Scoring Guide: Narrative Writing

Narrative writing re-creates a real or imagined experience. It usually contains four elements: characters, a setting, a chronological sequence of events, and a conflict or problem to be solved. The writer typically builds in high points by putting characters into interesting situations, weaving in plot twists, incorporating vivid details, and creating a central conflict or problem that builds suspense and holds the piece together.

6

HIGH

EXCEPTIONAL

- Starts with a lead that sets up the story and draws in the reader.
- Contains characters that are believable, fresh, and well described. The characters grow and learn.
- Describes a setting that is unique and rich.
- Features events that are logically sequenced and move the story forward. Time and place work in harmony.
- Is a complete story that has never been told or is an original twist on a familiar story. The plot is well developed. There is a key conflict or problem that is compelling and eventually solved.
- Features well-used literary techniques, such as foreshadowing and symbolism.
- Leaves the reader feeling intrigued, delighted, surprised, entertained, and/or informed.
- Ends satisfyingly because the key conflict or problem is solved thoughtfully and credibly.

5

STRONG

4

MIDDLE

REFINING

- Starts with a lead that sets the scene, but is predictable or unoriginal.
- Contains characters that are a bit too familiar. The characters show little change in their thinking or understanding as the story moves along.
- Offers a setting that is not described all that well.
- Features events that are given the same level of importance. Significant ones mingle with trivial ones, and sometimes stray from the main story line.
- Is a nearly complete story that may not contain new or original thinking. The plot moves forward, but then stumbles. Minor conflicts and problems distract from major ones.
- Contains examples of literary techniques such as foreshadowing and symbolism that are not all that effective.
- Leaves the reader engaged at some points, detached at others.
- Ends by providing the reader with a sense of resolution, but he or she may also feel unsatisfied or perplexed.

3

DEVELOPING

2

LOW

EMERGING

- Starts with a lead that is perfunctory: "I'm going to tell you about the time…"
- Contains characters that don't feel real. The unconvincing characters are stereotypes or cardboard cutouts.
- Offers a setting that is not at all described clearly and/or completely.
- Features simple, incomplete events that don't relate to one another and/or add up to anything much. There is a mismatch between the time and place.
- Is a story that jumps around illogically. There is no clear conflict or problem to be solved.
- Contains no examples of literary techniques—or, at most, poor, purposeless ones
- Leaves the reader frustrated and/or disappointed. He or she feels the story was not thought out before it was committed to paper.
- Finishes with no clear ending or, at most, a halfhearted attempt at an ending, leaving the reader wondering why he or she bothered to read the piece.

1

RUDIMENTARY