

**Narrative Eighth-grade Practice Prompt #3:** We all have done things that, when we look back, we would have done differently. Recall a time when you did or said something you wished you could erase and do over. Explain what you did, and tell what you'd do differently.

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### Writing Sample S

Well every body has something they wish they could change. The one thing I would want to change was the incident with my pet frog on December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

That beautiful Christmas afternoon I was giving my frog (Mr. Toad) a bath in the sink. While I heated up the water while holding onto the fragile amphibian, I failed to realize the steam rising from the hot sink water. Unaware of the water's temperature I plopped Mr. Toad into the sink. I watched him frantically squirm in the water as he often did. But then the movement slowed and got slower and slower by the second. In less than a minute the frog had gone from erratic to frozen in the hot water. I screamed "He's dead, I killed Mr. Toad! Oh what have I done?" and then cried for the next two hours in my bedroom.

If I was able to change that moment I would have noticed my mistake and cooled down the water. But sadly I can't, so now I must live with my mistake forever. I hope that Mr. Toad forgives me and is happy on the big lily pad in the sky, free to hop where ever he pleases. If only I could fix what went wrong.

**How would you score this sample?**

_____	Idea Development
_____	Organization
_____	Voice
_____	Conventions

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**Writing Sample S**  
**Scores & Annotations**  
**I=4 O=3.5 V= 4 C=4**

Overall, this is an above average paper, exceeding standards in all traits.

**Ideas:** This paper is clearly focused on the accidental killing of Mr. Toad. The detail of the “steam rising from the hot sink water” and the description of Mr. Toad’s frantic movements descending into his being “frozen” in the hot water places the reader in the middle of the event. The paper becomes somewhat more general in the last paragraph, but the reader senses the loss of the pet.

**Organization:** The organization works well in this paper. The writer builds suspense as she heats up the water, doesn’t notice the steam, and places the frog in the water. The transitions, “In less than a minute” and “If I was able to change. . .” are original and effective. The introduction however is less than compelling and keeps the paper at a 3.5.

**Voice:** Like the ideas, the voice is very strong in this paper. Because the writer has brought an excellent level of detail, the reader feels the loss and subsequent regret that the writer intends. The word choice is very strong as well: “fragile amphibian,” plopped,” and “frantically squirm” all contribute to the suspense. The word “fragile” foreshadows what is to follow and “plopped” conveys the lack of concern at the time. Clearly the writer is skilled at conveying emotion even with the “lily pond in the sky.” Again the generalities in the first and last paragraphs keep it out of the 5 range.

**Conventions:** The writer handles most basic conventions very well. There are few usage errors with the exception of “If I was able” rather than “If I were able.” Spelling is generally correct even on more difficult words like “amphibian”; only “frantically” is misspelled. End and internal punctuation are correct. This paper would probably receive a 5 with more sentence variety.

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### Writing Sample T

There are a lot of things that I regret doing in my life. One thing though stands out from the rest.

I was angry. Very angry. I had just gotten in a fight with my mom about doing the dishes. I hate dishes as much as little kids hate vegetables. I was only ten and I was pretty oblivious when I got angry. I put the soap in the dishwasher, slammed it shut and went to play videogames.

A few moments later, I heard an ear-drum shattering "LARRY!". I gulped hard and ran out to see what the big deal was about.

You will never guess what I saw. I saw a gigantic mound of bubbles bubbling around, right in front of the dishwasher! It was the coolest most radical thing I have ever seen! My smile vanished when I saw the look on her face.

She went on and on screaming at me about how to use the right soap or something. I kind of just tuned her out. I wish I could go back in time and put the right soap in the diswasher.

<b>How would you score this sample?</b>	
_____	Idea Development
_____	Organization
_____	Voice
_____	Conventions

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**Writing Sample T**  
**Scores & Annotations**  
**I=4 O=4 V=4.5 C=4.5**

This paper exceeds standards in all four traits.

**Ideas:** The ideas focus well on the fight over doing the dishes and the resulting overflowing of bubbles. The details are generally vivid and well placed. We know the writer is angry about doing the dishes and details like slamming the dishwasher shut reinforces the anger. The “gigantic mound of bubbles” is also a great detail, particularly when the writer thinks they are very cool and his mother thinks quite the opposite as his “smile vanished” with the look on her face. The last paragraph is less vivid, keeping the paper in the 4 range.

**Organization:** This paper has an adequate introduction, though it is not original as it basically repeats the prompt. The organization does move the reader through the paper and transitions such as “a few moments later” are effective. The conclusion is relevant with the ring of conviction as the writer wishes he could go back and “put the right soap in the dishwasher.”

**Voice:** The voice is the strongest aspect of this paper. The repeating of the first 2 sentences in paragraph two establishes a strong mood: “I was angry. Very angry.” The simile comparing doing the dishes to children eating vegetables is original. The voice remains strong in the next paragraph as the writer hears the “ear drum shattering “LARRY!” The word choice is strong as Larry ‘gulped hard.” The last paragraph is weaker in voice as the writer’s feelings seem to contradict; he says he turned out his mom yet wishes he had used the right soap.

**Conventions:** The writer uses conventions well and even manipulates them in the second paragraph with the second angry statement being a deliberate fragment to convey the emotion. Spelling is mostly correct even on words like “gigantic.” External as well as internal punctuation is correct, as is capitalization. In order to receive a 5, the paper needs more sentence variety

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### Writing Sample U

I'll admit that I have things I wish I could do over. I think we all wish there really was a rewind button on life. But what you just need to do is think before you say something or do something you might regret.

I was in grade three in my first and only year at Quincy Elementary School. My friends and I were out having fun at recess when an adorably cute yellow labrador retriever came through the gates and onto school grounds. Everyone wanted to pet him, after all, what little kid didn't love dogs? We all ran around chasing him and throwing sticks for him to fetch, and had a great time.

Then our fun was broken up by the teachers on duty, who wouldn't let the kids near him just in case he was dangerous. They asked who the dog belonged to, and I said he was mine so he wouldn't have to go to the pound, a place I loathed with every fiber of my being. I stated that my mom was at work and he must have gotten out of the yard. I made up a fake name for him and everything! Assumptions led me to believe they called my mom, because they pulled me out of class to talk to her.

I realize now I shouldn't have said anything. The dog had a collar, and I now know they would have tried to locate the owner. I guess I was just so afraid they would take him and put him to sleep. This is one time in my life I wish I could do over, because wherever it is, the SPCA or Humane Society, they do a lot of good to help animals.

How would you score this sample?	
_____	Idea Development
_____	Organization
_____	Voice
_____	Conventions
_____	

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**Writing Sample U**  
**Scores and Annotations**  
**I=5 O=5 V=5 C=5**

This is a superior paper, exceeding standards in all traits.

**Ideas:** The paper effectively focuses on the dog coming onto the playground and the writer's lie that the dog is hers, hoping to save the animal from the pound. The details bring the ideas to life: from the "adorably cute yellow lab" to throwing sticks to the detailed nature of the lie itself. There is also a level of reflection at the end: "I realize now I shouldn't have said anything. The dog had a collar and they would have tried to locate the owner. . ." The reflections in the last paragraph enhance the storyline.

**Organization:** The introduction gives the paper a fresh twist on the prompt with the phrase: "I'll admit that I have things I wish I could do over." The ongoing action flows smoothly, and the pacing, when to move ahead and when to pause for detail, is well controlled. The storyline is so controlled that obvious transitions are unnecessary. The conclusion is satisfying, appropriate to the rest of the story, and contains that reflection mentioned earlier.

**Voice:** The voice is strongest in the area of word choice: "a rewind button on life," and "loathed with every fiber of my being" are just two examples. The conversational tone also contributes to voice in lines like: "Everyone wanted to pet him, after all, what kid didn't love dogs?" The writer effectively conveys her fears about the fate of the dog and therefore provides a good justification for the lie; the reader is with her all the way.

**Conventions:** This paper, with the exception of a misplaced comma in the last sentence of paragraph two, is error free. Words are spelled correctly; usage is correct and punctuation both external and internal is correct. There is also a nice variety of sentence structure with compound, complex and simple sentences manipulated for effect. The maturity of this writer is evident in all traits, including conventions.

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### Writing Sample V

I have done so many things in life I regret... But the story I'm about to tell you is about one of the many regrets.

My regret was during the summer of 2008 I fell in love. With an amazing guy named Alfredo. He was kind, generouse, and would not do anything to hurt me.

But as time went by the feelings I had for him were fading away. Mostly just washing my heart filled with love for him.

As we fought for jealousy, rumors and life. We would always make each other feel worse.

When he had told me something that made me very depressed. I told myself am I really going to deal with this drama all the time or not.

And that's when I made my descision. I was going to end the relationship between us.

When I told him he started to weep and I told him things are probably going to get better in the future. He stayed quiet. Then he opened his mouth and said to me "But I still love you no matter what happns."

After that I thought things over and said to myself I know I still love him in my heart but we just needed time away.

I knew that when I did that I made a big mistake. Because I knew we would have been together for a long time and that's my biggest regret in life.

**How would you score this sample?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Idea Development

\_\_\_\_\_ Organization

\_\_\_\_\_ Voice

\_\_\_\_\_ Conventions

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**Writing Sample V**  
**Scores and Annotations**  
**I=3 O=3 V=3 C=3**

This paper meets standards in all traits; however it barely meets standards in conventions.

**Ideas:** The paper is focused on the love between the writer and Alfredo in the summer of 2008. The paper does detail the relationship generally with the most specific details coming with the description of how Alfredo reacted to the decision: “he started to weep. . .Then he opened his mouth and said to me ‘But I still love you no matter what happens.’” The reader is left with many questions, however, most prominently is whether the regret was for breaking up or did they then get back together? The reader is confused by the line “I knew that when I did *that* I made a big mistake. What does the *that* refer to?”

**Organization:** The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion, but they do not raise anticipation nor form a sense of completion in the reader. Transitions are adequate throughout, and the reader can move through the paper without confusion, at least until the last two paragraphs when the timing becomes unclear. The “After that,” while a transition, does not clarify the time between the break-up and the writer thinking things over. This also weakens the ending as mentioned earlier.

**Voice:** The writer keeps the reader interested in her relationship with Alfredo from the initial love to the fighting that begins to define the relationship. The quote by Alfredo, “but I still love you. . .” helps the reader feel his pain. Unfortunately convention issues make some of the emotions confusing: “As we fought for jealousy rumors and life.” While there is some emotion in the words, the statement is nonsense. The reader is engaged on occasion, but the last two paragraphs are very general.

**Conventions:** The weakest trait in this paper is conventions. Sentence structure is particularly problematic. There are numerous fragments in this paper, for example: “With an amazing guy named Alfredo.” The rest of the paper, however, is generally correct. With the exception of “generouse” for “generous” the spelling is correct. The sentence structure mentioned above may be just the confusion on the part of the writer between internal and external punctuation as the writer uses periods when commas would be appropriate. The writer does enough correctly to barely meet standard in this trait.

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### Writing Sample W

Everyday, or even every second of our life we wish we could have done or said something different! What I am going to tell you about is when I dislocated my sholder. And yes I really wished I would have done something different.

When I was younger my school had tracks like red, blue, green & yellow, and when we would go "off track" I went to the Rec. At the Rec. We did a lot of things. This one day after lunch we went outside and me and my friend played on the monkey bars. So she jumped on to a bar & swung on it for a few seconds and then jumped off. Then I did the same thing, but insted of swinging for a few seconds I decided to only grab the bar and then jump off. So I did that, but I ended up going to far forward (like swinging wise) and then I let go as I was forward and I fell on my side well my sholder hit first. I ended up dislocating my sholder.

The thing I wish I would have done different would be, to swing on the bar longer. Because I had to wear a sling & I missed out on a lot of fun things.

That was a moment that stuck out for me. I'm sure there were @ least 1000 I could chose. But I think this one has more meaning.

<b>How would you score this sample?</b>	
_____	Idea Development
_____	Organization
_____	Voice
_____	Conventions

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**Writing Sample W**  
**Scores & Annotations**  
**I=3 O=3 V=3 C=3**

**Ideas:** This paper is focused on the events surrounding a fall that dislocates the writer's shoulder. The details in paragraph two of swinging on the monkey bars, letting go too soon and falling are very vivid and help the reader see exactly what happens. The explanation of the school tracks is a good example of detail that has little to do with the event that hurts the focus of the paper. The opening and closing paragraphs are less original and more predictable in terms of detail such as: "I had to wear a sling and missed a lot of fun things."

**Organization:** The organization moves the reader through the paper with little confusion. The introduction is satisfactory, and the conclusion even contains a bit of reflection as the writer feels this particular incident has "more meaning." Transitions are adequate though more connections around the actual fall from the monkey bars would have helped clarify the incident for the reader.

**Voice:** The reader can sense why this event has meaning for the writer. The details, especially around the fall, create anticipation in the reader, though the next to last paragraph, concerning missing fun things puts the reader at a distance. The word choice is adequate but not memorable. Small revisions like giving the friend a name would help improve voice in this paper.

**Conventions:** The writer controls most standard writing conventions adequately. End punctuation is correct, but internal punctuation is missing: "When I was younger my school had tracks like blue. . ." and added in others: The thing I wish I would have done different would be, to swing on the bar longer." Spelling is generally correct though the writer should have looked up "shoulder" since it's the subject of the paper.

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### Writing Sample X

Have you ever been in an embarrassing situation, where you have said or done something so totally embarrassing right in front of your crush? Well if you have, welcome to my world, my name is Gabriella Montez. I'm 14 years old and had this boyfriend named Zac. All of my friends and I were at a fun hang-out spot called Skate Emporium. My friends and I always go there. My two friends Sharpay and Taylor were talking about a time when they were at my house and I got sick because of certain something, so I threw up. My boyfriend was standing right there listening and he laughed and looked at me. I was so embarrassed to the point that I fell, right on my butt, right in front of everybody. It was so embarrassing and everybody started laughing at me.

I wish that I could just rewind time, take a big huge pencil with a huge eraser and erase that point in my life. But, that's not possible. So instead I wish that I would have just talked about it with my friends, make a joke about it and laugh with every one that was laughing. Even though that was an embarrassing night, it brought back a lot of fun memories!

How would you score this sample?	
_____	Idea Development
_____	Organization
_____	Voice
_____	Conventions
_____	

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**Writing Sample X**  
**Scores & Annotations**  
**I=3 O=3 V=3 C=3**

This paper meets standards in all four traits.

**Ideas:** The details in this paper all contribute to showing an embarrassing moment at Skate Emporium. The reader has a good vision of the author's embarrassment: "I fell, right on my butt, right in front of everybody. The details continue in paragraph two. However, with the exception of "take a big huge pencil with a huge eraser and erase that point in my life." the paper ends more generally. There are also irrelevant details such as the writer's name and age. The paper does maintain a clear focus throughout.

**Organization:** The paper opens with a relevant question that sparks the reader's curiosity: "Have you ever been in an embarrassing situation, where you have said and done something so totally embarrassing right in front of your crush?" The conclusion is far more general and less satisfying. The pacing is adequate, and the reader can follow the paper without confusion even with a lack of effective transitions.

**Voice:** Voice is probably the strongest trait in this paper. After the initial question, she draws the reader in with "Well if you have, welcome to my world." Details like the huge eraser show originality and convey the regret the writer feels. The voice is diminished by the too conversational: "My name is-----. I'm 14 years old. . ." Word choice is strong enough to convey the reader's attitude but is not outstanding.

**Conventions:** The writer handles most conventions well. There are no glaring errors in usage. End punctuation is correct, but internal punctuation is often missing as in this sentence: "My two friends...were talking about a time when they were at my house and I got sick because of a certain something, so I threw up." Spelling, with the exception of "thou" for "though" and "embarressed" for "embarrassed" and "laughed" for "laughed" is correct. Sentences are generally correct but predictable.

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### Writing Sample Y

This is how it all began, I was at my Grandma's house. Then I got a phone call from my friend. I asked if I could go, but she said no. Then my brother asked if he could go to his friends house. And you will never believe this, she said ok. I finally got mad at her never lating me do anything. Then this huge argument happened between us. Then I told her that I hated her. Then she started to cry, I started to think why did I say that. I ran out of the front door.

Now I'm starting to think if I had another chance I would have never ever said a thing like that. And I would tell her I love her. Also I learned they do that because they love you, I wish I would've listend to my mom and I would have never said that to my Grandma.

How would you score this sample?	
_____	Idea Development
_____	Organization
_____	Voice
_____	Conventions
_____	

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**Writing Sample Y**  
**Scores & Annotations**  
**I=2.5 O=2.5 V=2 C=2.5**

This paper does not meet standards in three of the four traits; the three scores given also illustrate the range of three scores at the lower end.

**Ideas:** The paper does focus on the fight with the writer's grandma. There are details, like the brother being given permission to leave while the writer was told no. However, all of the details tend to be very general lacking specific showing examples. Ideas would benefit from using direct dialogue rather than summarizing the fight with her grandmother. The writer covers the incident and her later regret, but the reader is left with many questions.

**Organization:** The paper barely contains an introduction: "This is how it all began,". The conclusion is very predictable. The writer relies too much on the transition "then," using is five times in the first paragraph. There seems to be quite a jump from the incident in paragraph one and the "now" in the second paragraph. The pacing of the paper is thrown off by the weak transitions between past and present. Within the paragraphs, however, the reader can follow the incident without confusion.

**Voice:** The reader does believe that the writer regrets telling her grandmother she hates her. She also draws the reader in with the phrase, "and you will never believe this,". Unfortunately, summarizing the argument rather than providing direct dialogue puts the writer at a distance from the action and detracts from the voice.

**Conventions:** While the writer handles some conventions at grade level, other areas show a misunderstanding of conventions. First the paper has numerous run-on sentences such as this one: "Then she started to cry, I started to think why did I say that." The sentences that are correct are very short and simplistic. Spelling errors, while not overwhelming, are numerous enough to be distracting: "frount" for "front," "listend" for "listened" and "lating" for "letting" are the most prominent examples. The capitalization of Grandma shows a misunderstanding of that capitalization rule.

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### Writing Sample Z

I wonder why I didn't take care of myself better? I new that this was my only chance of being with my real family. I wonder what was going through my Head at the time?

All these Questions were going through my small, Hard Head in a swirl of regrete But the more I think of it the easier it is to realize that the most important question going through my Head is what could I have Done to make it Better?

I could have tried Being more responsible, or at least helped out more. I should Have treated them with more respect-and I should Have Helped with the chores around the house.

Now – I know with actiones comes consecuenses. I wish with ever Bit of Strength I have that I could erase it and start over. I will never make the same mistake twice.

How would you score this sample?	
_____	Idea Development
_____	Organization
_____	Voice
_____	Conventions
_____	

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**Writing Sample Z**  
**Scores & Annotations**  
**I=2.5 O=2 V=3 C=2.5**

**Ideas:** There is a focus on regret in this paper, but the reader never knows exactly what the writer did to be separated from his real family. There are hints in the details: “I could have tried being more responsible, or at least helped out more. I should have treated them with more respect. . .” The details also reinforce the sense of loss, but the question remains: What exactly was the mistake? What is the “it” in “make it better?” The paper lacks a clear incident that would help the reader understand the loss and regret.

**Organization:** The introductory sentence: “I wonder why I didn’t take care of myself better.” does not seem to have anything to do with the rest of the paper which seems to involve not behaving properly. The paper wanders as the writer considers what he could have done to be with his real family. The timing in the paper is confusing in terms of when events occurred. There is a sense of completion as the writer vows not to make the same mistake twice, but again, the reader is unclear about the exact mistake.

**Voice:** While the reader has many questions about this paper, the sense of remorse and regret is very strong. The reader feels the writer’s pain, especially with details like: “All these questions were going through my small hard head in a swirl of regret.” The list of “coulds” and “shoulds” in the third paragraph reveal the uncertainty in the mind of the writer. Unfortunately the fact that the reader does not know what happened hurts the voice as well.

**Conventions:** The writer has control of a very simplistic range of conventions. Usage is generally correct except for verb tense shifts in the second paragraph. The vocabulary is simplistic and still words like “new” for “knew” and “actiones” for “actions” are misspelled. The two sentences that begin with “I wonder. . .” in the first paragraph are punctuated incorrectly as they are not really questions. The simplistic sentence structure and word choice compounded with several errors keep this paper just below standard in conventions.