Memorable Misadventures

by Cameron Swain, Blake Bischler, Katie Urban, and Jacob Howie
How to use this book

1. Learn about the genre by reading pages 2–3. Get background information about the authors on pages 4–5.
2. Read the personal narratives for enjoyment.
3. Reread the narratives and answer the questions on pages 13 and 21.
4. Reread the last narrative. Pay attention to the comments in the margins. See how an author writes a personal narrative.
5. Follow the steps on pages 22–23 to write your own personal narrative.
6. Complete the activity on the inside back cover. Answer the follow-up questions.
What is a personal narrative?
A personal narrative is a nonfiction text that recreates an experience from the author's life. A personal narrative has a strong point of view, usually in the first person. It also communicates a distinct mood, or overall feeling. Most personal narratives are about something “big” in the author's life, such as a proud or sad moment, a trip or adventure, or an event that changed attitudes or actions.

What is the purpose of a personal narrative?
A personal narrative is a way to describe an experience so that others feel like they were there. Writers do this by using sensory details—what they saw, heard, touched, smelled, and tasted—and by including important events, characters, and dialogue. Writers explain what happened and also tell what they were thinking at the time and how they felt.

How do you read a personal narrative?
The title will likely give you a clue about the experience that the author will describe. As you read, pay close attention to the sequence of events. Ask yourself: Did this event happen to the person, or did the person make it happen? How did this event affect the person's life? Is the author simply writing to entertain, or is there something that I can learn from his or her experience?

Who writes personal narratives?
Everyone does! People record their experiences in diaries and journals, and share them in letters and e-mails. These informal writing opportunities provide valuable practice in selecting just the right details to make the experience come alive for others.
Meet the Authors

“Inner Tubing in Colorado”
Name: Blake Bischler
School: Old Union Elementary
Southlake, Texas
About Me: I play basketball, football, and golf. When I need a break, I play with my puppy, Chloe.

“Rodeo Clown”
Name: Katie Urban
School: Wellington Christian Academy
Wellington, Kansas
About Me: I live on a farm. I love to read romance, mystery, and history books.

“Spacers”
Name: Jacob Howie
School: Lower Gwynedd Elementary
Ambler, Pennsylvania
About Me: My favorite video game is World of Warcraft. My favorite TV show is Lost.

Tools Writers Use
Writer’s Voice

When your friends call you on the phone, can you recognize their voices? Each voice is distinctive, just like each friend’s personality. Writer’s voice is no different. Everyone’s writing is different from everyone else’s. Every writer chooses certain topics, selects certain words, includes certain details, and uses a certain style and mood that makes his or her writing as unique as a fingerprint. Good writers use their voices to add feeling to their writing. Good writers also adapt, or change, their voices for different audiences and purposes. For example, you would use a different voice to write an e-mail to your cousin inviting him to your soccer game than you would use to write a letter to your principal requesting a field trip for your class.
The Day I Split My Chin

I got my first two-wheel bike with hand brakes when I was seven. I was so thrilled. I wanted to use it right away. So I went for a ride in the park. I went with my mom and my brother, Matthew.

It was a beautiful Sunday morning in June. The sun was bright. There were no clouds in the sky. We were having a wonderful time riding together. At first we rode on a flat part. Then we biked farther north. We came to a steep hill. I looked down the hill. Should I ride down it? I wasn't sure if I should. But I did. I don't know why. Maybe I wanted to prove that I could.

Now here is the problem: I got scared. I forgot to use the hand brakes. My fingers were right on them. But I never squeezed them. Instead, the bike went faster and faster. I went from one side of the path to the other. Halfway down the hill, my bike began to shake. It was out of control! I was screaming! At least I think I was. At the bottom of the hill, I lost my balance. I fell hard. My chin hit the ground. Time stopped.

My mom and brother ran to me. Blood was pumping out of a big hole in my chin. Blood was all over my hands. It was on my shirt, too. Blood was everywhere. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before. My mom picked me right up. I was crying. “Am I going to die?” I asked.

My mom said, “No. You will be fine. But we need to get you to a doctor.”
Thankfully, a nice lady in the park helped us. She gave me some tissues. I wiped my chin. She helped my brother take the bikes out of the park. My mom carried me. My mom got us a taxi. We put the bikes in the trunk. We went straight to the doctor’s office. Mom said we were lucky that my doctor had Sunday hours.

The doctor looked at my chin. He said, “You need plastic surgery. We’ll make some calls.” Now I was really scared. I was only seven, remember.

We got another taxi. We rode to another part of town. The plastic surgeon opened his office just to see me. We waited for a long time. At least it seemed like a long time. My chin hurt. I sat on my mom’s lap. My brother was being nice. “You’ll be okay,” he kept saying.

Finally the plastic surgeon called us into his office. I lay down on a long chair. It was like a chair in a dentist’s office. The doctor wore magnifying glasses. He looked closely at my chin. “That must have been some fall,” he said. He told me that I would be fine. But my chin needed two layers of stitches.

Two layers of stitches! I wanted to jump out of the chair. I felt like running away. But of course I couldn’t run very far with a hole in my chin. So I lay there bravely. I held on to the sides of the chair. He put four shots of painkillers right into my chin! My mom had tears in her eyes. I didn’t cry a drop.

My chin turned numb. The doctor started stitching. By now I felt a little calmer. The stitches didn’t really hurt. They just felt weird. I lay there. I didn’t say a word. I hardly breathed. Then the doctor was done. Whew! I was glad about that.

You never know when something bad is going to happen. It’s not like you get a warning. You’re having fun. Then wham! Everything changes. But now I know that bad things aren’t the end of the world. You can get through them. I did.

We left the plastic surgeon and went to a candy store. I forgot all about my chin. I focused on the candy and my family. It had been an emotional day for all of us.
looked down the steep hill. It was covered in snow. The butterflies in my stomach danced. I forgot why I wanted to do this. If I had known what was about to happen, I would have turned back.

My whole body was shaking. Snow landed on my hair. The layers of clothing I had on weren’t keeping me warm.

Putting on all that stuff was a pain! I wore long underwear. I wore snowpants. I had on two pairs of socks and snow boots. I wore a coat, mittens, and a hat. I’m from Texas. It snows maybe once a year where I live. We don’t have any hills for sledding. Now here I was on a family vacation in Colorado. So I stepped up to the inner tube. I got ready for the adventure of a lifetime. I had been on a small sled once before. I had never been on an inner tube. And I had never seen such a big hill.

The snow fell harder now. My cheeks hurt. (They were the only part of my body not covered.) I shook the ice off my hands. I held the inner tube. I looked back at my mom. She waved her hand at me to hurry up. The winding line behind me was getting longer. I let out a deep breath. It looked like smoke coming out of a train. A blast of cold wind cut through me. Then I jumped on the inner tube.

Whoosh! Down the hill I went. The trees passed by me faster and faster. The wind slapped my face. The snow flew into my eyes. My stomach went flip, flop, flip, flop. It was the same feeling I had while riding a roller coaster.
I was halfway down the hill. My eyes were covered with snow. I thought everything had turned white. My eyes were watering from the gusting wind. I brushed my eyes with my mitten. That’s when I saw something big and brown on the ground. It was a few feet ahead. Help! There was no time to steer away from the rock.

Bam! I flew from the tube. I skipped across the snow like a rock across a pond. I tumbled and rolled, collecting snow all the way down the hill. I must have looked like a gigantic snowball. My body came to a stop. Then everything went blank.

The next thing I remember was my mom pulling me up. I felt the life rush back into me. We went back to our room. I wasn’t hurt. But I was a little shook up. I sat by the fire. I sipped hot chocolate. My family and I talked about what happened. We talked about what I should do next time. I would need to be more aware of my surroundings.

Well, there wasn’t a next time for inner tubing. But the next day, I went skiing for the first time. It was a blast—and a story for another time.
Rodeo Clown

The sound of a whip sliced through the air. Cows’ mooing echoed across our farm. My hair blew in the wind, too. The breeze pulled it this way and that. My fingers held the bars of the metal gate. My dad and big brother Mitch were herding cows. The cows needed to be in the pen. We had to give them their shots. The sound of the whip helped move them along.

Dad had on his customary overalls. Mitch wore a baseball cap and T-shirt. He had on jeans and untied shoes.

“Keep an eye on the cows, Mitch!” Dad called. Mitch did as he was told—for a little while. Then he got bored. He began to play with his whip. He was making fancy patterns in the grass. Dad shouted, “Look out!”

Mitch spun around. A cow was coming at him. Mitch dropped the whip. He ran fast. To me, he looked like a clown at a rodeo. He looked like the clown who tries to get the animals’ attention. Dad and I watched helplessly. The determined cow got closer and closer to Mitch. Then the cow was upon him. She tossed her head. Up, up, up went Mitch. Now the cow rushed underneath Mitch. She ran back to her friends. Mitch’s shoes dropped to the ground.

Amazingly, Mitch landed on his feet. When he hit the ground, his hand was on his head. He had kept his hat on. Dad rushed over. “Are you okay?” he asked.

“Yes, I’m fine!” Mitch replied. “It was fun!” He laughed as he went to find his shoes. “And I didn’t lose my hat!”

“Or get hurt!” Dad added.

We decided to tell Mom what happened. “Mom!” I shouted running up the steps of our house.

Mitch retold the story. I added details here and there. “Are you sure you’re okay?” Mom asked. “Yes, I’m fine,” Mitch said. For a few moments, no one said a word. Then we couldn’t help it. Our laughter filled the still summer air.

I know we will laugh about this story for a long time to come. Mitch is very careful around the cows now. I think you know why. But I will never forget the day my brother turned into a rodeo clown.
Jake, brush your teeth!” my mom would say to me every night. “What? I can't hear you,” I said back to her. I tried to make it seem like I couldn't hear her. That way, I might get away with not brushing. I knew it wasn't a good idea. But I did not like brushing. I'm supposed to brush at bedtime. I am too tired to brush then. I want to go to bed. Some mornings I would try to get out of brushing, too. It was easier then. My mom was busy getting stuff ready for school.

Did I get a lot of cavities? Nope! I got my first cavity at age five. The filling didn't hurt. I remember a weird sound in my ear. I remember an irritating feeling in my mouth. By the time I was nine, I had three fillings, total. Not too bad—some kids had a lot more.

However, by age ten I had lost all my teeth—my baby teeth, that is. Since then I have continued on my same old schedule of brushing . . . and not brushing. Trips to the dentist didn't bother me. They didn't scare me. Then I began to hear talk of braces. Gulp.

I had heard horror stories about orthodontists. They put evil metal things on kids' teeth. Braces hurt like crazy. Even worse, braces meant no candy, no candy bars, and no gooey, chewy goodies.
Braces! No, not me!

It happened on April 13, 2009. I, Jacob Howie, age eleven, went to the orthodontist's office. I was about to get something called “spacers.” Spacers are the first step in getting braces.

“Go to the room down the hall,” said the lady at the front desk. I sat next to a girl who was lying down. The orthodontist held a tool. I figured it was for pulling teeth or some other diabolical way to cause kids pain.

Oh my gosh.

“Next!”

I obeyed the order. I was now like a zombie. I followed the torturer’s assistant. She wore a blue shirt and pants. First I bit onto things. Then a monstrous camera took pictures. It looked like a ray gun from an old-time space movie.

I felt like a prisoner. I had to turn sideways and make a serious face. Meanwhile they took snapshots, like a mug shot.

Then I went back to my chair. It was warm and welcoming. The lady in blue was not. “Lie back. Open wide,” she said. Zip, click, went the ray-gun camera.

Then she took out another tool. It was a cross between pliers and scissors. I figured that it must be her favorite weapon. “This won’t hurt a bit, honey,” she said.

Right. Oh no! Here it goes . . . Pop!

A small rubber band slid between my teeth. It didn’t hurt. Hey, maybe this won’t be so bad, I thought.

Pop! Pop! Pop, pop, pop! All my molars now had rubber bands between them.

That’s when the orthodontist himself came in. I was expecting a crazed-villain type. I was wrong. He looked like a hero: He was young and muscular. And he had very white teeth.
“See,” the orthodontist said. “That wasn’t so bad.”

I went out through the waiting room. A different girl was there. She saw me playing with my spacers. “I’m sure they didn’t hurt,” she said. “And don’t worry; braces don’t hurt, either.”

“Thanks,” I said. I knew that when I came back to the orthodontist, I would be a lot less scared. I would have a lot more confidence, too.

Reread the Personal Narratives

Analyze the Narrative
- What experiences did these narratives describe?
- Where did they happen? How did each setting affect what happened?
- What people were involved? How did these people affect what happened?

Analyze the Tools Writers Use: Writer’s Voice
With a partner, discuss how these sentences show the writer’s voice.
- Crack! The sound of a whip sliced through the air. (“Rodeo Clown,” page 14)
- For a few moments, no one said a word. Then we couldn’t help it. Our laughter filled the still summer air. (“Rodeo Clown,” page 15)
- The orthodontist held a tool. I figured it was for pulling teeth or some other diabolical way to cause kids pain. (“Spacers,” page 18)
- “This won’t hurt a bit, honey,” she said. Right. Oh no! Here it goes... Pop! (“Spacers,” page 19)

Focus on Words: Specific Adjectives
Authors like to use specific, or exact, adjectives to describe nouns and pronouns. Make a chart like the one below. Reread the story to find other ways the writers used specific adjectives in their narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Specific Adjective</th>
<th>Noun Adjectives Describes</th>
<th>Less Interesting Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>customary</td>
<td>overalls</td>
<td>usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>fancy</td>
<td>patterns</td>
<td>pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>determined</td>
<td>cow</td>
<td>not giving up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>irritating</td>
<td>feeling</td>
<td>annoying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>diabolical</td>
<td>way</td>
<td>mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>monstrous</td>
<td>camera</td>
<td>big</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How does an author write a Personal Narrative?

Reread “Spacers” and think about what Jacob Howie did to write this narrative. How did he keep a narrow focus? How did he make you feel like you were there?

1. Decide on an Experience

Remember: A personal narrative is an actual retelling of something you have experienced. Therefore, you will use words such as I, me, and my as you write. In “Spacers,” the author wanted to tell about his first visit to the orthodontist.

2. Decide Who Else Needs to Be in Your Narrative

Often, other people—or even animals—were a part of your experience. Ask yourself:
• Who was there with me?
• Which people are important to my story?
• How will I describe these people?
• Which people should I leave out?
• Can I tell my story without embarrassing another person? If not, what other experience could I write about?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Orthodontist’s Assistant</th>
<th>Orthodontist</th>
<th>Girl in Waiting Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance to Story</td>
<td>told him to brush his teeth; took him to dentist and orthodontist</td>
<td>took photos of author’s teeth; put in the spacers</td>
<td>talked to author and made him less scared</td>
<td>assured the author that braces don’t hurt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Recall Events and Setting

Jot down notes about what happened and where it happened. Ask yourself:
• Where did my experience take place? How will I describe it?
• What was the situation or problem I experienced? Was the experience happy, scary, sad, or surprising?
• What events happened?
• How did my experience turn out?
• What questions might my readers have about my experience that I could answer in my narrative?

Setting
Orthodontist’s office

Situation or Problem
I was afraid to go to the orthodontist.

Events
1. I saw the orthodontist working on a girl and thought it surely must hurt.
2. The orthodontist’s assistant took photos of my teeth.
3. The orthodontist made me less scared.

How My Experience Turned Out
It didn’t hurt! A girl in the waiting room told me that braces wouldn’t hurt, either.
**Glossary**

- **customary** (KUS-tuh-mair-ee) usual; familiar (page 14)
- **determined** (dih-TER-mend) not giving up; driven to succeed (page 14)
- **diabolical** (dy-uh-BAH-lih-kul) devilish (page 18)
- **emotional** (ih-MOH-shuh-nul) full of feeling (page 9)
- **fancy** (FAN-see) ornamental; decorative (page 14)
- **gigantic** (jy-GAN-tik) very large (page 12)
- **gusting** (GUS-ting) blowing forcefully, as the wind (page 12)
- **irritating** (EER-uh-tay-ting) causing displeasure (page 16)
- **lucky** (LUH-kee) fortunate (page 8)
- **monstrous** (MAHN-strus) enormous; very big (page 18)
- **steep** (STEEP) rising or falling at a sharp angle (page 6)
- **winding** (WINE-ding) curving; twisting (page 11)

---

**Make Connections Across Texts**

Complete a graphic organizer like the one below.

### Analyzing the Narratives

Use your graphic organizer to help you answer these questions.

- How does each title prepare you for reading the personal narrative?
- What connections can you make to these personal narratives?
- How did you feel as you read each personal narrative?
- How are the personal narratives alike?
- How are the personal narratives different?
- What could readers learn from these personal narratives?
Four Personal Narratives
A girl rides her new bike down a big hill. A boy wipes out while inner tubing on a ski slope. A girl watches her brother get chased by a cow. A boy visits the orthodontist for the first time. What will happen? Read this book to find out.

Enjoy all of these Nonfiction Readers’ & Writers’ Genre Workshop titles.

Biography
Michelle Obama
Barack Obama

George Washington
Abraham Lincoln

Book Reviews
Some Pigs Are Fat
Bad Wolf
Red Fairy

Three Cheers for Two Crazy Children

Persuasive Letters
Our School Can Save Trees
Stop Junk Food Ads for Kids

Pass Me a Pig!

Personal Narratives
Memorable Misadventures
My Best Moment

Cameron Swain
lives in New York.

Blake Bischler
lives in Texas.

Katie Urban
lives in Kansas.

Jacob Howie
lives in Pennsylvania.

GENRE: Personal Narratives Level: J/18