



**SOCIAL STUDIES OBJECTIVE:** Synthesize information into a written document.

## Writing a Narrative Essay

### LEARNING THE SKILL

A story or an account of an event is a narrative. A narrative can be fictional, historical, or based on real-life events. Narrative essays answer the question "What happened?" The following guidelines can help you plan your narrative:

- **Plot**—Narrative is driven by plot, the sequence of events. The events are often presented in chronological order, the order in which they occurred.
- **Characters**—The people or animals that take part in the events must be introduced and developed. A well-developed character is revealed through what he or she says or does or by his or her appearance.
- **Setting**—Characters must be located in space and time. The time may be past, present, or future.
- **Conflict**—Some tension arises in the narrative, often because obstacles arise when a character is trying to obtain a goal.
- **Transitions**—Words such as *before*, *after*, *then*, *next*, *until*, and *finally* signal the reader that time is changing. These words help readers follow the flow of the story.
- **Point of View**—Narratives can be written in first or third person. In first person, the narrator tells the story using *I* or *we*. When using first person, the narrator can share only what he or she experiences or feels. When writing in third person (*he*, *she*, *they*), the narrator can share what several people are experiencing. A third-person omniscient (all-knowing) narrator can reveal the characters' thoughts or information to the reader that the characters do not know.
- **Dialogue**—Conversations between characters or internal monologues can reveal a great deal about a character. Dialogue should be written in the way that the people in the story would really talk. If you were writing a story about a well-educated person of the nineteenth century, for example, that person would probably use correct grammar and avoid slang.

### APPLYING THE SKILL

**DIRECTIONS:** Imagine that you are writing a narrative based on the life of a Reconstruction leader, such as Governor Edmund J. Davis. You may need to research additional information on the person you select. Answer the following questions about the narrative writing process on the lines provided. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

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