

we can write

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

using small moments



IN *THIS* UNIT...

I created this unit because I needed some major guidance & structure on how to teach writing personal narratives so that it was accessible to my young learners. The stories come out great in the end and the parents love seeing how their child's writing developed throughout the whole process!

You will find teacher tips, lesson plans, anchor charts, and graphic organizers for each of the following:

- Introducing a small moment
- Draw your story out
- Stretch your story out
- Adding more to your story
- Revising/Editing your story
- Publishing your story

After I meet with each student and help them decide on a good small topic to write about, we go through each step:

- Circle map: brainstorm as many details as they can about their small moment.
- Draw it out: draw a detailed picture of the 3 main events surrounding their small moment (the small moment is usually the middle picture).
- Stretch it out: take each draw-it-out picture and write about each picture. Students s t r e t c h out each picture stating what happened in each one.
- Author Study: we use Jonathan London's *Froggy* books to help us add fun & excitement to our stories to keep our reader's entertained.
- Revise/Edit: Revise, edit and peer edit stories.
- Publish: publishing their stories!

To start writing our personal narratives,
I first teach my students what a small moment is. We begin with
that and then stretch it out.

A small moment is one small, isolated instance in your life.
For example a small moment would be petting a horse at the zoo...
not the whole trip to the zoo.

I have the students start off by creating their own small moment
maps to brainstorm different ideas. I walk around the class during
this time to check in with students and help them generate ideas. It
really helps me see which students can isolate a small moment on
their own.

Here are some examples for reference when filling out the Small
Moments Map:

Where can I find small moments?!

School:	Family:	Holiday:	Emotion:
Field trips Meeting friends Getting a good/bad grade Special days (100 th day, etc.)	Births of siblings Family events and vacations	Christmas, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and other big holidays Birthdays	Times I felt: Sad Happy Excited Nervous



TEACHER tips:

The daily lesson plans in this unit are just guidelines and examples of what it would look like in my 1st grade classroom. There are some days where the lesson needs to be stretched into the next day to help students and allow for more guidance. Other days students will get it quickly and you can begin the next steps!

I structured each lesson in the simple “I do, We do, You do” format so you are able to use this however you see fit in your classroom!

I do:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Includes teacher modeling and “think alouds” with skill of the day
We do:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students practice the skill with a partner or with guidance from the teacher
You do:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students independently put that skill to use in their own writing

- While working on a unit, we keep all our work in folders until we publish our books and move onto another unit.
- Our “stretch it out” pages are our sloppy copies and I do *not* focus on neat handwriting, beautiful coloring, etc. during this time. These pages allow us to just WRITE and erase and edit and REWRITE.
- During the publishing phase, we take everything we did and make it beautiful!



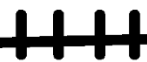


TEACHER tips:

- Most of the time at the beginning of the unit is spent writing and getting our ideas down on the paper.
- During the author study portion, I have students spend more time listening to and observing the craft of Jonathan London and learning a few different techniques to add to their own papers.
- During that time, the time allotment will be switched for a few days. I like to have my students spend most of the writer's workshop block actually writing, but instead they may only add an ellipses to one part of their story.
- While it may not take much time, I want to make sure they understand that technique and can apply it properly to their writing!

IM DONE, NOW WHAT?!

Students will inevitably finish at all different times! That is just the way it goes. When a student has finished publishing their book and others still have a day or two left, they do one of two things in my classroom. They can 1.) choose a writing prompt to complete that is generally housed in the writing center. All my writing prompts are found [HERE](#) or 2.) They can go back and choose another small moment to publish! They will look at the small moments map and follow the steps to begin publishing another story! As long as they are writing during my Writer's Workshop block, I am a happy teacher 😊



What is a small moment?

I do:

- Let students know they will be starting to write personal narratives and define a personal narrative.
- Personal narrative: a true story about something that has happened to you.
- I explain to my students that when I write a personal narrative I really want to write about a *small* moment. You can use the watermelon (big moment)/seed (small moment) analogy if you'd like.
- I use an example of going to the zoo. If I wanted to write all about the day I went to the zoo, my story would be really long! Instead, I can write about a zoomed in portion of that day... I can write about how I pet a horse at the zoo. I can talk about how that made me feel, what the horse looked like, and lots of other details!

We do:

- I display the small moments map under the projector and we brainstorm a few ideas to go in each category.
- As each idea is brought up, we make sure that it is a "zoomed in", small moment and not a big, watermelon moment.

You do:

- Students each get their own small moments map to complete with their own, personal experiences.
- As students complete them, walk around and help students as needed.

Pick Your Moment & Brainstorm!

I do:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind students that we are writing personal narratives and show the “let’s write small moments” anchor chart.• Go through the bullet points on the chart and explain that is what we will be focusing on while we write our stories.• I remind students that the small moment I chose to write about is petting a horse at the zoo.• I will show students how I complete the circle map writing “pet horse” in the middle as my small moment and then I will brainstorm details: At the Stone Zoo, I was with my mom and sisters, it was a big, brown horse with soft hair, I was nervous at first, it was in the petting zoo area, etc.
We do:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students take out their small moments map and choose ONE of the moments to write about.• Students will turn and talk to a partner about their small moment experience. This will get their mind working to remember details about their small moment.
You do:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will receive and complete the circle map, brainstorming details about their small moment.

Draw it Out!

I do:

- Explain to students that today they will draw their story in 3 parts, a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Display the Draw it Out organizer under the projector and think aloud before you begin drawing: "hmmm, well I know my small moment is supposed to be zoomed in and I am really trying to think of what happened *right before* and *right after* I pet the horse."
- Model that the middle drawing will be when I was actually petting the horse and explain that for this portion I am just sketching me and the horse.
- Right before I was able to pet the horse, we walked into the petting zoo area and the horse trainer brought out Dolly (the name of the horse). I show students how I will sketch that into the first box.

We do:

- While students are still sitting on the mat have them identify exactly what they will draw in the middle box and share it with a partner.
- Talk them through figuring out what happened *right before* and *right after* their middle event. I like to use a couple students' small moments as examples for the rest of the class and we help them together.

You do:

- Students will receive their own draw it out graphic organizer and sketch (pencil only) their beginning, middle, and ending of their small moment.



Draw it Out - More Details, Please!

I do:

- Remind students that yesterday they did the hard work of coming up with and sketching their beginning, middle and ending of their small moments.
- Take out the teacher example and explain to students that today we will think of more details to add to our B, M, and E.
- I explain that yesterday I was just sketching so I could get my ideas down on paper. But today I want to think back to my small moment and add as much detail as I can.
- Use the middle picture to show students how to add details: I like to add labels to label myself, Dolly, the trainer. I note that Dolly was a brown horse so I color her in brown. I explain what the petting area looked like and add in details. I begin to draw other people that were there petting different animals, etc.

We do:

- While students are still sitting on the mat (or wherever they were for the modeling portion) have them help you add more details to your first box.
- Have students pull out their draw it out sheet from yesterday and tell a partner what details they will add to their middle box.

You do:

- Students will independently add labels, color, and lots more detail to all three of their boxes on the Draw-it-Out page.

Stretch it Out

I do:

- Explain to students that we spent two full days drawing out our small moment and remembering lots of details around our small moment and today we will begin putting words to our stories.
- I show students the stretch it out page with the #1 at the top and that this page correlates with that first box that we drew in Draw-it-Out.
- I model looking at my Draw-it-Out page and telling my sentences aloud to the class before I write them down.
- "Okay, now I remember it was back in July when I went to Stone Zoo with my mom and sisters. I remember walking over to the petting area and the horse trainer came out with the big, brown horse named Dolly. I was so excited to pet her. She looked nice!"
- Model writing the sentences on your paper and explain that when writing a personal narrative, we are simply telling our story about what happened to us.

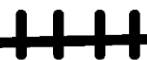
We do:

- Have students pull out their Draw-it-Out sheet from yesterday and explain to their partner how the beginning of their story will go.

You do:

- Students will independently write down as much as they can about the beginning of their story. Remind students that the pages marked I are only telling about the first Draw-it-Out box. Once they are finished with the writing, they can sketch a picture for their new page to match the words they wrote. (pencil only - these pages are our "sloppy copies!")

*We generally spend a day per Draw it Out page.



Transition Words

I do:

- Let students know that they have done a great job writing their sloppy copies and the basics of their story are complete! Now we are going to see how other authors make their stories a bit more interesting and appealing to their readers.
- Hold up a few Froggy books and tell students that the author we will be focusing on over the next few days is Jonathan London.
- Show students the transition words anchor chart and explain that one thing Jonathan London does in his stories is use transition words to let us know the order of the story.
- Read the book aloud and make note every time a transition word is used.

We do:

- Have students help you add at least one transition word to your teacher writing example.
- Give students the transition sheet to complete.

You do:

- Students will independently add some transition words to their stretch it out pages. I show students how to do this with a ^ mark and re-emphasize that these are our sloppy copies, it is okay for us to have them look a little messy!



Ellipses

I do:

- Explain that today we will be looking at how Jonathan London uses ellipses in his stories.
- Show students the ellipses anchor chart and explain that there are generally two reasons people use ellipses and we will have to read and see how Jonathan London uses them in his *Froggy* books.
- Choose a different *Froggy* book to read aloud and notice each time Jonathan London uses ellipses.

We do:

- Have students help you add at least one ellipses to your teacher writing example.
- Give students the ellipses sheet to complete.

You do:

- Students will independently find at least one place in their story to add an ellipses. If it doesn't work in their current sentences, they can add a new sentence with an ellipses. I usually have students add in the ellipses with a red marker or colored pencil so we can quickly identify them.

Sound Effects

I do:

- Explain that today we will be looking at how Jonathan London uses sound effects to his stories to add some excitement!
- Show students the sound effects anchor chart to show them examples of different sound effects and where you might hear them.
- Choose a different *Froggy* book to read aloud and notice each time Jonathan London uses sound effects and how it adds excitement to the story.

We do:

- Have students help you add at least one sound effect to your teacher writing example.
- Give students the sound effects sheet to complete.

You do:

- Students will independently find at least one place in their story to add a sound effect. If it doesn't work in their current sentences, they can add a new sentence with a sound effect. I usually have students add this noise in with a colored pencil so we can easily see it and it "jumps" off the page.

All CAPS

I do:

- Explain that today we will be looking at how Jonathan London uses all CAPS in his stories.
- Show students the All CAPS anchor chart and explain that when we see these words in our books they are really emphasized and the author wants us to focus on this word for some reason. Other times, authors may use all caps to show that a character is being really loud or yelling.
- Choose a different *Froggy* book to read aloud and notice each time Jonathan London uses all CAPS.

We do:

- Have students help you add at least one all CAPS word to your teacher writing example.
- Give students the all CAPS sheet to complete.

You do:

- Students will independently find at least one place in their story to add an all CAPS word.

Let's Revise!

<p>I do:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain to students that we are almost done with our personal narratives, but before we can send our books off to be published, we need to revise them! • Show students that we will go through our writing today with a pencil in hand and double check that we have added everything we need to our personal narratives. • Show students the "My Revision Checklist" and go through each line with your own paper to show students how to complete this. • I also take this time to explain that sometimes it can be helpful when someone else revises our work as well. Our readers sometimes see things that we might miss! Explain that we will do this by having a friend read their paper to us and we will use the checklist to make sure their story has everything it is supposed to.
<p>We do:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this time, I have students get together and read one another their paper. As they are reading, the other student is using the checklist to check off the items.
<p>You do:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will independently use their own checklist to make sure everything on the list is included in their paper. • If something is missing, students can add it to their paper now.

*General Teacher Note: don't expect this day to super smoothly in terms of *real*/revision. This is a very difficult task - especially the partner revision, but I feel that walking through the steps and introducing it to our first graders is a key step in the writing process!* - sometimes your students will really surprise you!!



Let's Edit!

<p>I do:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I let students know that just like revising, we also need to edit our stories before we can publish them and when we are editing out stories we are making sure that they are easily readable to our readers. • Show students the "My Editing Checklist" and go through each line with your own paper to show students how to complete this. • I let students know that we will be editing our partners papers as well today, just like yesterday. (**Note: I sometimes only complete this step with my higher students or in a small group setting as it usually requires us to read one another's papers, which is a very difficult task for many of our first graders*)
<p>We do:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this time, I have students get together and read one another their paper (or, if possible, they read it themselves). As they are reading the other student is using the checklist to check off the items.
<p>You do:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will independently use their own checklist to make sure everything on the list is included in their paper. • If something is missing, students can add it to their paper now.

*General Teacher Note: don't expect this day to super smoothly in terms of *real* editing. This is a very difficult task - especially the partner editing, but I feel that walking through the steps and introducing it to our first graders is a key step in the writing process!* sometimes your students will really surprise you!!



Time to Publish

I do:

- This is such an exciting day! We get to begin publishing our books!!
- Remind students of all the steps they took to make their own stories: they brainstormed small moments, drew it out, added details, stretched it out, studied Jonathan London's craft, revised and edited our stories! Now we get to publish!
- On the first day I show students the title page and show them different picture books and their cover pages. I explain how usually the entire page is colored in (we color in the whole box) and the title and name is printed. Since we aren't typing our stories - we must use our *neatest* handwriting so our readers can read it easily!
- On the subsequent days I show students how to take the stretch it out pages and copy them over to the publishing pages using our neatest handwriting and our best, most colorful illustrations.

We do:

- During these days, the "we do" portion is generally just a quick turn-and-talk where students can share with a partner what they will be working on today.
- I have also had students look at another classmate's work and give a suggestion about what to work on and a praising statement about what is great about their work!

You do:

- Publish, publish, publish!
- This stage varies in time based on your students. If students are going too quickly, I generally must remind them about going slow, paying attention to detail, and using our neatest handwriting. If students are working too slowly, we may need to have a private talk about not needing everything to be *perfect*! You will know your students best and their needs!



Meet The Author!

I do:

- Now that our books are finished, we just need one last page: The Meet the Author Page!
- I explain to my students what a meet the author page is and read a few different ones from the books we have in our class library.
- I like to point out that this page is generally written in third person and includes some of the following: name, age, where the author lives, the author's family members, what the author does for a living (or what they want to be when they grow up) and some of the author's hobbies. You can choose whatever categories you want to help you students brainstorm!

We do:

- Students will share with a partner the answers to some of the categories above.

You do:

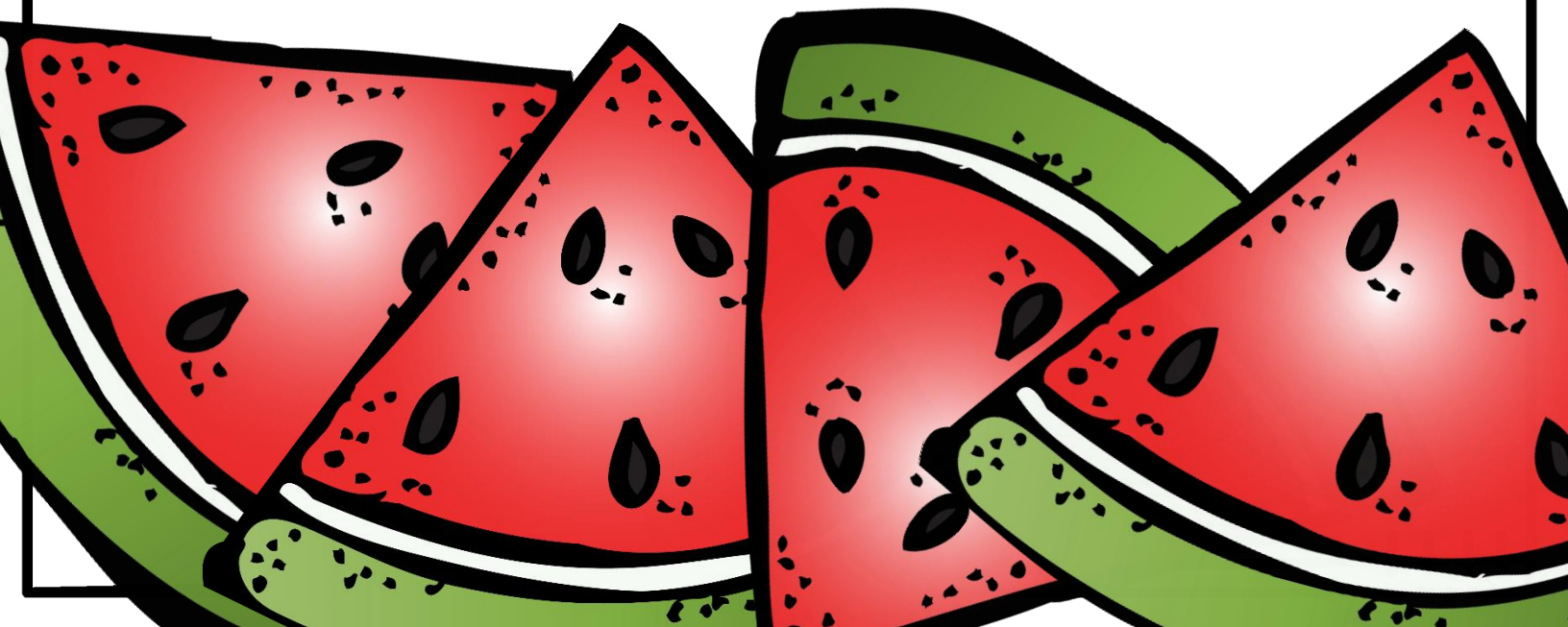
- Students will receive their Meet the Author page and write a few sentences about themselves in third person.
- I usually take a quick picture of each student and paste it inside the box, but students could easily just draw themselves!

let's write

SMALL MOMENTS!

Our stories will:

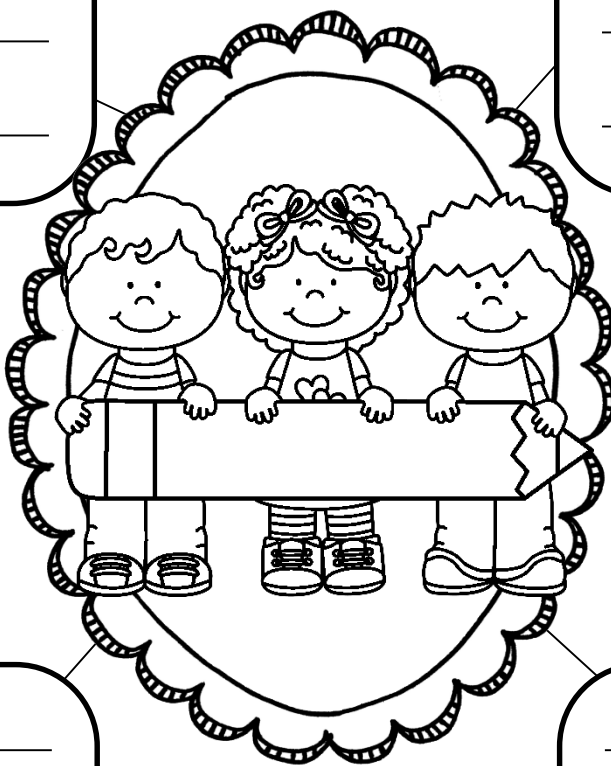
- Tell about a *tiny* moment in time.
- Tell about something that really happened to us.
- Have a beginning, middle, & end.
- Include details and transitions.
- Entertain the audience!



My small moments map!

School moments

Family moments

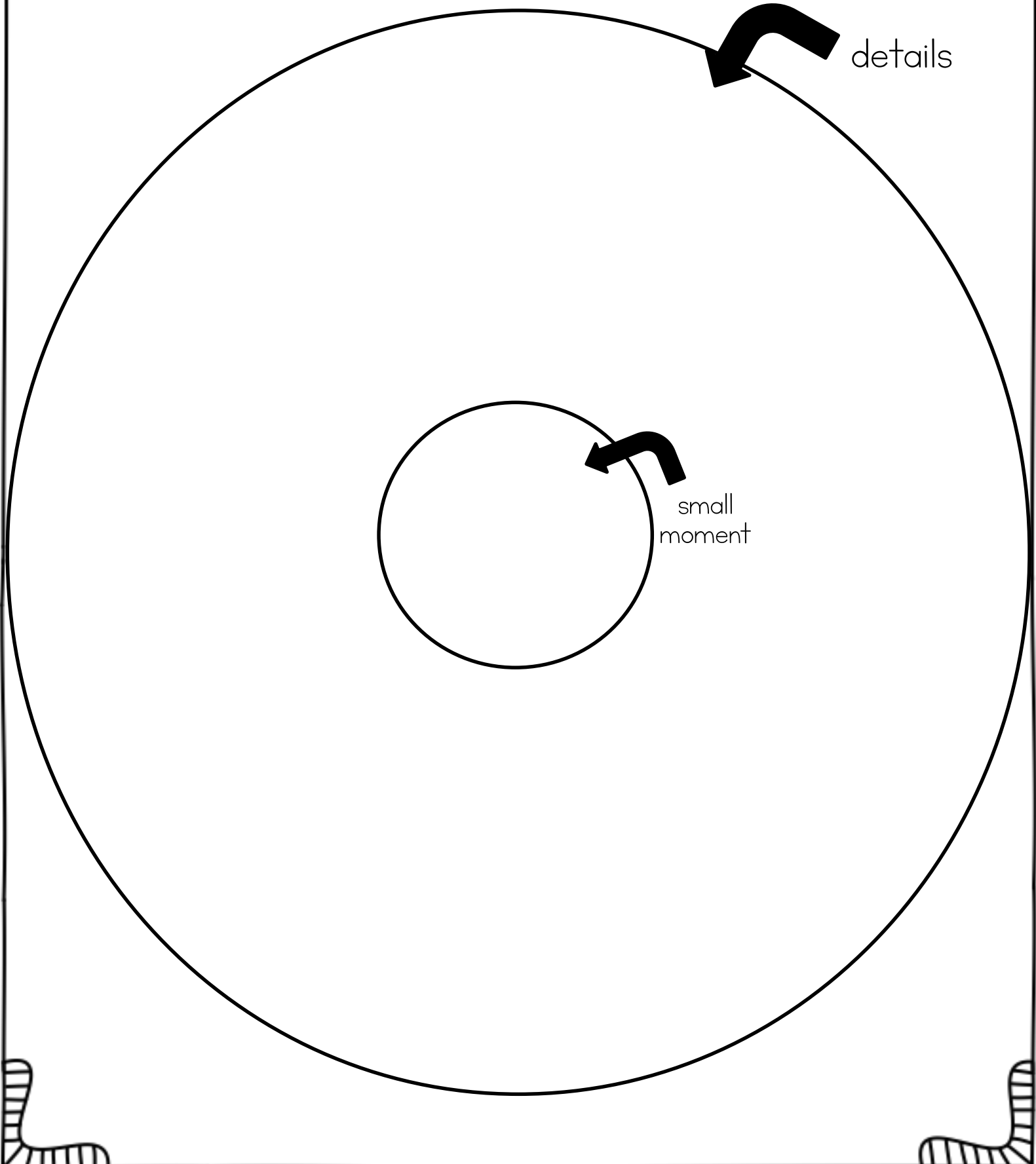


Holiday moments

Emotion moments

Name: _____

My small moment



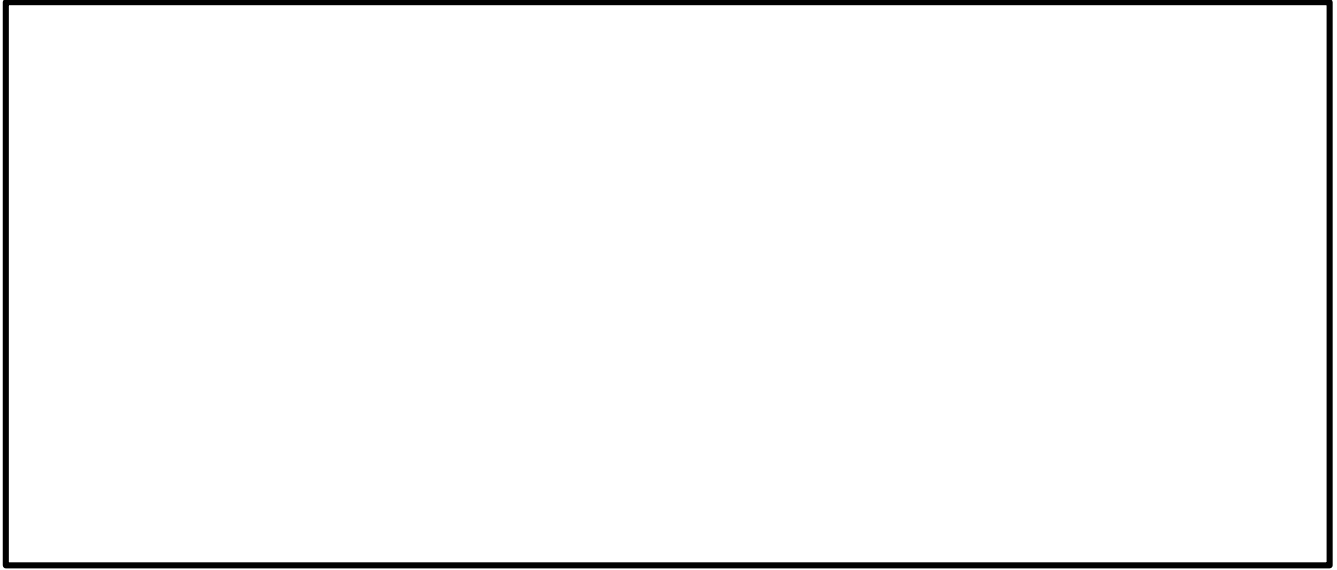
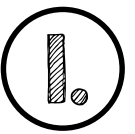
Draw it out

1.

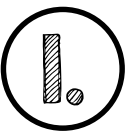
2.

3.

Stretch it out



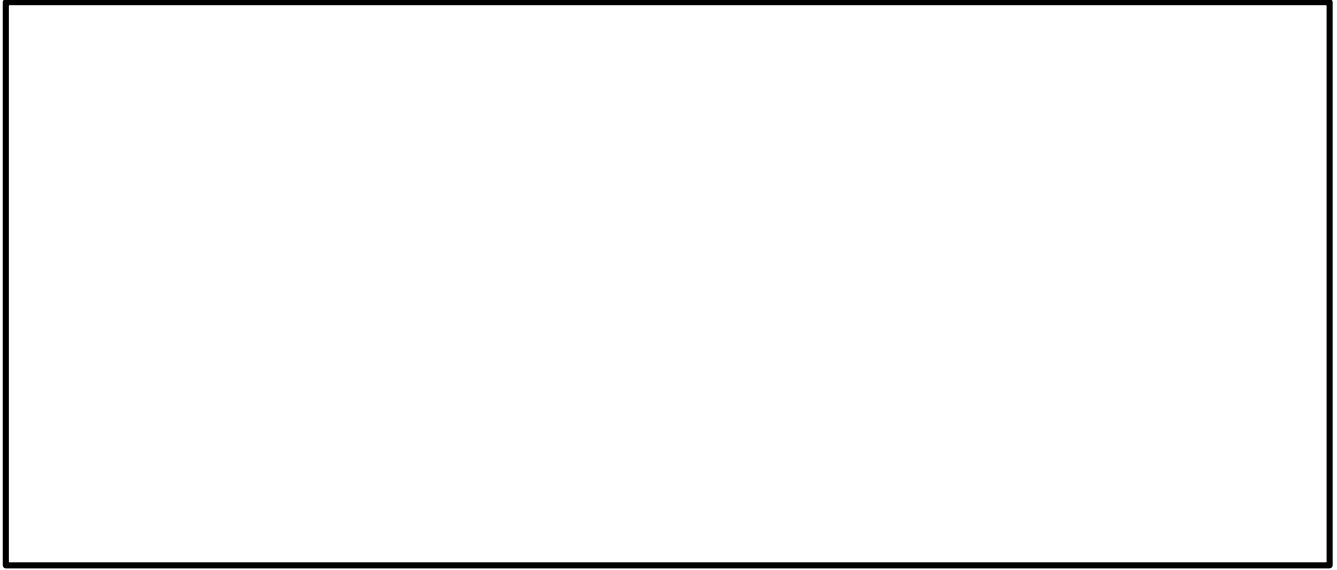
Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for tracing and writing practice.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for letter formation.

Stretch it out

2.



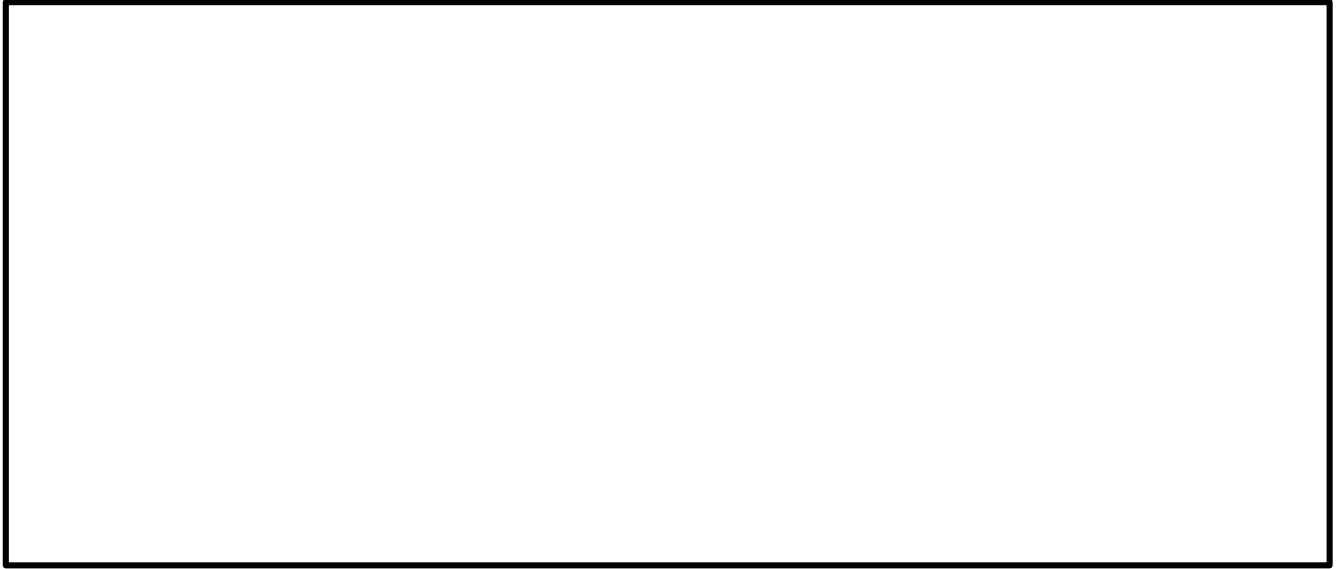
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Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for letter formation.

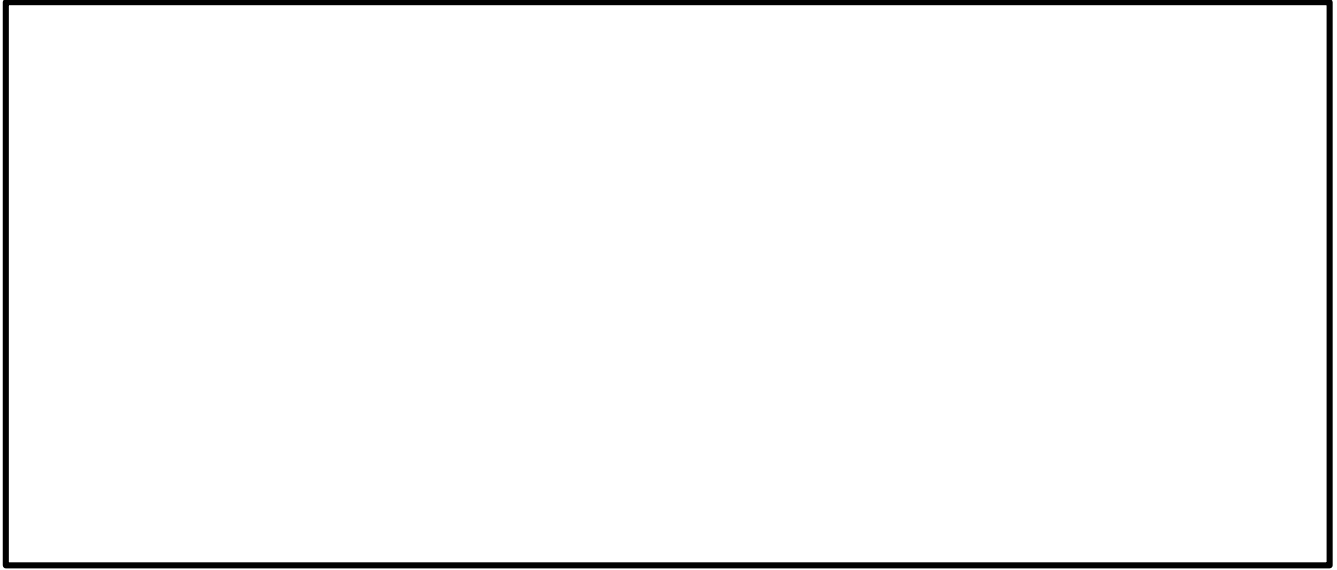
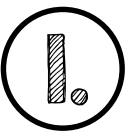
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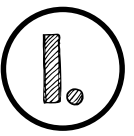
3.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for letter formation.

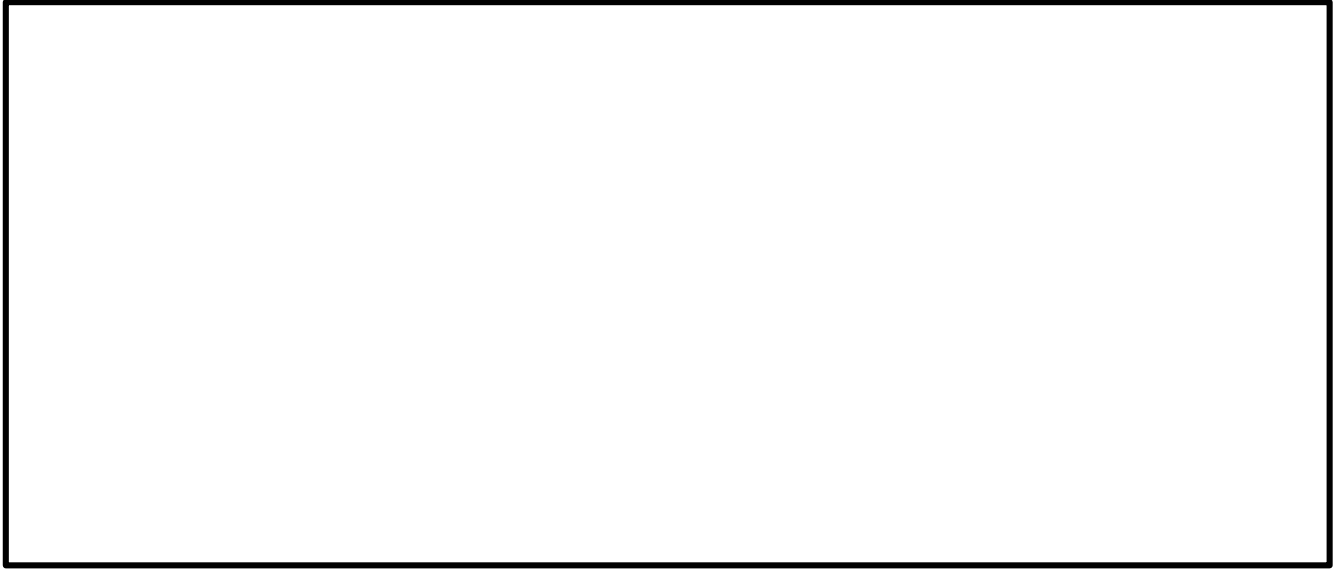
Stretch it out



[illegible]

Stretch it out

2.

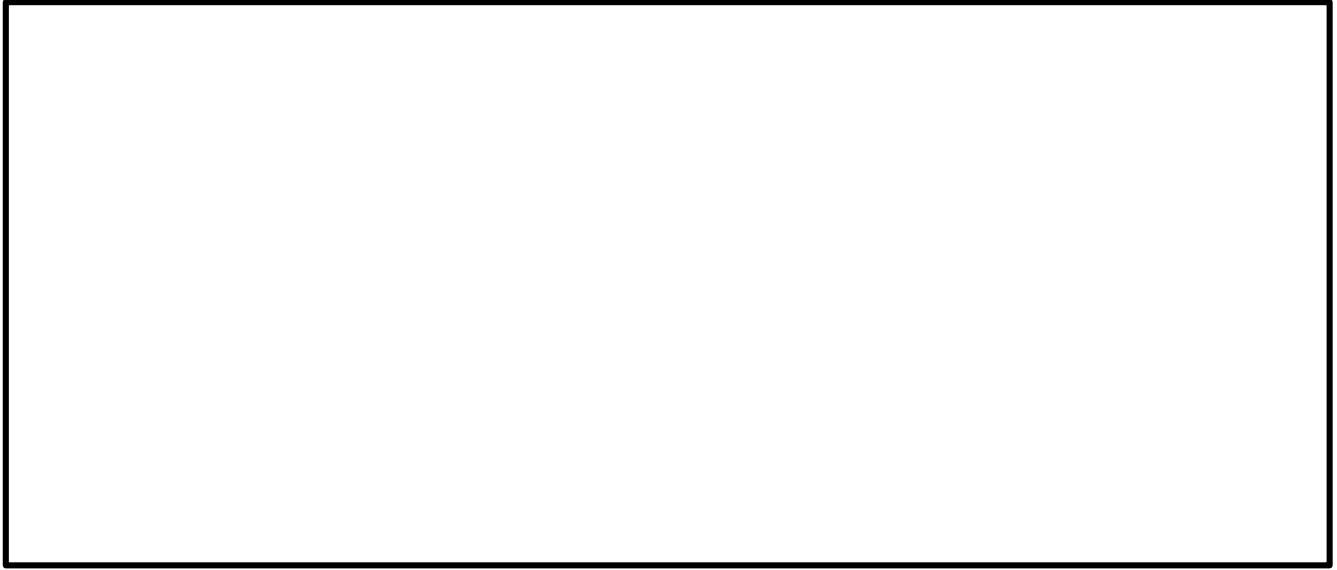




A series of 15 horizontal lines spanning the width of the page, providing a template for writing.

Stretch it out

3.



[illegible]

After we've stretched it out, we read a Froggy book each day to highlight a different writing feature: transition words, ellipses, sound effects, & using all CAPS. After we read and discuss, students go back to their stretch it out pages and revise to add these features to their writing.

Jonathan London's Froggy!



we can use **TRANSITION WORDS**



Writers use transition words to show sequence and organization in their story. These words help bridge the gap between ideas in a story.

first

next

before

then

second

finally

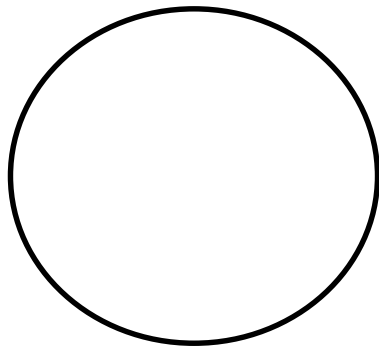
afterwards

third

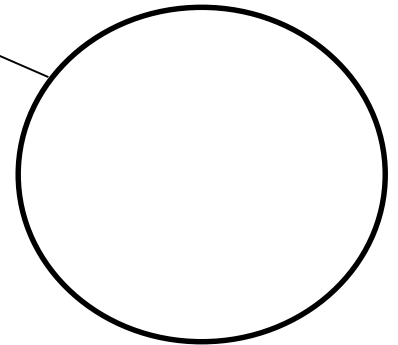
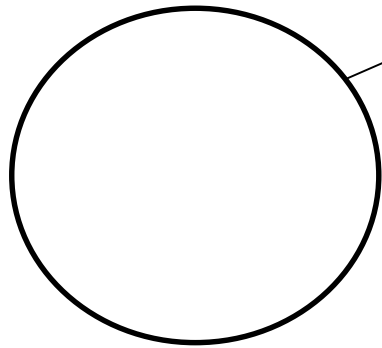
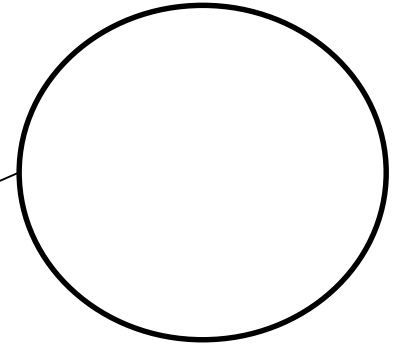
Name _____

Transition words

student sheet

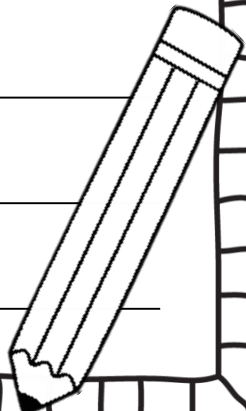


Brainstorm some
transition words
you can add to your
narrative



Practice:

Choose a sentence in your story and practice adding in a transition word. Share with your classmate!



We can use **ELLIPSES**

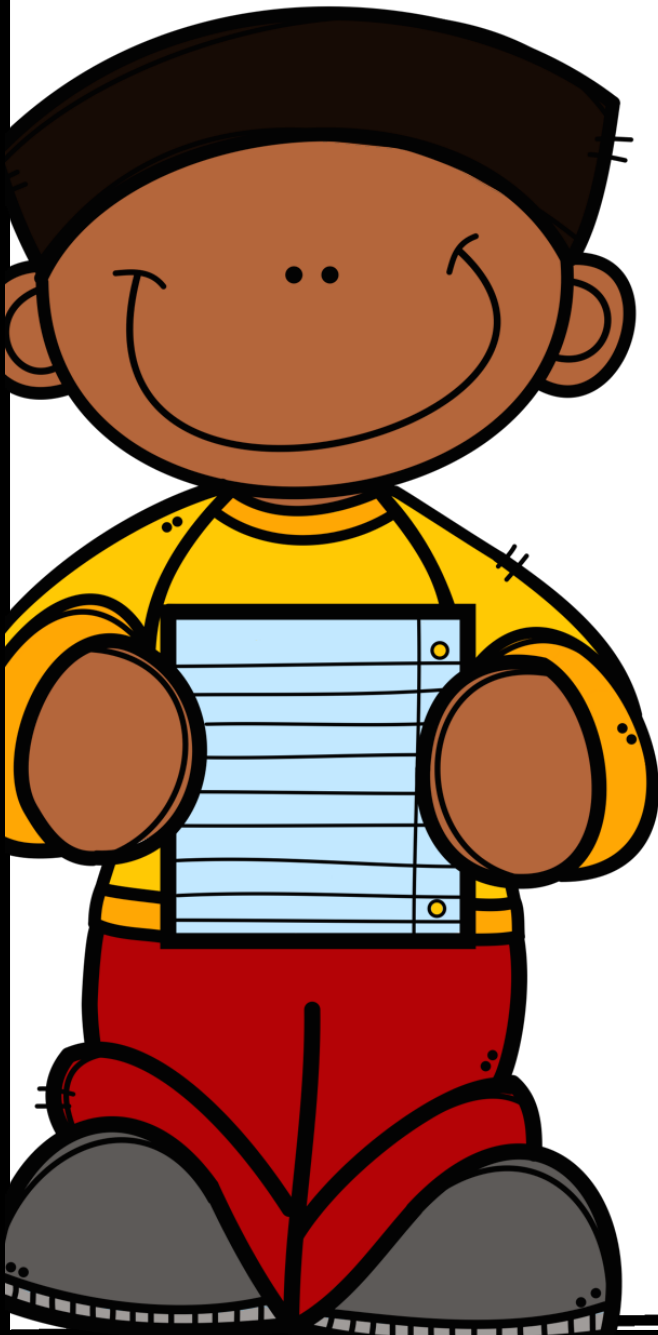


Writers use ellipses to let the reader know more is coming. They add hesitation or suspense in a story.

*Once upon a time...

*The strange sound was getting louder and closer and suddenly...

*We were running through the halls and... BAM! I ran right into the door!

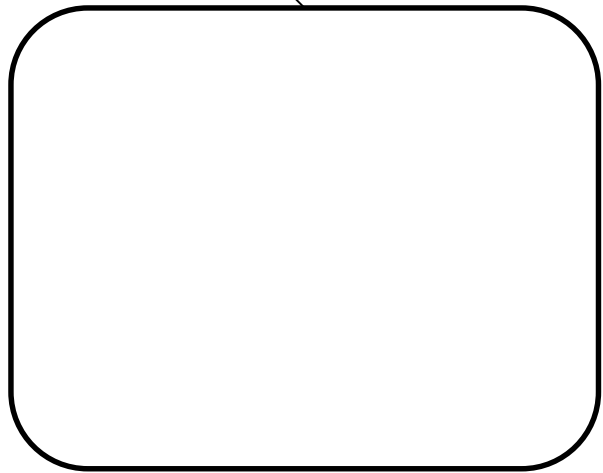
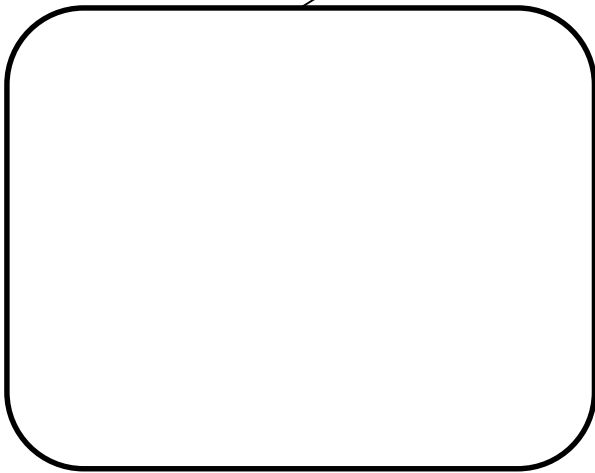


Name _____

Ellipses...

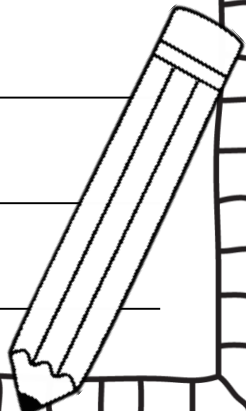
student sheet

When should you
add an ellipsis to
a story?



Practice:

Choose a sentence in your story and practice adding an ellipsis. Share with your classmate!



we can use **SOUND EFFECTS**

Writers use sound effects to add pizzazz & excitement to their story. When placed properly, sound effects allow readers to really *hear* what the author is writing.



boom!

Wham!

Zoink!

buzzzzzz

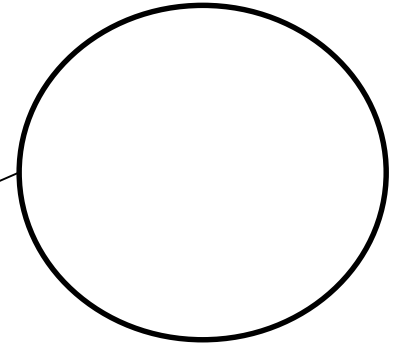
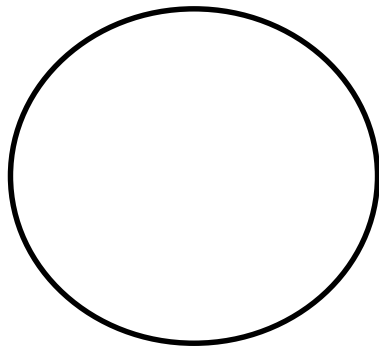
Pow!

Zing!

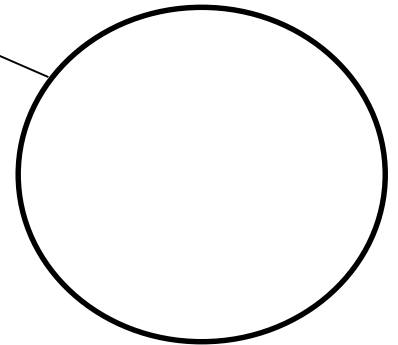
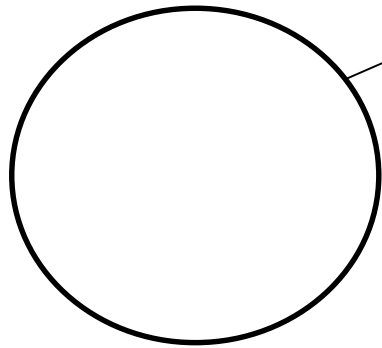
Name _____

Sound Effects

student sheet

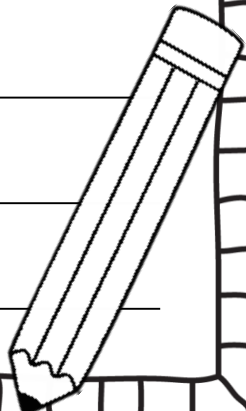


Brainstorm some
sound effects
you can add to
your narrative

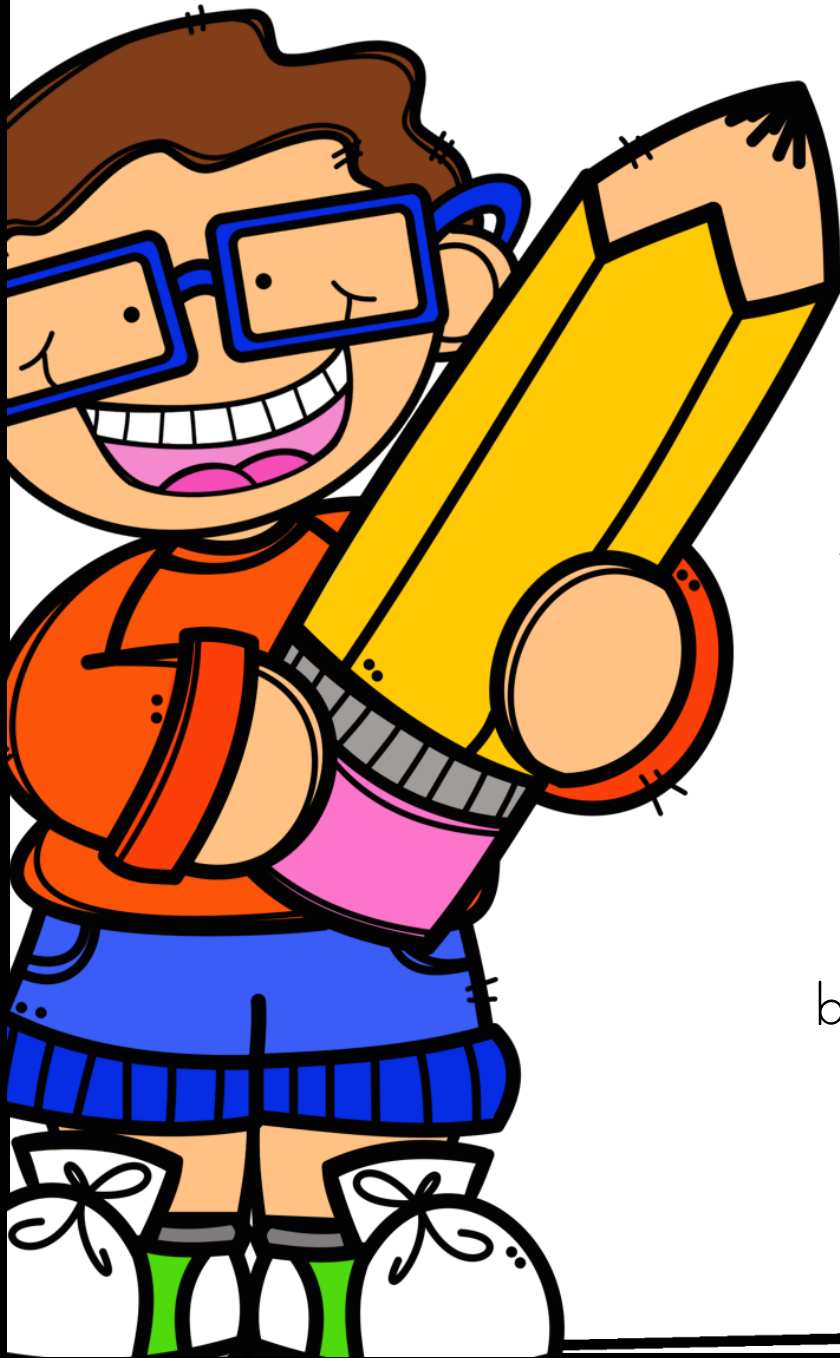


Practice:

Choose a sentence in your story and practice adding a sound effect. Share with your classmate!



we can use **ALL CAPS**



Writers use all capital letters to emphasize certain words or to show that someone is yelling.

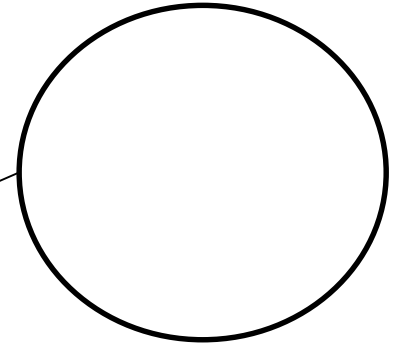
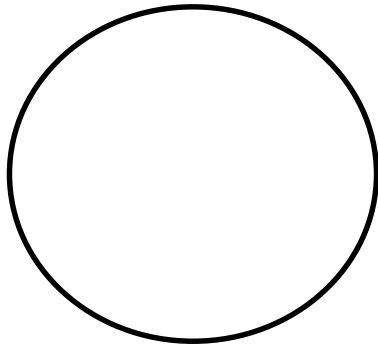
*My brother wouldn't stop bugging me and I finally cracked. "STOP!" I yelled.

*The zoo was really fun, but it was so HOT outside, I was sweating all day.

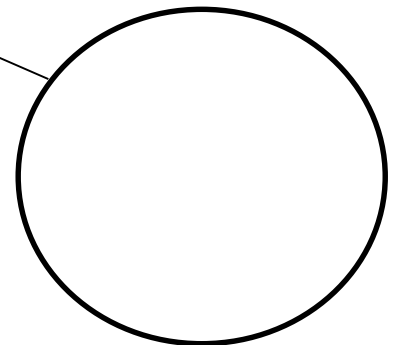
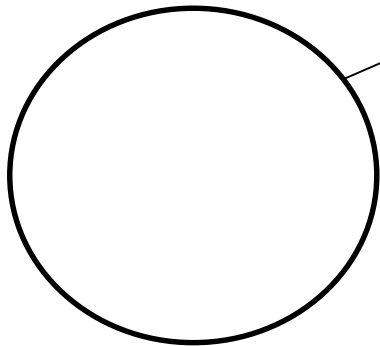
Name _____

All CAPS

student sheet

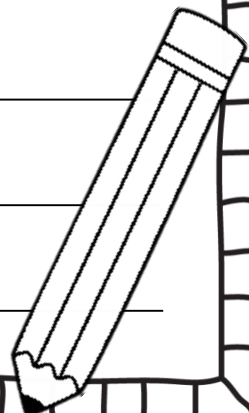


Brainstorm some
all CAPS words
you can add to
your narrative



Practice:

Choose a sentence in your story and practice adding an all CAPS word. Share with your classmate!





My Revision Checklist

Did I...?	Yes	No
Introduce the characters		
Identify the setting		
Use transition words		
Add ellipses		
Add sound effects		
Add words with ALL CAPS		



My Partner's Revision Checklist

Did My Partner...?	Yes	No
Introduce the characters		
Identify the setting		
Use transition words		
Add ellipses		
Add sound effects		
Add words with ALL CAPS		



My Editing Checklist

Did I...?	Yes	No
Start each sentence with a capital letter?		
End each sentence with correct punctuation?		
Use my word wall and dictionary to spell any tricky words?		
Read all my sentences again to make sure they were complete and made sense?		



My Partner's Editing Checklist

Did My Partner...?	Yes	No
Start each sentence with a capital letter?		
End each sentence with correct punctuation?		
Use the word wall and dictionary to spell any tricky words?		
Write complete sentences that make sense?		




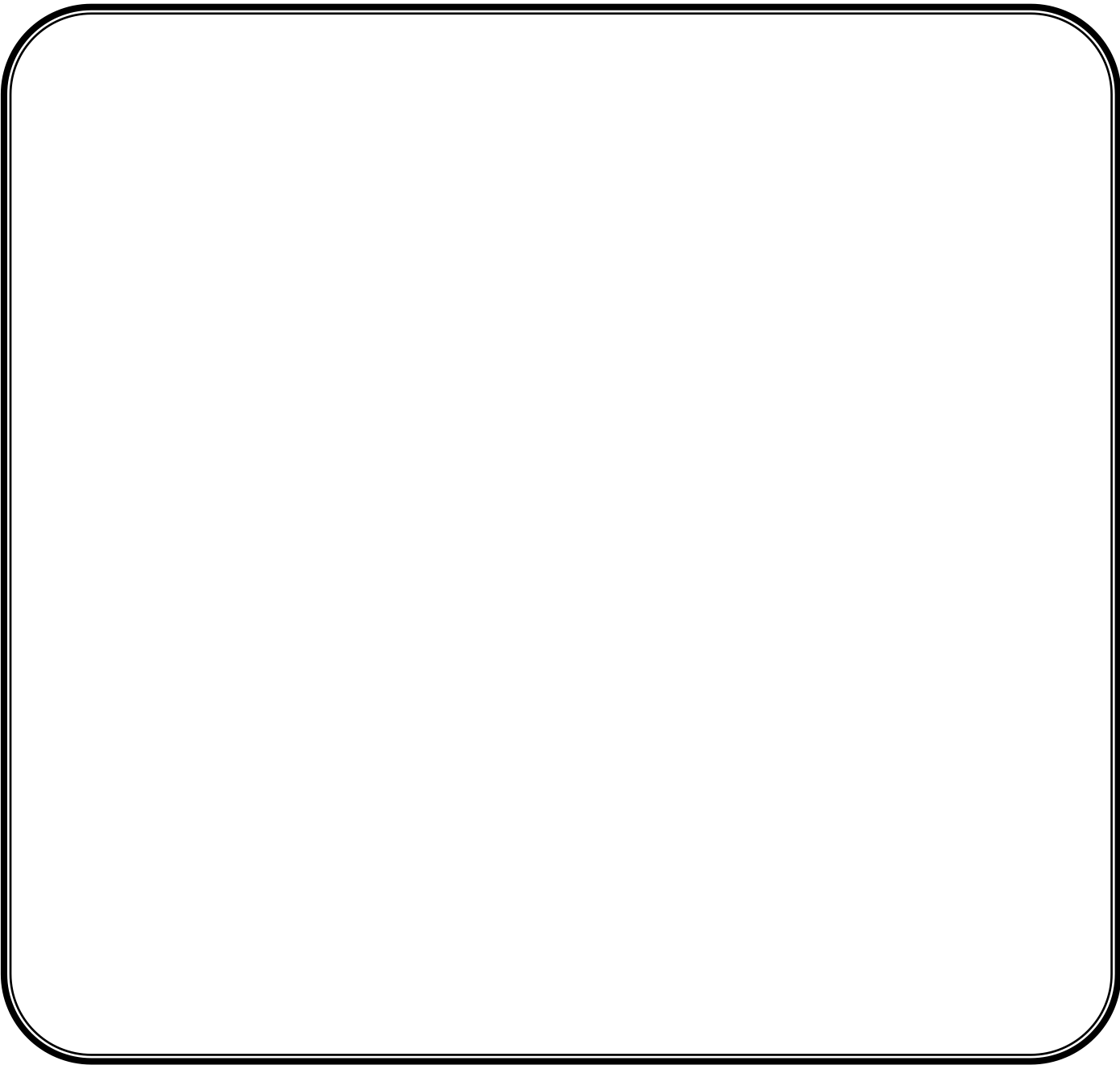
It's time to **PUBLISH!**

The next few pages are for the final copies of the students' narratives!

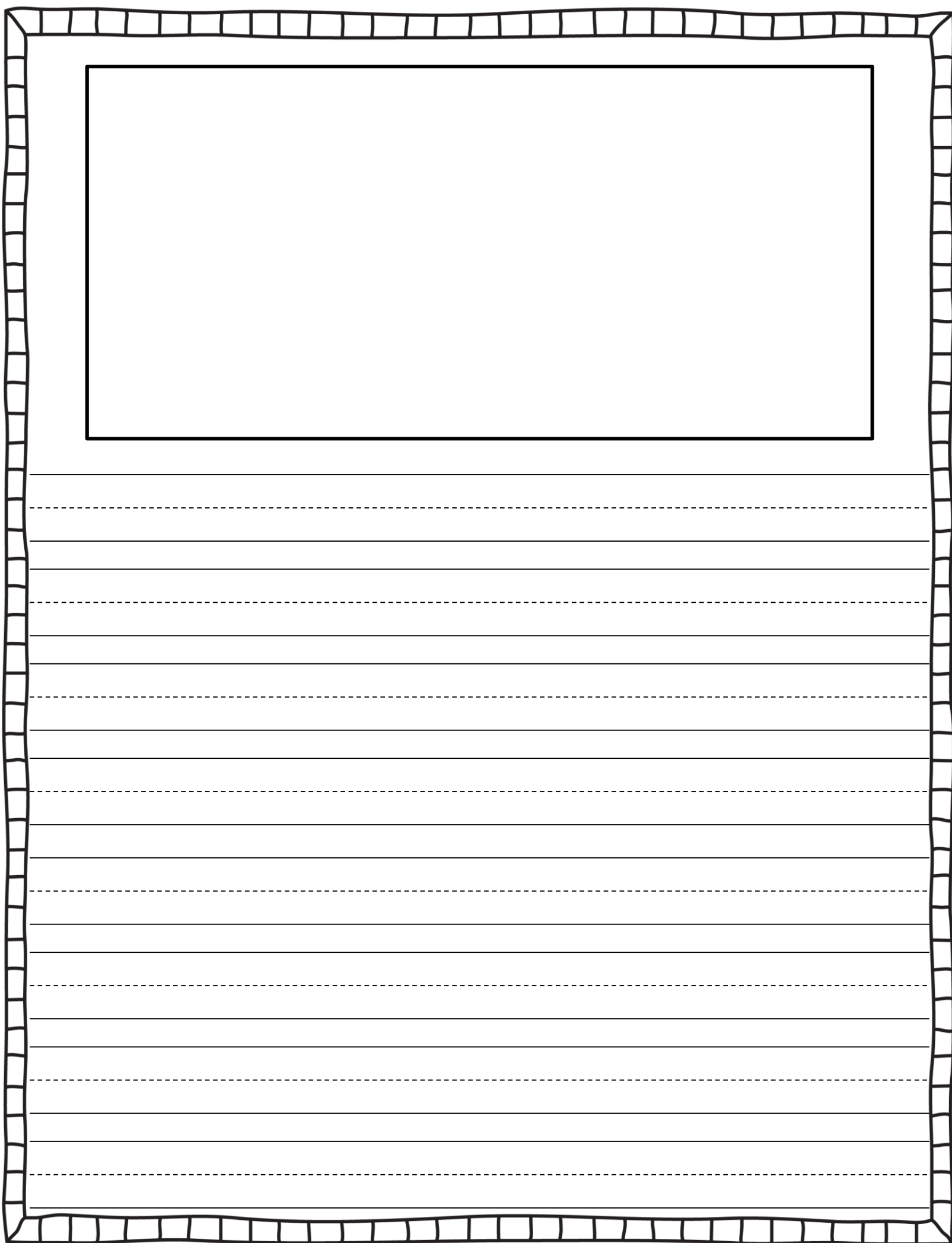
I always glue the cover and meet the author pages onto construction paper and laminate them before I bind the whole book. I also take a photograph for the meet the author page.

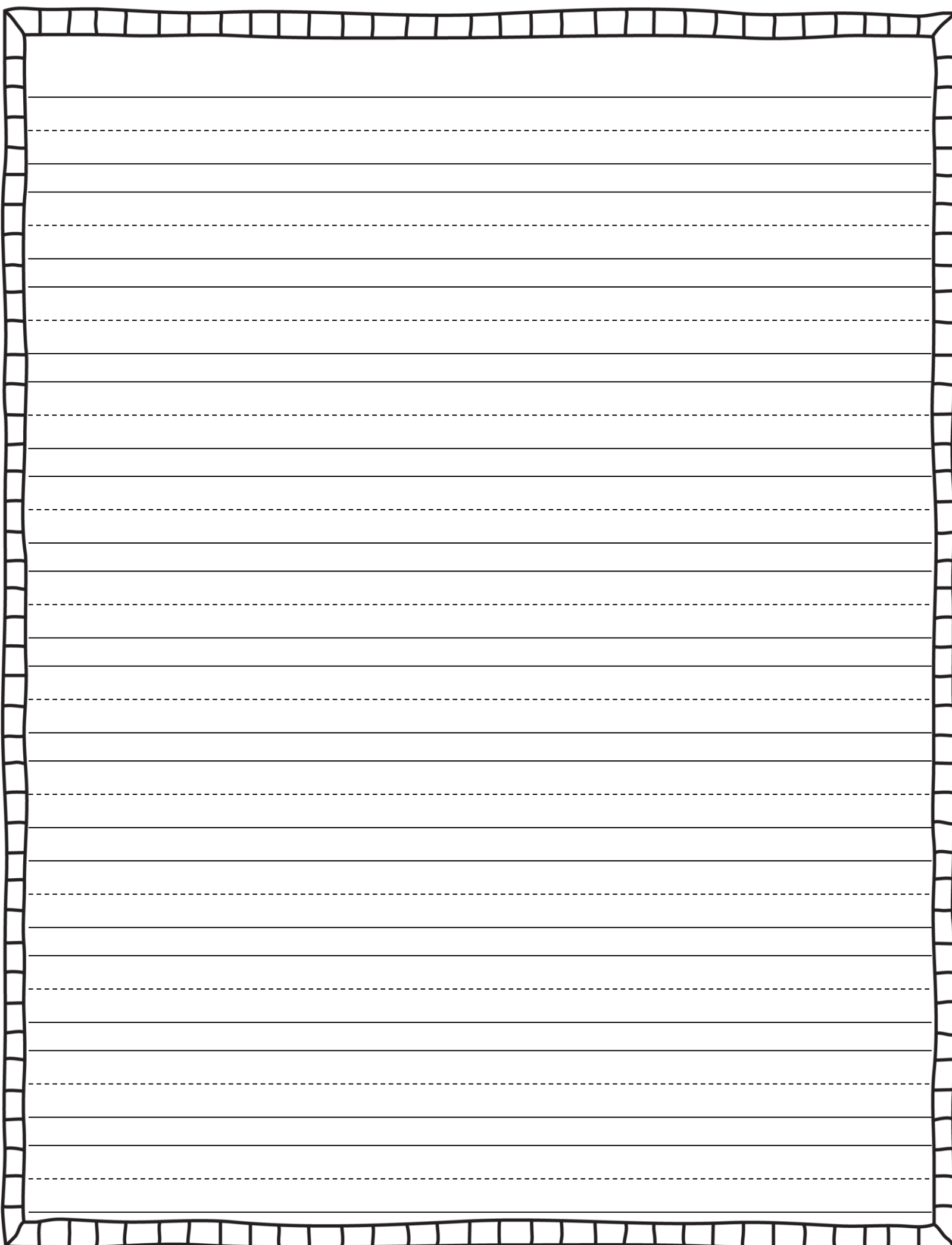
I included my rubric I created to help grade my first graders' paper. Good luck & I hope their stories come out adorable and fun-to-read!!!

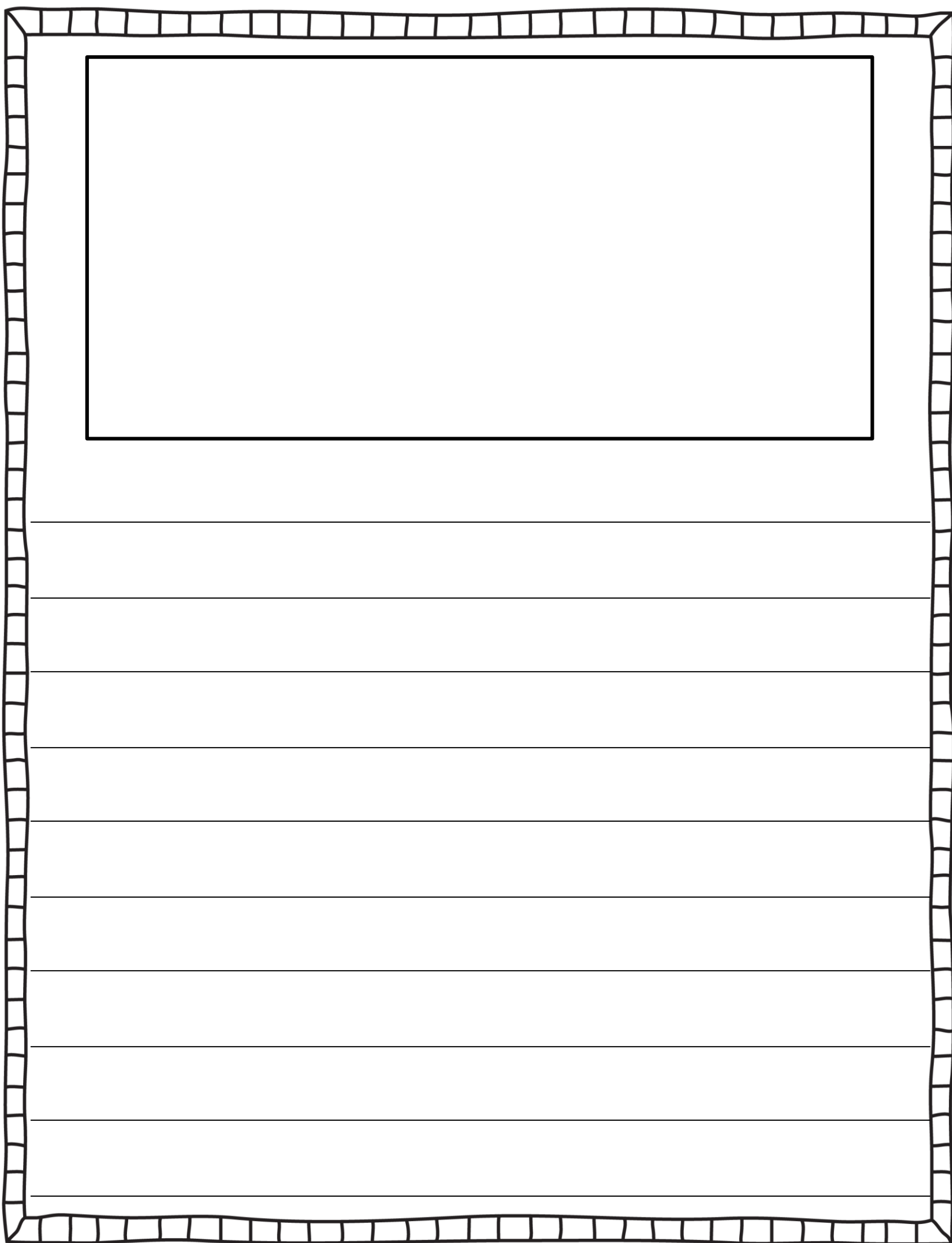


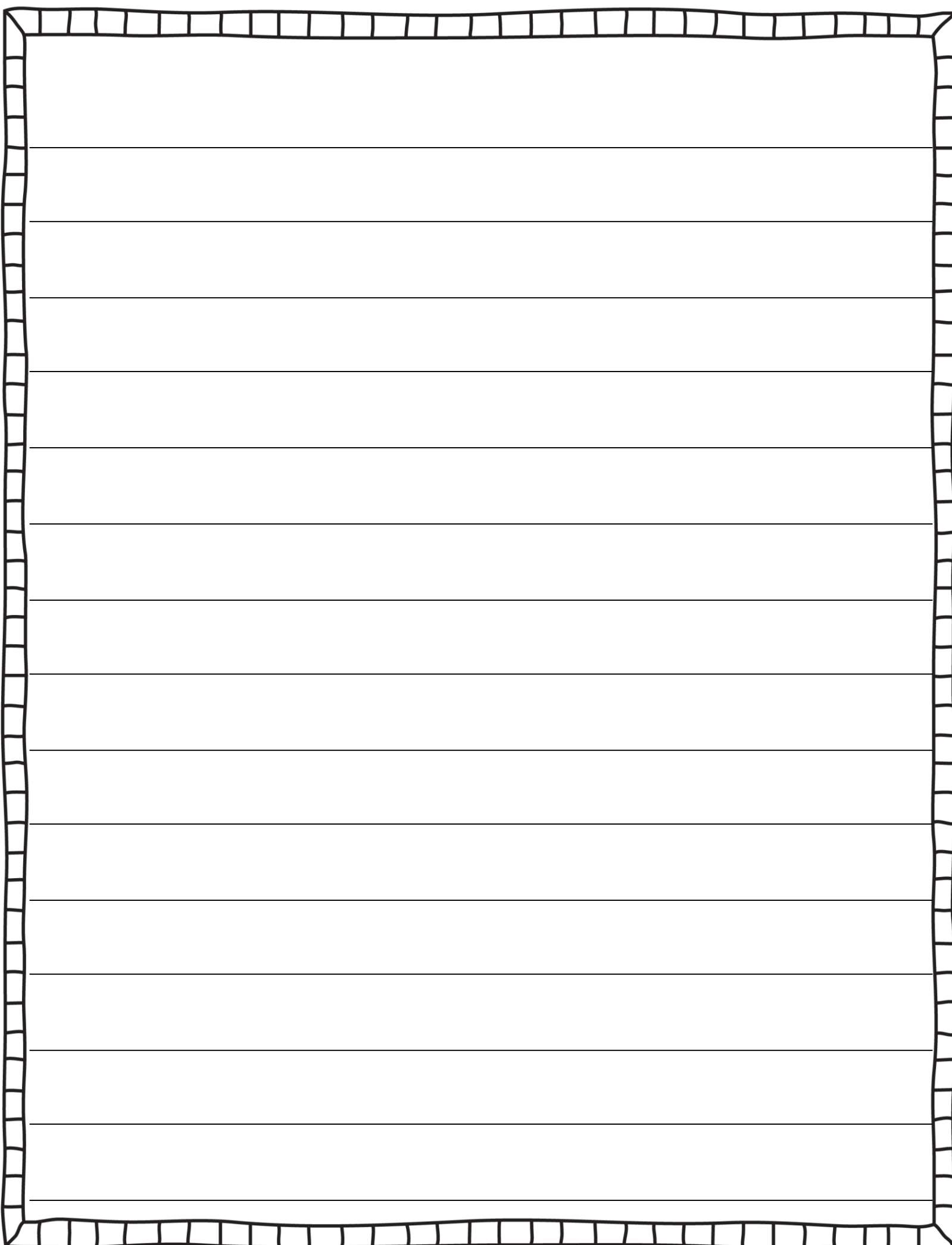


Written & Illustrated by:

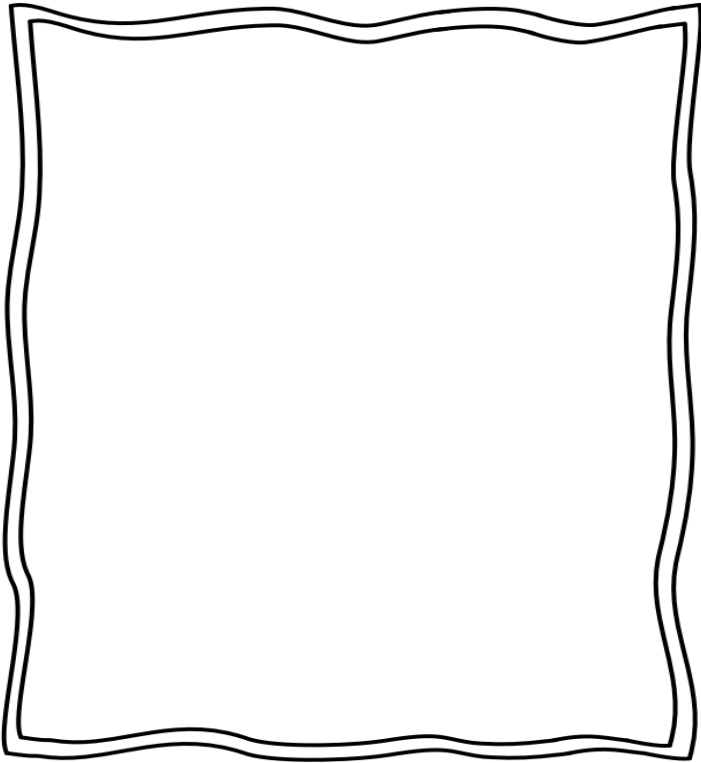


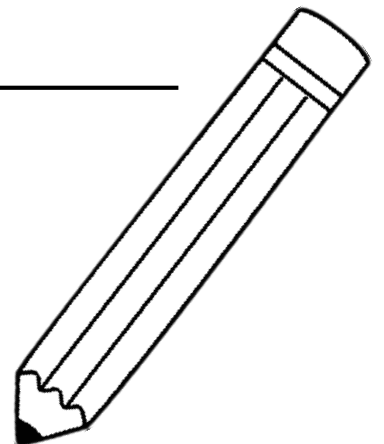




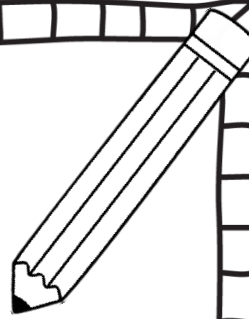


Meet the Author





Narratives Rubric



Student Name: _____

	Narrative	Topic	Conventions	Organization
4	The narrative recounts two or more appropriately sequenced events with temporal words.	Student stayed on topic throughout the entire paper.	Student used inventive spelling, spacing, punctuation and capitalization correctly throughout the entire paper.	Student has all of the following: A clear opening, a detailed middle, and an appropriate closing.
3	The narrative recounts two or more appropriately sequenced events with some temporal words.	Student stayed on topic throughout most of the paper.	Student used inventive spelling, spacing, punctuation and capitalization correctly throughout most of the paper.	Student only has 2 of the following: A clear opening, a detailed middle, and an appropriate closing.
2	The narrative recounts one event with or without temporal words.	Student stayed on topic for some of the paper.	Student used inventive spelling, spacing, punctuation and capitalization correctly throughout some of the paper.	Student only has 1 of the following: A clear opening, a detailed middle, and an appropriate closing.
1	The paper is too short to evaluate or the paper does not recount a personal event.	Student did not stay on topic.	Student struggled with the use of inventive spelling, spacing, punctuation and capitalization throughout the entire paper.	Student was missing all of the following: A clear opening, a detailed middle, and an appropriate closing.

Notes:

Let me say...

THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for buying my Personal Narrative unit for primary grades! For more ideas and freebies, visit me at my blog,

<http://thankgoditsfirstgrade.blogspot.com>

xo,
Susan Jones

Looking for other writing units?!

[CLICK HERE!](#)

Fonts/Graphics:

