was all a dream'!

What I learned

Sentence starters: I learned that... Now I know...

How I changed

Sentence starters: Before, I... but now I... Since that day...

Why it matters

Sentence starters: I will always remember this because... Whenever I..., I think of...

My final sentences

Bring it back to the moment, then show what it meant to you.

Model: The High Diving Board

A filled-in plan and a model paragraph to share

My moment	Jumping off the high diving board for the first time (about 5 minutes)
Before	Climbing the ladder and looking down. Felt: terrified. Senses: rough board under my toes, the smell of chlorine.
During	Stepping off and falling. Felt: my stomach floated. Senses: cold water up my nose, a roar in my ears.
After	Popping up and swimming to the ladder. Felt: proud. Senses: my sister cheering.
Show, don't tell	Scared: my knees shook and my toes curled over the edge.
Ending	The scary part lasted three seconds. The waiting was the worst bit.

Model paragraph

My toes curled over the rough edge of the high diving board. Far below, the pool looked as small as a bath mat, and the water winked up at me in the sunshine. My knees would not stop shaking. Behind me, a boy coughed loudly, and I heard my sister call, "You can do it, Lily!" I squeezed my eyes shut. One... two... I stepped into nothing. For a second my stomach floated up into my throat, and then SPLASH! Cold water rushed up my nose and roared in my ears. When I burst back up to the surface, coughing and grinning, I realised the scary part had lasted about three seconds. I swam to the ladder and climbed straight back up for another go.

Talk about it

- Find two places where the writer shows a feeling instead of naming it.
- Which senses can you spot? Underline them in different colours.
- The jump lasts three seconds. How does the writer make it feel longer?
- What does the last sentence tell us about how the writer changed?

Want the full unit? The Narrative Writing Unit

Want more mentor texts like this? The full unit has lessons, models, checklists and rubrics for ages 8-14.

[See it on TpT](#)