

Mrs. Carter's chest rose and fell on its own, and we around her bedside smiled at our success. As the morning's tension slowly disappeared, I knew that few jobs could match a nurse's for excitement.

6

FOR WRITING OR DISCUSSION

MyWritingLab

1. Do the title and the first paragraph of the narrative reveal too much of the story? Why, or why not?
2. The writer uses strong action words throughout the paper. How do they contribute to the writer's purpose?
3. What is the thesis of the narrative?
4. Identify some expressions that indicate the passage of time.
5. What do the direct quotations contribute to the narrative?
6. Write a narrative paper about an exciting moment in which you participated.

Here is another student narrative. Note the use of concrete detail.

Jarrett David Lee Jackson**My Father's House**

When I walk into my father's house every day, I always wonder if my parents should have stayed together and how my life would have changed because of it. It just seems funny to me that seven years ago my parents and my sister and I were one big happy family.

1

My father still lives at our old house with his new wife. I still think of all the memories I have in that house, and I also think about all the memories that he's making with a new family. I remember falling up the stairs for some reason. My sister found it amusing to see me bleeding and crying. It hurts every time I walk up to the door, knowing I have to knock instead of just using my key to get in. I don't even have a key to my father's house. Maybe he's just forgetful, or maybe he just doesn't want me to have one.

2

Every time I come to the house, I remember that horrible night.

3

The date was July 14, 1994. It's strange after all these years that I can remember the exact date. I remember to read all that day to keep my mind off of the past. I usually stay alone, too, choosing to isolate myself.

4

5 I remember cooking dinner that night. It had been a long, bad day at school, and I remember only wanting to go outside. I asked my mother if I could go outside and play. She gave me a hurt, empty look, like she didn't know what to say. Her face was full of hurt and disgust for something, but I didn't know what. She told me no and also to ask my father when he got home. She turned her back to me and rubbed her forehead and bloodshot eyes as if she wanted to cry but was holding it in.

6 I'd never seen my mother that bothered by something, but I didn't know what it was. I went to my older, wiser sister to see if she knew what was wrong with our mother. I knew she didn't really know *everything*, but it always made me feel better if my sister and I both didn't know what was going on. My sister got me through many, many problems in my life, but even she couldn't help me through this one.

7 My father drifted through the door at about 6:30. Usually he was home by 5:30. I had seen him late about three times in my whole life. I greeted him at the door with a hello. He said hello back with a very serious face. I was scared to ask him what was wrong, so I just told him that dinner was ready. He said okay, but it was like he wasn't even talking to me. After he hung up his coat, he walked right past me like I wasn't even there.

8 About 8:00, I went to my room to watch television and play a game or two. My mother was in the shower. My mother usually takes her nightly shower about nine or ten o'clock, so she was kind of early. My father slipped into the room and sat down on my bed. He told me to pause the game and come to their bedroom. I would have asked why, but I was looking in his face and he looked dead serious, so I just followed orders and went to their bedroom. My sister immediately followed. She pushed me, and we started playing, but then I caught a glimpse of my father's face and stopped. My sister sat down on the other side of the bed. I tried to think what I might have done in the past couple of days that I might have gotten into serious trouble for.

9 My father sat on the bed and said he loved us, but he got real nervous for some reason. Then my mother came in from the shower with her robe on. Her eyes showed that she was hurt or had been crying. She sat down in a chair next to the bed, but far away from my father. He tried to let us down easy about the situation. He explained how people fall out of love with one another, but still care for one another. I didn't understand. Who was he talking about? Was this some sort of life lesson I had to learn that day? I got scared and sick to my stomach as I feared the worst.

"We're getting a divorce." The most devastating words I have ever heard. Out of my father's mouth? My heart dropped down to my feet. I couldn't move from the bed. My sister was crying so hard I couldn't hear anything else. My mother grabbed hold of me, trying to say she was sorry between her sobs. Everyone was crying but my father and me. I maintained eye contact with him. I couldn't break contact with him for fear I would look weak in one of those situations where I must not appear weak.

"How could you do this to us?" I asked, fighting back tears.

"Well, son, it can't be explained. It just happened," he answered in a mellow tone.

My father is a strong, stony man, and I really didn't expect too much emotion to pour forth. He was also a loud man, but he maintained his hushed, mellow tone. He explained that he was moving out and that I would have to become the man of the house. It was a responsibility I knew I wasn't ready for, but I had to accept. I knew I would try to be a man to the best of my boyish abilities.

My father slept on the couch that last night together. The house was extremely silent. I didn't hear any snoring or even breathing. I was in my room thinking about being the man of the house, of remaining strong for what remained of our family. I got up to talk with my father, but when I got to the top of the stairs I stopped. A dead silence filled the house as I realized I couldn't ask him for any help again. I felt that he was taking the easy way out by divorcing my mother. I right then promised myself that I would be a better father and man than he was. I would always try my hardest and at eleven years old I would step up and become a better man than my father.

I'll never forget that day because while it was the lowest point in my life, it was also a breakthrough for me. It was my day, an enlightenment of some sort. Oddly enough, I still love my father, but in my heart I know I will be a better man than he has been, a better husband, father, and man. I understand that love is forever and can never be "divorced."

FOR WRITING OR DISCUSSION

MyWritingLab

1. What is the writer's thesis? Where in the essay do you find it stated most clearly?
2. Where does the writer use sensory language most vividly?
3. Write a narrative paper about a time that you made a personal discovery after experiencing an intense moment with your parents or other family members.