

## Grade 7 Narrative

### An Unexpected Find

Thomas opened his sketchbook, turned to a clean page, and took a deep breath. He could see his main character perfectly in his imagination. He was confident that he could draw the same image on a piece of paper if he just tried hard enough. He seized his sharpest pencil and began drawing the outline of Malcolm as he pictured the character in his mind—a person with a wrinkled brow, wide eyes, and a big grin. When Thomas tried to translate those ideas onto the white page in front of him, the proportions were not correct. Thomas was sure that he used the eraser on the end of his pencil much more frequently than he used the lead.

When Thomas was not drawing, he was reading a graphic novel—a book that relates a narrative through pictures as well as text. He enjoyed reading this genre, and he went to the library at least once a week to exchange the books he had finished for new titles. It was his dream to become a famous illustrator of graphic novels, but he had a great deal to learn. He had tried to research the styles used by graphic artists. Although the library had many instruction manuals about drawing, none of them included the style he wanted to learn.

“Thomas, I’m ready to go,” called his mom from the kitchen. Thomas sighed. He had forgotten that he had agreed to go to the craft store with his mom. She was creating a scrapbook for his older sister that chronicled the years Lisa had played in the school orchestra and had been a member of the track team. Although Mom was almost finished, she had four more pages to complete. She needed to go to the craft store for more glue and stickers that would add just the right details to her creation. Thomas was looking forward to seeing what was available in the art section of the craft store. “I’ll be right there, Mom,” replied Thomas, placing his sketchbook and pencil back on top of his desk. He considered bringing his favorite graphic novel with him, but he decided the car ride would be a good opportunity to converse with his mom.

When they arrived at the craft store, Thomas headed directly for the art supplies while his mom collected the materials she needed. Thomas was eager to investigate the art-supply section to see whether anything new or interesting caught his attention. He scanned the shelves and immediately noticed a book he had not seen before. A drawing of a figure with wide eyes, a wrinkled brow, and broad shoulders was on the front cover. The image reminded Thomas of his main character Malcolm.

Eagerly, Thomas picked up the book and began paging through it. It was a step-by-step art book that showed how to draw graphic-novel heroes, villains, and other characters. With growing excitement, he thumbed through more pages that focused on how to draw eyes, mouths, and other features of a face. Each page revealed glimpses of characters Thomas had spent months trying to create.

*This is amazing*, Thomas thought to himself. He hesitantly turned the book over to discover the price. The cost was reasonable but still a little more than he had saved. He clutched the book tightly in his hand and ventured through the store to find his mom. He could hardly wait to show her the book he had found.

"Thomas, this is fantastic! I know you have been searching for a long time to find a book like this," said his mom.

"I plan to use the money I earned from doing my chores," said Thomas. "But the price is a little bit higher than the amount I have saved."

"Well, I know you are very interested in this style of art, so I would be willing to pay the extra few dollars to make up the difference," said his mom.

"Thanks, Mom," replied Thomas, and then he began to laugh. "Actually, I think this book will save money for both of us." His mother looked at him questioningly.

"If the book helps me even half as much as I expect," Thomas chuckled, "we will end up saving a fortune on erasers!"

## Grade 7 Informational

### Hiking Hints

Hiking is a healthy and enjoyable form of recreation. Here are some hints for you and your friends to make your first hiking experience a good one.

First, decide how long you wish your hike to be. It can last anywhere from an hour to several days. People who hike the entire 2,000-mile Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia spend up to four or five months hiking! But if this is your first hiking experience, it is best to keep it to just a few hours or a day at most. The amount of time you spend hiking will help determine the distance you cover.

Hiking requires a great deal of stamina. Most people cannot go on a long hike without some physical preparation. A person should be getting at least 30 minutes of exercise three times a week before attempting a lengthy hike. This can be in the form of a team sport, such as basketball or soccer, or an activity such as swimming or cycling. Brisk walking, jogging, or running for at least one mile also can prepare a person for hiking.

It is essential that you have the proper clothing and equipment for hiking. In winter, hiking clothing should consist of several layers, starting with a long-sleeved polyester shirt (pure cotton will absorb moisture and stay wet). Another two or three loosely layered shirts topped with a jacket should follow. The clothing must be loose enough that you can move without feeling restricted. In warm weather, short sleeves can be topped with long sleeves to avoid sunburn while staying cool.

You will need well-worn hiking boots no matter what the weather is like. They should have soles that provide good traction and high tops to help prevent ankle sprains. Sunglasses and a watch are necessities, as well as a brimmed hat to protect your face from sun, wind, and rain. You will probably also want to carry along a bandanna (to wrap around your head to absorb perspiration).

Perhaps you have seen pictures of hikers carrying huge backpacks bulging with supplies. Actually, what you need for a beginner's hike will fit nicely into your school backpack. Your equipment should include a trail map (more about this later), a compass, a multipurpose tool, one small flashlight, a whistle (to help others locate you if you get lost), a first-aid kit, sunscreen, insect-repellent lotion, tissues, and a couple of plastic garbage bags. You also may want to carry a sturdy walking stick for extra traction on steep hills. A stick also will come in handy for checking the depth of streams or rivers and for keeping your balance while crossing the running water. The food you take along should travel well and require no preparation; fruit, nuts, and dry whole-grain cereal are popular choices. These take up little space, especially if you choose dried rather than fresh fruit. A very important part of your provisions is water. Allow for 64 to 96 ounces per person for an all-day hike. This is between one-half and three-quarters of a gallon of water.

Maybe you are eager to go on your first hike but do not know where to go. Your local library will have hiking guides with information about trails in state and local parks. Local hiking clubs can tell you the best trails for beginners, or you can visit the National Park Service website at [www.npshiking.com](http://www.npshiking.com) to see if there is a national park with hiking trails in your area. Parks with hiking trails typically have trail maps available to carry with you on your hike. Additionally, all established hiking areas have signposts to mark trails and provide information. Using these maps and guideposts should reduce any anxiety you may have about getting lost.

Here are some final tips for your hike:

- First and foremost, never hike alone; it is not safe. Hiking is also more fun as a group activity. It is always best for an adult to accompany your group.
- Check with a local hiking club for a more complete list of tips and safety rules. Safety should always be your number-one priority when hiking. There are many other safety considerations not covered in this article.
- Plan the time and length of your hike carefully, allowing one hour for three miles of flat terrain. Add 30 minutes to this time for every 1,000 feet of altitude gain. Remember, higher altitude means less oxygen, and this will slow you down. Take rest and water breaks often to avoid fatigue and dehydration.
- Leave your pets at home; most parks do not allow them on their hiking trails.
- Finally, respect the ecology of the hiking area by staying on the trail and bagging and removing all trash.

No doubt your first hike will be a learning experience, and you may do things a little differently the next time you go out. But these tips should help you get started in a recreation that can last a lifetime.