

## Personal Narrative Introduction Types

Excerpt from "Thank You M'am"

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance so, instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk, and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here." She still held him. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Excerpt from "The Scarlet Ibis"

It was in the clove of seasons, summer was dead but autumn had not yet been born, that the ibis lit in the bleeding tree. The flower garden was strained with rotting brown magnolia petals and ironweeds grew rank amid the purple phlox. The five o'clocks by the chimney still marked time, but the oriole nest in the elm was untenanted and rocked back and forth like an empty cradle. The last graveyard flowers were blooming, and their smell drifted across the cotton field and through every room of our house, speaking softly the names of our dead.

It's strange that all this is still so clear to me, now that summer has long since fled and time has had its way. A grindstone stands where the bleeding tree stood, just outside the kitchen door, and now if an oriole sings in the elm, its song seems to die up in the leaves, a silvery dust. The flower garden is prim, the house a gleaming white, and the pale fence across the yard stands straight and spruce. But sometimes (like right now), as I sit in the cool, green-draped parlor, the grindstone begins to turn, and time with all its changes is ground away-and I remember Doodle.

*LEAP* by Brian Doyle

A couple leaped from the south tower, hand in hand. They reached for each other and their hands met and they jumped. Jennifer Brickhouse saw them falling, hand in hand.

Many people jumped. Perhaps hundreds. No one knows. They struck the pavement with such force that there was a pink mist in the air.

The mayor reported the mist.

A kindergarten boy who saw people falling in flames told his teacher that the birds were on fire. She ran with him on her shoulders out of the ashes.

Tiffany Keeling saw fireballs falling that she later realized were people. Jennifer Griffin saw people falling and wept as she told the story. Niko Winstral saw people free-falling backwards with their hands out, like they were parachuting. Steve Tamas counted fourteen people jumping and then he stopped counting.

Several pedestrians were killed by people falling from the sky. A fireman was killed by a body falling from the sky.

I try to whisper prayers for the sudden dead and the harrowed families of the dead and the screaming souls of the murderers but I keep coming back to his hand and her hand nestled in each other with such extraordinary ordinary succinct ancient naked stunning perfect simple ferocious love.

Their hands reaching and joining are the most powerful prayer I can imagine, the most eloquent, the most graceful. It is everything that we are capable of against horror and loss and death. It is what makes me believe that we are not craven holiness within them like seeds that open only under great fires, to believe that some unimaginable essence of who we are persists past the dissolution of what we were, to believe against such evil hourly evidence that love is why we are here.

No one knows who they were: husband and wife, lovers, dear friends, colleagues, strangers thrown together at the window there at the lip of hell. Maybe they didn't even reach for each other consciously, maybe it was instinctive, a reflex, as they both decided at the same time to take two running steps and jump out the shattered window, but they did reach for each other, and they held on tight, and leaped, and fell endlessly into the smoking canyon, at two hundred miles an hour, falling so far and so fast that they would have blacked out before they hit the pavement near Liberty Street so hard that there was a pink mist in the air.

Jennifer Brickhouse saw them holding hands, and Stuart DeHann saw them holding hands, and I hold onto that.

*Crank* by Ellen Hopkins

Before Bree, I was Kristina...

Before Bree

flirting would never have happened.

Whatever she'd done to me,

for me, and basically

in spite of me,

she'd given me a whole

new sense of self.

I never knew

I could play the vamp.

do it so well, flirt

with total aplomb,

and not only that, but

look good doing it.

Before Bree I never

Knew such sheer, depraved

Forwardness could

be so much fun.

So I went with it,

jumped right into the role

of shameless flirt.

Girls responded

with pointed whispers,

haughty laughter and, as

I myself have done,

with evil eyes.

Bree, of course, couldn't

care less. In fact she thrived

on any and all attention.

Guys responded

to that with solid

once-overs, come-on smiles, and

in Brendan the lifeguard's case,

with phone numbers.

“The Distance Traveled” by MC

The door slams hard, reverberating through the walls. Heavy footsteps follow. “Know what? Back off.” It erupts like hot spit, like a jalapeno fountain. Direct aim. Under my breath, I utter, “Just *back off*.”

I stomp viscously away, knowing she’ll follow nagging. The sunny day is opposite our mood.

I’m rotating the sunglasses toward my face, hiding my eyes squinting with anger, revealing indirectly the hate I feel but don’t understand. Still, I pretend the reasons for my irritation are so obvious. I try to reflect her own image back at her. She cannot penetrate through me. She cannot hurt me.

We use the walls to divide us. If she is outside, I am in. If she is coming home, I am heading out. If she’s making dinner, I already have plans.

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CC Narrative Example:

Every day as I walked through the front door to my house, I would smell the rich delicious smells of that night’s dinner. My mother would come give me a great big hug and ask me, “How was your day?”

I would then go on to tell her, “It was an alright school day but seeing you just made it a million times better.” She would then fix me a snack and we would watch our favorite show, sitting together on the couch covered with dog hair, with our fluffy kitty sitting on our lap. We would just sit there soaking in each other’s smell and listening to the sound of our simultaneous heartbeats. That’s the way it used to be, that is, before we found out what was really happening to my mother.

The four of us kids sat in the children’s waiting room with my grandma, while my Mommy was in the doctor’s office. My big, brave older brother was not playing with all the bright colorful toys that my sisters and I were playing with. He was just sitting there right next to my Grandma on the stained maroon chairs looking over at us with glassy eyes that were beginning to form mist in the corners. Once I realized that my big, brave brother was not acting as himself and entertaining us, I began to worry as well.

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“Blues Ain’t No Mockingbird” by Toni Cade Bambara

“Go tell that man we ain’t a bunch of trees.”

“Ma’am?”

“I said to tell that man to get away from here with that camera.” Me and Cathy look over toward the meadow where the men with the station wagon’d been roamin around all mornin. The tall man with a huge camera lassoes to his shoulder was buzzin our way.

“They makin movie pictures,” yelled Tyron, stiffenin his legs and twistin so the tire’d come down slow.

By the time the man with the camera had cut across our neighbor’s yard, the twins wer out of the tress swingin low and Granny was onto the steps, the screen door bammin soft and scratchy against her palms. “We thought we’d get a shot or two of the house and everything and then – “

“Good mornin,” Granny cut him off and smiled that smile.

“Good mornin,” he said, head all down the way Bingo does when you yell at him about the bones on the kitchen floor.

“Nice place you got here aunty. We thought we’d take a – “

“Did you?” said Granny with her eyebrows.

## **I Will Survive**

At the age of 20, I was a headstrong young woman who thought, “I know everything.” I did not realize my naiveté until I found myself in tears on the New Jersey Turnpike, with \$15 in my pocket and half a tank of gas, driving a decrepit 1969 Volkswagen death trap with no floor boards or brakes.

Against my father's strong advice, I had left my home in Kentucky to work as a live-in nanny in Chatham, New Jersey. Without so much as an interview, I had been hired. My father said it would never work, but what did he know? He had no faith in me. He wanted to dominate me. He didn't even know me!

“You'll be home within six weeks,” he said. He was wrong. I lasted eight weeks, and didn't know how to get home. With echoes of “I told you so” ringing in my ears, I had to make a decision. Should I call my father, ask for money, and crawl the 856 miles back home with my tail between my legs—or drive to New York City and take my chances?

Filled with fear, I drove through the Holland Tunnel, hoping to find food, faith, and strength on the other side.

“What do I have to lose?” I half-asked, half-told myself. I spent the next week riding the subway, trying to think of a plan. After many long, silent summer days in the nauseating stench of urine and the sweat of human sardines commuting in the heat, I thought there must be a better way. So I returned to my car and drove across the bridge to the beach, to Long Island.

I found public showers at the beach, and there were crowds of happy people, peaceful and serene, unlike the sardines of the subway, mashed into the E-train, bogged down with the baggage of tension, and oppressed by the heat. Here I could think and plan.

It was day nine that I blended into a company picnic. The tantalizing aroma of free hot dogs called me, and the crowd was large. No one would recognize me as an outsider. And if they did, what was the worst they could do? Take away my hot dog? Tell me to leave? Have me arrested? It was a risk I would have to take.

After successfully caging four hot dogs, I felt brave. I had been silent for days, lonely and scared. I began talking, first to children, then to the clown hired to entertain them. Finally, I approached some adults.

The following week, I reported to this company for work. I thought I would work a few weeks to earn enough money to get home. That was eight years ago. I am still at the same company, I have married, and I still live on Long Island.

I view this as the most positive experience of my life. Although I was frightened, hungry, and insecure, I learned that I am a survivor. I can do anything I set my mind to, and with faith, I will always get through.

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**Read each passage and decide which type of introduction this passage falls under. You and your partner need to read all 8 examples together and make guesses about which type of intro each example is. Be prepared to back up your choice with specific elements from the example. The introduction types you have to choose from are:**

Compare/Contrast-

Reminiscent/Reflective-

Jump into the Moment-

Dialogue-

Flashback-

Chronological

Cause and Effect

Full Circle-