

Grade 6 Narrative Writing Standard W.6.3

Grade 6 Narrative

W.6.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
- d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

The Reading/Thinking/Writing Task

This historical fiction narrative grew out of a Humanities unit on the American Civil War. Students had studied the war in depth, with an emphasis on how it had impacted people who lived through it at the time. They had worked with a dozen or so scenarios naming fictitious people from various walks of life who had been impacted by the war. The Focusing Question for the narrative was *“How was your character impacted by the Civil War? Choose a single moment in their experience that illuminates that impact.”* Students wrote independently, conferring with other students but not with a teacher between drafts.

Focus of the Writing Task

How was your character impacted by the Civil War? Choose a single moment in their experience that illuminates that impact.

The Writing Task in the Curriculum

How is it embedded in curriculum/content?

- ★ *Class: 6th grade integrated ELA / social studies curriculum*

- ★ *Curriculum unit*
 - students studied the Civil War, with an emphasis on the variety of ways in which it impacted people at the time
 - emphasis on “cause-and-effect” thinking – students worked with understanding causal relationships within events

- ★ *Standards*
 - C3
 - Writing: W.6.3, W.6.9, W.6.10

How did students build the knowledge they needed?

- ★ *Texts / Sources*
 - students read a variety of texts over the course of the unit, including a text book
 - Ken Burns’ *Civil War* (documentary); *Glory* (film)

- ★ *Reading and re-reading*
 - teacher read texts aloud while students read along in their heads
 - students re-read texts independently and discussed with a partner
 - students began by taking teacher-guided notes on both texts and films, then took notes more independently over course of unit

What instructional approaches were used to teach writing?

- ★ *Craft lessons*
 - students worked with a model of an effective Civil War narrative, analyzing it for narrative elements and techniques

- ★ *Writing approaches*
 - students practiced in small groups with characters of various types before choosing their own
 - once they had created a character and an event, they orally told the story to a partner
 - they wrote and peer conferred, then proofread independently

What was the timeframe?

Four-week unit (total of 16 class periods, including 4 -5 periods planning and writing)

Standard W.6.3
Grade 6
Proficient

Broken

Today, like any other day was just that, a normal day. But today was not a normal day, today was the day that my life would never be the same again.

Early in the morning I go to feed the chickens as mother has instructed me to do. That has been my special job on the farm since father left to fight in the war. My father has gone to fight with the Confederates in order to save our farm. After I come back from the chicken feeding I see my mother, she has a large envelope and a look of shock across her face. At first I expect the worst, but when I go over to talk to her she just looks at me in a way that I know exactly what's happened. Father is coming home.

I'm in shock and riddled with glee but then I realize that if he is coming home, then he has gotten hurt. But I don't think about that now all I do is turn to my mother and say "Is he okay?" Mother replied, "He is going to be fine, he had to get his hand amputated, but he is going to be fine." I was happy and relieved but my father...is he okay?

But before I can think about anything more the unthinkable happens. The Union soldiers marching and one man shouting orders at someone to "take anything that looks useful" and I know exactly what's happening. They tell us to come out onto the lawn and we follow orders come onto the lawn and they are pointing guns at us and two soldiers walk behind us to go into our house and steal everything. I look at the soldier their eyes looking into mine as they slowly begin to ruin my life. And they know it. The man on the horse shouting orders again to burn the house down. I can't see it but I can tell my face has turned white and pale as I watched the soldier light the torch and [throw] it in my old busted kitchen window that my father promised he would fix after he got back from the war. But he would never get the chance.

After they left my house was fully aflame. The bright heat was so intense I could not get very close to it. At that moment the reality of what's happened sets in. I am as helpless as a pig chosen for slaughter. Soon the one place I called home would be nothing more than a pile of ashes. And there was nothing I could do to stop it.

My father will come home to nothing more than a daughter and mother whose lives have been broken, and whose mind have been damaged.

Standard W.6.3
Grade 6
Approaching

Shot Dead

“I WANT TO GO,” William yelled.

“YOU’RE NOT GOING IT’S TOO DANGEROUS,” Gail yelled right back.

“But mom I want to do what’s right, this is the right thing to do.”

“But dear your father is already going off to war so we are doing the right thing.”

William ran to his room and slammed the door behind him. He looked out the window. William peered down at the green grass, then looked up at the swaying trees. He felt more calm at this moment. William knew what he had to do, William had to go out to the war and fight along side of his father.

“William dear come down for dinner.”

William walked down stairs for dinner and ate slowly once he was finished he collected his mother and father’s plates and cleared the table. After he finished clearing the table he walked to his room, closed the door, turned off the lights, and went to bed. He had to be up at six in the morning to meet the other soldiers at the waterfall. Finally six o’clock had arrived and William got dressed and ready, then met his father at the door.

“So you’ve decided to disobey your mother and come fight alongside me have you,” Thomas asked.

“Yes father”.

“OK then let's go”.

Together Thomas and William walked out of the door and left without saying goodbye. They walked down to the waterfall where they met all the rest of the soldiers. Soon enough they were in the war. Mini explosions everywhere. The air filled with smoke. Already horses and men were laying dead on the ground. But then Thomas was shot in the leg.

“FATHER”. William yelled out to his father that was being taken to the field hospital.

A few hours later William died. He was running to take cover then it happened. He had been shot in the head. An instant kill. Days later Gail had heard a knock on her door it was as a death notifier, coming to tell Gail that her son was dead. Gail’s eyes began to fill with tears. She

slammed the door in the man's face and ran to her couch, where she layed for a while to think about what was going on.

Is this real, Why is this happening, and Why MY son, were things that Gail thought.

Gail was angry at Thomas for not protecting his son in battle and for letting him come and fight in the first place. Months later Gail decided to become a nurse to help and comfort injured soldiers as her way of giving back to people that were also fighting for our great nation.

“Thank you, “ Gail spoke softly with an injured soldier.

Standard W.6.3
Grade 6
Beginning

Hit in the Chest

Sitting on my purple chair thinking about when my best friend Stephen and I were running up the line with Colonel Shaw commanding us to run up to the small hill that was almost shaped as if it were meant to be used as a blockade. There were dead bodies everywhere lying on the battlefield of Gettysburg. As I looked up at Stephen I thought about us not being able to see each other ever again, in the case of one of us getting shot we might not see each other ever again so I ran on a slight slant towards him to tell him something. That was when he was shot at his right shoulder to the left about 3 inches. He yelled to me saying “leave me, you have to follow shaw’s orders, I can try to find a passing medic.” Right in front of me he was bleeding out with blood spurting out 5 feet in front of him. As he is doing so I am called up by Colonel Shaw to advance but I didn’t want to leave him. Then Shaw yelled at me to run or I’ll get shot. His piercing voice hurt my ears as I ran up and shot a large burly confederate soldier with my musket, the shot went right through his neck. That was when I got interrupted when in my flashback. I heard a knock on my front door. I opened the door and saw a man with a letter that was handed to me. I wondered who it was from so I read the return address. It read “Stephen Tompkins, 308 Greensboro Drive” that was the moment I realized that it was from Stephen and that he was alive.

Standard W.6.3
Grade 6
Exceeds

Letters and Love

My dearest Elizabeth,

I hope you are doing well. So far, all is well here. Nobody knows what will happen next. I am sure you have heard of the battles that have been victories or losses. General Grant thinks we don't have much of a chance to win this war, but is not giving up yet. Gettysburg is in just under two weeks, and I can't say my nerves haven't caught up with me. I do not feel my presence is as important as it could be. I am hoping that I will be placed at a higher rank in the close future. Please don't worry about me, I will be fine. I miss you and love you more than I am able to put into words. Tell Matilda that I love her and miss her everyday. I will send another letter as soon as I have a chance, as you probably guess, things are quite busy here.

Signed with a loving heart,

Lieutenant Roger Shaw

Flipping the letter over, I used my cotton apron to dry my teary eyes. I knew I had to be strong, to get through these hard times. Slowly, I pushed my chair backwards, stood up, blew out the candle, and left the dimly lit room. Once I was upstairs, I went into Matilda's room. She was sitting on her bed, playing with her teddy bear.

"Tildy?" I gently asked her. She looked up, and I went over and lowered myself down on her bed next to her. "Another letter came from papa today."

"Really?" She asked, her small voice barely reaching her ears.

"Yes, my love. He said all is well, and he is getting ready to fight again at Gettysburg."

"Why does papa have to fight? Why can't he stay home like me and you?"

"Darling, he is fighting to help save our country, and you should be downright proud that you're brave papa is out there." I hugged her, and she set her teddy bear down on the floor next to her bed. She lay down, and I kissed her goodnight. No more words were needed to be said. I left her room, and quietly closed the door behind me.

During the next three weeks, no more letters were received. I understood Roger said he may not have enough time to write again before Gettysburg, but yet it still worried me. So badly I wanted him to come home, to be okay. I hugged the precious letter that was last received to my chest, wondering what had happened. My eyes started to water again, and I had a dropping feeling in my chest. Fear crept over me, and I allowed the tears to easily roll down my cheeks. Sitting down on my desk, I put my head in my hands and sobbed. A pang of devastation was in my heart. I had a strong, sad suspicion that Roger was dead.

The next morning, Tildy came into my room before dawn.

“Mama, mama, wake up mama. Look what came.” I opened my eyes, and saw my child, still in her white cotton nightgown, with a grin on her face. I wasn’t sure what she was hoping to show me. Drearly, I sat up in bed. My eye caught a piece of parchment that Tildy was grasping.

“A letter came this morning. Here.” She was grinning. Smiling big. Greedy to know what this letter was about, I snatched the small paper out of her hands. Opening the paper, [a] small picture fell [out]. I picked it up, and studied it. On the photo, with trees and fields behind him, was a picture of Roger. Even though the picture wasn’t in color, I could clearly picture his dark blue shirt and pants, his grass green eyes, and his almond colored hair. Looking even closer, I could tell that he only had part of his leg. It ended just above his knee. I set the picture aside, and went on reading the letter aloud.

My dearest Elizabeth,

I know I have caused you and my darling Tildy a lot of pain. I haven’t been able to write in the past weeks, and here is why. I got transferred from being a Lieutenant to a spy and couldn’t write, because if a letter I wrote fell into the wrong hands, you know what could’ve happened. Gettysburg is over. Another one of the beloved Union’s victories. I definitely prefer spying, though the danger level is high. I told you I would come back some day. My left leg was blown clean off by a shell, so I only have half of my leg, and as a result of this injury, I will return home.

At this point in the letter, I stopped reading and cried out, “Home! Home, sweet home. Roger is returning home!” I burst into tears. Tildy followed close in my steps, and the next

moment she too was tearfully sobbing. We hugged each other, long and hard. When our cries of sheer happiness subsided, I continued reading the rest of the letter, my eyes watery.

Come to the station at 2:00 on Saturday, and I will be there waiting.

I cannot wait to see you two, my most prized possessions. War is a terrible thing and it changed me in many ways. The only way it didn't change me is the desire to see you two. I have missed you terribly, and can only hope that the grief this has caused you and me will be worth something, the freedom of our fellow black Americans.

Love to you two straight from my heart,

Papa

Standard W.6.3
Grade 6
Proficient

Broken

Today, like any other day was just that, a normal day. But today was not a normal day, today was the day that my life would never be the same again.

Early in the morning I go to feed the chickens as mother has instructed me to do. That has been my special job on the farm since father left to fight in the war. My father has gone to fight with the Confederates in order to save our farm. After I come back from the chicken feeding I see my mother, she has a large envelope and a look of shock across her face. At first I expect the worst, but when I go over to talk to her she just looks at me in a way that I know exactly what's happened. Father is coming home.

I'm in shock and riddled with glee but then I realize that if he is coming home, then he has gotten hurt. But I don't think about that now all I do is turn to my mother and say "Is he okay?" Mother replied, "He is going to be fine, he had to get his hand amputated, but he is going to be fine." I was happy and relieved but my father...is he okay?

But before I can think about anything more the unthinkable happens. The Union soldiers marching and one man shouting orders at someone to "take anything that looks useful" and I know exactly what's happening. They tell us to come out onto the lawn and we follow orders come onto the lawn and they are pointing guns at us and two soldiers walk behind us to go into our house and steal everything. I look at the soldier their eyes looking into mine as they slowly begin to ruin my life. And they know it. The man on the horse shouting orders again to burn the house down. I can't see it but I can tell my face has turned white and pale as I watched the soldier light the torch and [throw] it in my old busted kitchen

Engages and orients the reader by establishing a context and introduces a narrator and characters: the narrator's father is a Confederate soldier in the Civil War, who has joined the war to protect the family farm. He is about to arrive home. This protection of the farm becomes the focus of the narrative.

Event sequence to follow unfolds naturally and logically

Uses narrative technique of dialogue to develop events

Uses transitional phrase to convey sequence: the phrase "unthinkable happens" keeps the focus on the narrator's experience of the events.

Uses the narrative technique of pacing to develop events: the writer controls **pacing** by slowing down the action and reflecting.

Uses precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey events and develop characters

window that my father promised he would fix after he got back from the war. But he would never get the chance.

After they left my house was fully aflame. The bright heat was so intense I could not get very close to it. At that moment the reality of what's happened sets in. I am as helpless as a pig chosen for slaughter. Soon the one place I called home would be nothing more than a pile of ashes. And there was nothing I could do to stop it.

My father will come home to nothing more than a daughter and mother whose lives have been broken, and whose mind have been damaged.

Uses transitional clause to control **pacing**, keeping focus on the narrator's experience

Provides a conclusion which follows from and then reflects on **the events** and focus/ conflict **of the narrative**, the destruction of the family farm

Final Thoughts
(Gr 6 Narrative: Proficient)

This proficient sixth grade narrative shows an understanding of the topic (*impact of a specific aspect of the Civil War*) in a brief moment in time, a Southern home being burned by Union soldiers. Written from the perspective of a young girl, the piece is focused around this conflict. The narrative begins by introducing the narrator) and establishing a situation (*father about to return from the war*). The writer uses descriptive language and controls the pacing to keep the reader's attention on the significance of the focus (*I look at the soldier their eyes looking into mine as they slowly begin to ruin my life*). Events unfold naturally and logically, and the writer uses dialogue very selectively to develop the action. A variety of transitional words, phrases and clauses (*today was the day my life would never be the same again, but before I can think about anything, at that moment*) help to smoothly manage the sequence and to signal shifts in time frame. The conclusion follows naturally from earlier events and reflects on their importance.

Note: the writer reflects throughout this narrative (*I am as helpless as a pig chosen for slaughter, whose lives have been broken and whose lives have been damaged*), which is above the standard for this grade level.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 6 Narrative: Proficient)

Control of Conventions: Although there are some errors, the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.

Standard W.6.3
Grade 6
Approaching

Shot Dead

“I WANT TO GO,” William yelled.

“YOU’RE NOT GOING IT’S TOO DANGEROUS,” Gail yelled right back.

“But mom I want to do what’s right, this is the right thing to do.”

“But dear your father is already going off to war so we are doing the right thing.”

William ran to his room and slammed the door behind him. He looked out the window. William peered down at the green grass, then looked up at the swaying trees. He felt more calm at this moment. William knew what he had to do, William had to go out to the war and fight along side of his father.

“William dear come down for dinner.”

William walked down stairs for dinner and ate slowly once he was finished he collected his mother and father’s plates and cleared the table. After he finished clearing the table he walked to his room, closed the door, turned off the lights, and went to bed. He had to be up at six in the morning to meet the other soldiers at the waterfall. Finally six o’clock had arrived and William got dressed and ready, then met his father at the door.

“So you’ve decided to disobey your mother and come fight alongside me have you,” Thomas asked.

“Yes father”.

“OK then let's go”.

Together Thomas and William walked out of the door and left without saying goodbye. They walked down to the waterfall where they met all the rest of the soldiers. Soon enough they were in the war. Mini explosions everywhere. The air filled with smoke. Already horses and men were laying dead on the ground. But then Thomas was shot in the leg.

Attempts to **engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introduces a narrator and characters:** the narrator wants to join his father and enlist in the war.

Reflection keeps the focus on the narrator’s decision to join the war

Event sequence unfolds naturally and logically

Uses transitional phrases to convey sequence

Uses narrative technique of dialogue to develop events: this narrative would benefit from the dialogue being more developed to show the importance of this moment.

Attempts to use **precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey events** and develop characters: the narrative would benefit if the **pacing** were slowed down.

“FATHER”. William yelled out to his father that was being taken to the field hospital.

A few hours later William died. He was running to take cover then it happened. He had been shot in the head. An instant kill. Days later Gail had heard a knock on her door it was as a death notifier, coming to tell Gail that her son was dead. Gail’s eyes began to fill with tears. She slammed the door in the man’s face and ran to her couch, where she layed for a while to think about what was going on.

Is this real, Why is this happening, and Why MY son, were things that Gail thought.

Gail was angry at Thomas for not protecting his son in battle and for letting him come and fight in the first place. Months later Gail decided to become a nurse to help and comfort injured soldiers as her way of giving back to people that were also fighting for our great nation.

“Thank you, “ Gail spoke softly with an injured soldier.

The writer attempts unsuccessfully to shift focus from William to his mother for rest of narrative.

Attempts to **provide a conclusion which follows from the events of the narrative**, but focus has shifted from the narrator to the mother

Final Thoughts
(Gr 6 Narrative: Approaching)

This sixth grade narrative approaches proficiency, with several attempts at effective narrative writing. It shows an understanding of the topic (*impact of a specific aspect of the Civil War*). However, while it begins with a brief moment in time (*a boy deciding to join his father in the war*), it loses this focus and tries to tell too much. The narrative begins by introducing the narrator and establishing a situation (*boy refusing to obey his mother so he can join his father*). However, it omits some important context (*which side is this? Why does the boy think he needs to fight?*). The writer uses some dialogue to establish importance and control the pacing (*between William and his father*); this could be used more effectively to slow down this important moment. Events unfold naturally and logically. The narrative uses some transitional words, phrases and clauses (*He felt more calm at this moment, after he finished clearing the table*) to smoothly manage the sequence and to signal shifts in the time frame. Towards the end of the piece, the writer seems to attempt to “wrap up” the story, but this requires unsuccessfully switching to the perspective of the mother.

The piece would benefit from a conference helping the writer to limit the narrative to leaving with the father and concentrating the writing on developing that intense moment in time.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 6 Narrative: Approaching)

Control of Conventions: Although there are some errors, the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.

Standard W.6.3
Grade 6
Beginning

Hit in the Chest

Sitting on my purple chair thinking about when my best friend Stephen and I were running up the line with Colonel Shaw commanding us to run up to the small hill that was almost shaped as if it were meant to be used as a blockade. There were dead bodies everywhere lying on the battlefield of Gettysburg. As I looked up at Stephen I thought about us not being able to see each other ever again, in the case of one of us getting shot we might not see each other ever again so I ran on a slight slant towards him to tell him something. That was when he was shot at his right shoulder to the left about 3 inches. He yelled to me saying “leave me, you have to follow shaw’s orders, I can try to find a passing medic.” Right in front of me he was bleeding out with blood spurting out 5 feet in front of him. As he is doing so I am called up by Colonel Shaw to advance but I didn’t want to leave him. Then Shaw yelled at me to run or I’ll get shot. His piercing voice hurt my ears as I ran up and shot a large burly confederate soldier with my musket, the shot went right through his neck. That was when I got interrupted when in my flashback. I heard a knock on my front door. I opened the door and saw a man with a letter that was handed to me. I wondered who it was from so I read the return address. It read “Stephen Tompkins, 308 Greensboro Drive” that was the moment I realized that it was from Stephen and that he was alive.

Attempts to **engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introduces a narrator and characters** in the form of a flashback: the narrator and his friend were soldiers at Gettysburg. This battle experience becomes the focus of the narrative.

Attempts to have **event sequence unfold naturally and logically** but **pacing** is hurried

Attempts to **use narrative techniques of dialogue, precise detail, sensory language to develop events:** the narrative would benefit from these being more developed.

Attempts to **use transitional phrase to signal shift in time**

Attempts to **provide a conclusion which follows from the events of the narrative**

Final Thoughts
(Gr 6 Narrative: Beginning)

This sixth grade narrative is not yet proficient. It does show a very basic understanding of the topic (*being in a battle of the Civil War*). However, important context is omitted (*which battle is this? Who is Shaw?*). The narrative begins by introducing the narrator and attempting to establish a situation (*sitting in my purple chair, my friend Stephen*). This is an attempted flashback but needs more development. The writer uses some narrative techniques and dialogue (*between narrator and his friend*); all of this could be used more effectively to develop this important moment. Events are told in an “and then” fashion. The narrative uses some transitional words, phrases and clauses (*that was when I got interrupted in my flashback*) to manage the sequence and to signal shifts in the time frame. There is almost no conclusion; rather, the piece ends abruptly.

The piece would benefit from a conference helping the writer to identify key places in the narrative that could be substantially more developed with various narrative techniques.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 6 Narrative: Beginning)

Minimal Control of Conventions: At times, the lack of control of conventions and language interferes with the reader’s understanding of the piece. This writer would benefit from instruction in punctuation and grammar.

Standard W.6.3
Grade 6
Exceeds

Letters and Love

My dearest Elizabeth,

I hope you are doing well. So far, all is well here. Nobody knows what will happen next. I am sure you have heard of the battles that have been victories or losses. General Grant thinks we don't have much of a chance to win this war, but is not giving up yet. Gettysburg is in just under two weeks, and I can't say my nerves haven't caught up with me. I do not feel my presence is as important as it could be. I am hoping that I will be placed at a higher rank in the close future. Please don't worry about me, I will be fine. I miss you and love you more than I am able to put into words. Tell Matilda that I love her and miss her everyday. I will send another letter as soon as I have a chance, as you probably guess, things are quite busy here.

Signed with a loving heart,

Lieutenant Roger Shaw

Flipping the letter over, I used my cotton apron to dry my teary eyes. I knew I had to be strong, to get through these hard times. Slowly, I pushed my chair backwards, stood up, blew out the candle, and left the dimly lit room. Once I was upstairs, I went into Matilda's room. She was sitting on her bed, playing with her teddy bear.

"Tildy?" I gently asked her. She looked up, and I went over and lowered myself down on her bed next to her. "Another letter came from papa today."

"Really?" She asked, her small voice barely reaching her ears.

"Yes, my love. He said all is well, and he is getting ready to fight again at Gettysburg."

Engages and orients the reader by establishing a context and introduces a narrator and characters in the form of a letter: the narrator's husband is a Union soldier in the Civil War. The narrator's concern about her husband becomes the focus of the narrative.

Event sequence unfolds naturally and logically

Uses narrative technique of dialogue to develop events: the dialogue develops the narrator's character as a loving wife and mother, as well as the husband's reason for fighting.

“Why does papa have to fight? Why can’t he stay home like me and you?”

“Darling, he is fighting to help save our country, and you should be downright proud that you’re brave papa is out there.” I hugged her, and she set her teddy bear down on the floor next to her bed. She lay down, and I kissed her goodnight. No more words were needed to be said. I left her room, and quietly closed the door behind me.

Effective **pacing** slows action to focus on narrator’s experience, including reflection

During the next three weeks, no more letters were received. I understood Roger said he may not have enough time to write again before Gettysburg, but yet it still worried me. So badly I wanted him to come home, to be okay. I hugged the precious letter that was last received to my chest, wondering what had happened. My eyes started to water again, and I had a dropping feeling in my chest. Fear crept over me, and I allowed the tears to easily roll down my cheeks. Sitting down on my desk, I put my head in my hands and sobbed. A pang of devastation was in my heart. I had a strong, sad suspicion that Roger was dead.

Uses transitional clauses to convey sequence and control **pacing**, keeping the focus on narrator’s experience

Uses precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey events and develop characters; the writer uses reflection to keep focus on narrator’s experience.

The next morning, Tildy came into my room before dawn.

“Mama, mama, wake up mama. Look what came.” I opened my eyes, and saw my child, still in her white cotton nightgown, with a grin on her face. I wasn’t sure what she was hoping to show me. Drearly, I sat up in bed. My eye caught a piece of parchment that Tildy was grasping.

Uses narrative technique of dialogue to develop events: the dialogue here moves the event sequence/plot forward.

“A letter came this morning. Here.” She was grinning. Smiling big. Greedy to know what this letter was about, I snatched the small paper out of her hands. Opening the paper, [a] small picture fell [out]. I picked it up, and studied it. On the photo, with trees and fields behind him, was a picture of Roger. Even though the picture wasn’t in color, I could clearly picture his dark blue shirt and pants, his grass green eyes, and his almond colored hair. Looking even closer, I could tell that he only had part of his leg. It ended just above his knee. I set the picture aside, and went on reading the letter aloud.

Precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language control **pacing** to slow down events: the writer also uses reflection to keep the focus on the narrator’s experience.

My dearest Elizabeth,

I know I have caused you and my darling Tildy a lot of pain. I haven't been able to write in the past weeks, and here is why. I got transferred from being a Lieutenant to a spy and couldn't write, because if a letter I wrote fell into the wrong hands, you know what could've happened. Gettysburg is over. Another one of the beloved Union's victories. I definitely prefer spying, though the danger level is high. I told you I would come back some day. My left leg was blown clean off by a shell, so I only have half of my leg, and as a result of this injury, I will return home.

Uses another letter from husband to manage event sequence, keeping focus on the narrator's experience

At this point in the letter, I stopped reading and cried out, "Home! Home, sweet home. Roger is returning home!" I burst into tears. Tildy followed close in my steps, and the next moment she too was tearfully sobbing. We hugged each other, long and hard. When our cries of sheer happiness subsided, I continued reading the rest of the letter, my eyes watery.

Uses transitional **clause** to **convey sequence** and control **pacing**, keeping focus on the narrator's experience

Come to the station at 2:00 on Saturday, and I will be there waiting.

I cannot wait to see you two, my most prized possessions. War is a terrible thing and it changed me in many ways. The only way it didn't change me is the desire to see you two. I have missed you terribly, and can only hope that the grief this has caused you and me will be worth something, the freedom of our fellow black Americans.

Provides a **conclusion which follows from** and then reflects on **the events** and focus **of the narrative**, the return of the narrator's husband: the narrative moves beyond proficiency to reflect on the meaning of the Civil War itself.

Love to you two straight from my heart,

Papa

Final Thoughts
(Gr 6 Narrative: Exceeds)

This sixth grade narrative exceeds proficiency in several ways. It shows a deep understanding of the topic (*impact of a specific aspect of the Civil War*), focusing on the family of a Union soldier who is away fighting. Written from the perspective of a young wife, the piece is focused around the tension of worry about the husband. The narrative begins by introducing the narrator and establishing a situation (*father away fighting for the Union in the war*). While the narrative spans more than a brief moment in time, taking place over several weeks, the writer controls the pacing effectively by using letters from the father to manage the time sequence. The writer uses precise descriptive language and some dialogue to develop the characters and events. Using the letters as a structural device, events unfold naturally and logically. A variety of transitional words, phrases and clauses (*greedy to know what the letter was about, at this point in the letter*) help to smoothly manage the sequence and to signal shifts in the time frame. The conclusion follows naturally from earlier events.

Note: the writer reflects throughout this narrative (*a pang of devastation was in my heart; will be worth something, the freedom of our fellow black Americans*) which is above the standard for the grade level.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 6 Narrative: Exceeds)

Control of Conventions: Although there are some errors, the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.