**English 2201**

**Narrative Writing**

*Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*SOME FINAL TIPS AND REMINDERS*

**A. Sentence Variety**

**∙** You will want a variety of long and short, simple and complex sentences to avoid monotony in your writing.

∙ **Break the Rules!** In lower grades we were taught not to use sentence fragments and to avoid repetition, for example. But we have studied how these can enhance writing if used effectively.

∙ When writing narrative, you’ll want to vary sentence beginnings, especially to avoid repeating “I” or other pronouns or nouns at the beginning of each sentence. Also avoid overuse (common mistake) of the following types of phrases at the beginning of your sentences:

*“As I walked down the lane . . .*

*“After I stomped out the fire . . .*

Let’s examine the attached essay *Uncle Lou’s Secret* and note how thewriter has varied sentences.

∙ Please avoid overuse of simple conjunctions, particularly *“so”* (another common weakness)

**B. Consistent Tense**

Another very common error when writing narrative is shifting tense. Use past tense to narrate your story. Consider the following excerpt from *“À Stalwart Lion Dog Holds the Ledge``* – here it has been written with tense shifts. Can you spot the errors?

*I had to save Don . . . Physically he could not have saved me or himself, but his grand spirit somehow pierced to my manhood. Leaning against the wall, I lift the revolver and steady my arm with my left hand, which still held the camera. I aim between the purple eyes. That second was an eternity. The gun crashes. The blaze of one of those terrible eyes went out. Up leaps the lion . . .*

**C. Transitions**

Provide a variety of transitions where they help the reader to understand the passage of time or the chronological sequence of events in the story.

**D. Paragraphing**

You should begin a paragraph each time your story shifts in action, thought, scene, speech, etc. Think of it this way – imagine you are creating a storyboard for your narrative. Each new scene or picture you draw would be a new paragraph.

**E. Blend**

Blend your narration, dialogue (if using), description and introspection. See the attached essay as an example.

**F. Reflection**

Either in your introduction or conclusion, reflect briefly upon the impact or significance of the described event.

Note the “thesis” in the opening of *Uncle Lou’s Secret*.

***SCORING***

***Ideas and Content (x2) 10 points*** *Focus on topic is clear and definite*

*Effective and appropriate details create a vivid picture*

*Fresh (uncommon) approach to topic holds reader’s attention*

***Narrative Elements (x2) 10 points*** *Who? What? When? Where? and Why? are answered.*

*Transitions are used effectively, particularly to indicate chronological order*

*An engaging introduction has hooked the reader*

*There is a clear beginning, middle, and end*

***Word Choice (X2) 10 points*** *Precise, vivid, language creates a clear and complete picture in the reader’s mind*

*Powerful verbs, precise nouns, appropriate adjectives and phrases enhance meaning*

*Original phrasing and memorable language prompt reflective thoughts and insights*

*Dialogue, if used, sounds natural*

***Sentence Fluency and Variety 5 points*** *Sentences vary in beginnings, length and structure*

*Sentences are smooth and rhythmic*

***Conventions 5 points*** *A strong grasp of standard writing conventions is evident: capitalization, spelling, grammar, usage, indenting.*

***Final Student Model***

Write discussion notes inside the margin.

**Uncle Lou’s Secret**

It was a cool, crisp, New England day in the summer of 1965, and I was in the middle of a strenuous football practice. For a sophomore, I was hard-hitting and 180 pounds, so the coaches were watching me closely. After fighting off blocks and crunching our star running back, which forced him to fumble, I heard the coach yell, “You’re starting at the defensive end on Saturday!” My spirit was pumped. My ego was too. Both would be seriously deflated before the day’s end. Sometimes life’s better lessons are learned the hard way.

My friend, Paul, a senior, called to me, “Hey, Dave, c’mon over to my house after supper. Five of us are going to box.

“Okay,” I said, “I’ll be over there at 7:00"

We boxed in Paul’s cellar a few times a week, and I prided myself on being able to trade punches with the “older guys”. Importantly, nearly everyone on the team had heard the invitation, which enhanced my reputation with the upperclassmen.

By 8 P.M., I had won two fights (three two-minute rounds) and was about to fight our defensive tackle, who had also won twice. At that point, two men in their late fifties descended the stairs. They reeked of scotch and cigars. I recognized Paul’s dad, but I did not know his paunchy companion.

Paul asked, “Who wants to fight my Uncle Lou? How about you, Dave?”

“Why would I want to fight a fat, old man?” was my nearly silent

response.

However, nearly silent was not silent enough; Uncle Lou had heard me, and he was putting on the gloves. Uncle Lou was three or four inches shorter than I but perhaps just as heavy – thanks to a beer gut.

I was unimpressed as he took off his glasses and said, “C’mon punk; let’s see your stuff.

I hated the word “punk,” and now, regardless of his age and condition, I wanted to fight him. Moving toward him, I cranked up a huge right hand. As I threw it, I felt a succession of jabs pummelling my forehead, nose and chin. Embarrassed and angry, I charged the “old man” and ran into a right hook that sent me reeling into the workbench.

I was bordering on unconsciousness, but I remember saying, “Who the hell is that guy?”

“He’s my Uncle Lou,” replied Paul with a grin. “Here, look at this,” Paul ordered and he handed me an almanac.

A few moments passed before my eyes could focus, but there it was clearly printed for anyone to read – “Lou Brouillard – 1931 Welterweight Championship of the World.”

I had learned Uncle Lou’s secret – and a lesson – the hard way.

*David Bardsley*

**We’ve notes some aspects of this essay which could be modelled. Would you suggest any improvements?**