

Name _____ Date _____ Period ____

Writing Workshop: The Narrative: Slowing Down, or Exploding, the Moment

A **personal narrative** is a story about an important event in your life, a moment that is big in your heart.

Today's Goal: I can slow down the action in the climax of my narrative for my reader to experience the moment just like I did.

- Remember, you are writing for your readers. Take the time to *slow down the moment* so that your readers can experience the action like you experienced the action.
- Imagine the big event or the key moment of your narrative as a movie in your head. Then, write out the moment step by step for your reader just like the movie in your head.
- Slowing the moment helps in the climax, to explain feelings, or show important actions. There may be several places where you slow the moment in your piece.

Before

My mom asked me to take the trash out. I did.

After Slowing the Moment Down

For the fourth time that day, my mom asked me to take the trash out. She stood with her hand on her hip, a cobra ready to strike when I made my excuse.

"It's not my turn!" I replied with a soft, half-yell. I knew better than to respond with a loud, full yell. My strict mother would not stand for that. I reminded her that I took out the stinky, over-filled trash yesterday. Today was my brother's turn. I waited for her response. I knew if she insisted, I would lose the battle and have to take out the trash. "Just do it," she responded. I did.

OR

With an irritated look on her face, my mother said, "Take out the trash!"

"I haaate taking out the trash!" I said as I held my breath and reached into the trash can to gather up the sides of the bag. I started to gag and cough as I got a whiff of last week's dinner spoiling alongside the banana that rotted before it had a chance to be eaten. Why do trash cans smell like something dead? I thought to myself that a simple spray of Lysol would make this chore so much easier.

Examples from Student Narratives: Both were about swimming pool incidents where each student felt as if she were drowning.

Before

In the wave pool, I became tired. Then, I felt like I was drowning.

After Slowing the Moment

Suddenly, it wasn't so fun anymore. I regretted ever disobeying my father, because I got tired. So I relaxed. But I sunk like a rock in a rushing river. I stopped treading, and then, just as if I had brought my foot down expecting another stair at the top of a staircase, my stomach dropped as fast as I did. A rock in a river, I descended, down, down, down. Where was the bottom of the pool? I thought. Where was anything?

Although I felt as if I had never been more tired in my life, I used my last gram of energy to swim towards the surface. Every second I spent ascending felt like an hour. Finally, I reached the surface, and it felt like the breath of life. I was having trouble keeping my head above water, literally. I coughed and sputtered, just like the way my dad's old car used to do before it started up.

I desperately and vainly tried to inhale as the devious waves, like a vicious beast, washed over my face. I needed air! I was about to breathe in again, but another wave washed over my face. I gulped down a gallon of chlorine. My nose burned, and my throat seared with pain as the chemical set fire to my respiratory system. I tried one more time. Same thing as last time, and I gave up.

I was panicked. Nobody likes to be helpless, but I was exhausted; in spite of my oxygen deprived brain telling me to swim up, I sunk down. It was over. I thought it was the end.

Then, by chance, a hand grabbed mine.

Before

My head could not reach the surface of the water. I was stuck underneath.

After Slowing the Moment

I lifted my head upwards, but only felt the inner tube above it. No air, no nothing. The gas of life slowly left my body. I could just see the others in the pool, floating silently upward and then arriving untouched at the surface, taunting me with a place I so badly wanted and needed to be.

The blackness was overwhelming me, pulling at me slowly, until I would not have the strength to resist it. The edges of my vision flickered, and my head exploded with dizziness. I felt like a convict, shut off from the rest of the world in the depths of a prison cell. The darkness was my enemy. I fought and I fought and I fought, but soon it overcame me.

***During our writing time today, spend time slowing down the action for your reader at points where you really want the reader to feel the way you were feeling when you experienced this moment.*

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Homework:

Find one sentence in your piece that shares a simple idea or action but means so much more to you.

Write the sentence here.

Now, explode this sentence! Take the sentence and develop it into at least five sentences where you give background information, explain the action step by step, add dialogue, *or* add internal thoughts that accompany the action.

Try adding this new paragraph to your narrative. Will it help your reader fully experience the event or action?