

Rubric for Narrative Writing—Eighth Grade

	Grade 6 (1 POINT)	1.5 PTS	Grade 7 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 8 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 9 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
STRUCTURE								
Overall	The writer wrote a story that has tension, resolution, and realistic characters, and also conveys an idea, lesson, or theme.	Mid-level	The writer created a narrative that has realistic characters, tension, and change, and that not only conveys, but also develops an idea, lesson, or theme.	Mid-level	The writer not only created a narrative with well-developed characters who change, he used the story to comment on a social issue, teach a lesson, and/or develop a point of view.	Mid-level	The writer created a narrative with well-developed characters whose interactions build tension and change over time. The writer used that story to comment on a social issue, teach a lesson, and/or develop a particular point of view.	
Lead	The writer wrote a beginning that not only set the plot/story in motion, but also hinted at the larger meaning the story would convey. It introduced the problem, set the stage for the lesson that would be learned, or showed how the character relates to the setting in a way that matters in the story.	Mid-level	The writer wrote a beginning that not only sets the story in motion, it also grounds it in a place or situation. It includes details that will later be important to the story. These details might point to the central issue or conflict, show how story elements connect, or hint at key character traits.	Mid-level	The writer wrote a beginning that establishes the situation and place, hinting at a bigger context for the story (revealing issues that have been brewing, showing how the setting affects the character, contextualizing a time in history, developing one out of many points of view).	Mid-level	The writer wrote a beginning establishing a situation, place, and/or atmosphere; foreshadowing the problem(s); and hinting at questions, issues, ideas, or themes. The writer introduced a particular narrative voice and point of view.	
Transitions	The writer not only used transitional phrases and clauses to signal complicated changes in time, she also used them to alert her readers to changes in the setting, tone, mood, point of view, or time in the story (such as <i>suddenly, unlike before, if only she had known</i>).	Mid-level	The writer used transitional phrases and clauses to connect what happened to why it happened (<i>If he hadn't . . . he might not have, because of, although, little did she know that</i>).	Mid-level	The writer used transitional phrases and clauses, grammatical structures (paragraphing, descriptive phrases, and clauses) and text structures (chapter divisions, extended italics) to alert his reader to changes in the setting, the mood, the point of view, or the time in the story.	Mid-level	The writer used transitional phrases and clauses, grammatical structures to demonstrate the passage of time, to connect parts of the story, to imply cause and effect, to raise questions, and/or to make allusions (<i>long before, as when, just as, without realizing, ever afterward</i>).	
Ending	The writer wrote an ending that connected to what the story is really about. She gave the reader a sense of closure by showing a new realization or insight or a change in the character/narrator. The writer showed this through dialogue, action, inner thinking, or small actions the character takes.	Mid-level	The writer gave the reader a sense of closure by showing clearly how the character or place changed or the problem was resolved. If there was no resolution, he gave details to leave the reader thinking about a central idea or theme.	Mid-level	The writer gave the reader a sense of closure by revealing character change(s) that followed from events in the story, or a resolution. If there was no resolution, she wrote to convey how the events of the story affected the characters, and to circle back to a central idea, issue, or theme.	Mid-level	The writer gave the reader a sense of closure by returning to a theme, and/or revealing how characters change or make a change. If there wasn't resolution, the writer made a connection to a larger issue or mood that added to the meaning of the whole story or suggested social commentary.	

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STRUCTURE (cont.)								
Organization	The writer used paragraphs purposefully, perhaps to show time and setting changes, new parts of the story, or to create suspense for readers. She created a logical, clear sequence of events.	Mid-level	The writer used a traditional—or slightly modified—story structure (rising action, conflict, falling action) to best bring out the meaning of his story and reach his audience.	Mid-level	The writer modified a traditional story structure, dealing with time in purposeful ways, to best suit her genre, bring out the meaning of her story, and reach her audience.	Mid-level	The writer used or adapted story structures and literary traditions (quest structure, coming of age, cautionary tale, etc.) to fit the story, meaning, genre, audience. The writer dealt with time purposefully (eg, introducing multiple plot lines, flash-forwards, or flashbacks).	
								TOTAL:
DEVELOPMENT								
Elaboration*	The writer developed realistic characters, and developed the details, action, dialogue and internal thinking that contribute to the deeper meaning of the story.	Mid-level	The writer developed the action, dialogue, details, and inner thinking to convey an issue, idea, or lesson. He showed what is specific about the central character. The writer developed the setting and the characters' relationship to the setting.	Mid-level	The writer developed complicated story elements: she may have contrasted the character's thinking with his or her actions or dialogue. The writer developed the central character's relationship to other characters. She showed character flaws as well as strengths to add complexity. The writer used details that related to and conveyed meaning or developed a lesson or theme.	Mid-level	The writer developed complicated story elements through key details—using them to add to tension or meaning. The writer showed character flaws, strengths, and aspects that make them unique or worthy of being written about. The writer used details to convey meaning or develop a lesson or theme.	
Craft*	The writer developed some relationship between characters to show <i>why</i> they act and speak as they do. He told the internal, as well as the external story. The writer wove together precise descriptions, figurative language, and some symbolism to help readers picture the setting, actions, and events and to bring forth meaning.	Mid-level	The writer developed contradictions and change in characters and situations. The writer used specific details and figurative language to help the reader understand the place and the mood (making an object or place symbolic, using the weather, using repetition). The writer varied her tone to match the variety of emotions experienced by the characters across the story.	Mid-level	The writer conveyed the pressures characters feel and the dreams they hold. He related those to their actions. The writer developed complicated characters who change and/or who change others. The writer created a mood as well as a physical setting, and showed how the place changed, or its relationships to the characters changed.	Mid-level	The writer developed characters across scenes, offering insight into their troubles, hopes, relationships, and giving clues about how they change. The writer used setting to create mood and add to meaning. The writer used symbolism or metaphor for subtle as well as obvious connections to a theme.	

*Elaboration and Craft are double-weighted categories: Whatever score a student would get in these categories is worth double the amount of points. For example, if a student exceeds expectations in Elaboration, then that student would receive 8 points instead of 4 points. If a student meets standards in Elaboration, then that student would receive 6 points instead of 3 points.

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DEVELOPMENT (cont.)								
Craft* (cont.)	The writer used language that fit his story's meaning and context (e.g., different characters use different kinds of language).				The writer used symbolism to connect with a theme. The writer varied his tone to bring out different perspectives within the story, or to show a gap between the narrator's point of view and that of other characters.		The writer varied the pace and tone to develop tension and/or develop different perspectives across the text.	
								TOTAL:
CONVENTIONS								
Spelling	The writer used resources to be sure the words in her writing are spelled correctly.	Mid-level	The writer used the Internet and other sources at hand to check spelling of literary and high-frequency words.	Mid-level	The writer used the Internet and other sources to check the spelling of literary, historical, and geographical words.	Mid-level	The writer checked spelling for accuracy, double-checking for misused homonyms and technologically created mishaps.	
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	The writer used punctuation such as dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons to help him include extra detail and explanation in some of his sentences. The writer used commas and quotation marks or italics or some other way to make clear when characters are speaking.	Mid-level	The writer varied her sentence structure, sometimes using simple and sometimes using complex sentence structure. The writer punctuated dialogue sections accurately.	Mid-level	The writer used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout his piece. The writer used verb tenses that shift when needed (as in when moving from a flashback back into the present tense of the story), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate.	Mid-level	The writer was accurate and purposeful with conventions, using them to enhance and pace the tone of the text. If the writer broke conventions, it was purposefully (for example, using fragments or dialect) when appropriate to the genre and purpose.	
								TOTAL:

Teachers, we created these rubrics so you will have your own place to pull together scores of student work. You can use these assessments immediately after giving the on-demands and also for self-assessment and setting goals.

Scoring Guide

In each row, circle the descriptor in the column that matches the student work. Scores in the categories of Elaboration and Craft are worth double the point value (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 instead of 1. 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, or 4).

Total the number of points and then track students' progress by seeing when the total points increase.

Total score: _____

If you want to translate this score into a grade, you can use the provided table to score each student on a scale of 0–4.

Number of Points	Scaled Score
1–11	1
11.5–16.5	1.5
17–22	2
22.5–27.5	2.5
28–33	3
33.5–38.5	3.5
39–44	4