

Grade 11 Narrative

A Challenging Saturday

As Nina gathered the textbooks she needed from her locker to complete her assignments, her mind was whirling. The week seemed to be flying by, and she would ordinarily have been looking forward to the weekend. Typically she regarded Saturdays as oases—havens from the frantic pace of the week. Saturdays were the only days she could regard as her own, allotting time as she wished. This Saturday was going to be an exception. In addition to her usual commitment of volunteering at the hospital, she was facing a combined set of challenges she had not anticipated: finding a replacement for the person she had planned to interview for her history project, completing the presentation on time, and helping to plan a sleepover party for her younger twin brothers, Terry and Robert. At this point, Nina’s Saturday began to resemble an endurance contest rather than an oasis.

On Friday, she had attended a basketball game, where she participated in the pep band. She had played the music effortlessly, but her thoughts were still occupied by Saturday’s schedule. When arriving home, Nina discovered that Saturday now had one more complication. Aunt Charlotte—one of her favorite relatives—was arriving the next morning for a visit. Nina wondered how she could find time to spend with her aunt in the midst of the chaotic day ahead of her.

Before going to sleep that night, Nina contemplated a number of ways she could achieve all of her obligations. She had already made arrangements to trade schedules with a friend who also volunteered at the hospital, so she would not have to work at the hospital this weekend. Nina checked one task off her mental list, but she struggled to find a way to fit the rest of her responsibilities into her overbooked schedule. She set her alarm for an early awakening on Saturday.

All too soon, it seemed, the jangling alarm announced the start of Nina’s conquest. First, she wanted to make progress on the multimedia presentation for her history project. Nina and her friend Christie had prepared a majority of the material, but Nina still needed to finish organizing the presentation that focused on a portrait of the United States during the 1960s. She and Christie had collected an interesting collage of videotaped interviews, slides of photographs, advertisements, and music. Nina planned to visit a local art gallery to view paintings from the era. She had scheduled an interview with Mr. Nolan, who currently taught at the same high school he had attended in the 1960s. Unfortunately, Mr. Nolan had discovered a schedule conflict and had reluctantly canceled the interview. With the project deadline looming, Nina had to find a replacement on short notice. As she worked steadily at the computer, inspiration struck. She thought of a brilliant plan to accomplish two of her tasks at the same time.

When Nina heard Terry and Robert clattering down the hall, she stopped working on the presentation to help her mother prepare her brothers’ favorite breakfast—French toast with blueberry syrup and sausages. She also wanted to ask her mother’s opinion about interviewing

someone for her project.

“How is your project going, Nina?” inquired her mother, as they fixed a second batch of French toast. “Have you found a way to accomplish everything you need to do?”

Nina nodded briskly and removed the pitcher of blueberry syrup from Terry’s hand before his plate overflowed onto the table.

“Not to worry, Mom. I’ve assembled a list of goals for the day, and I will cross them off as I accomplish them. I thought Aunt Charlotte might be someone I could interview about life in the 1960s. I also thought she might like to come with me to the art gallery, since she is interested in modern art.”

“Those are inspired ideas, Nina,” said her mom. “I’m sure Aunt Charlotte will be delighted to help you with your project, and a trip to the art gallery will give you two some time together.”

“You’ll be back in time for our party, won’t you, Nina?” asked Robert plaintively. “You won’t forget to come home in time, will you?” added Terry.

“You can count on me!” Nina assured them. “I wouldn’t dream of missing the party, and I have planned some special activities and games for you and your friends.”

Satisfied and intrigued, the twins returned to devouring their breakfast, and Nina snatched these few minutes to return to her history project. Aunt Charlotte would soon arrive, and they would begin to complete Nina’s formidable to-do list.

When Aunt Charlotte arrived—bustling and cheerful—she was delighted to sit down with Nina to preview the history presentation. She was flattered that Nina had asked to interview her for the project. Aunt Charlotte was eager to reminisce about her childhood days and pleased to provide Nina with a primary source for her project. Taking out a tape recorder, Nina proceeded to ask a set of questions, to which her aunt responded by regaling Nina with tales about listening to rock-and-roll music on her record player. Aunt Charlotte stated that some Saturday afternoons were spent with friends at the movies, and in the evenings, the family gathered in front of the TV to watch favorite programs in black and white, since most people did not have color TV in the 1960s.

On the way to the art gallery in town, Nina provided some background information about the curator—an interesting artist who was very knowledgeable about the pop art of the 1960s. As they toured the gallery, Nina was amazed to find common objects, such as soup cans or comic strips, portrayed in vivid colors. The curator explained that pop art focused on ideas and images from popular culture. In contrast to the more abstract art of earlier periods, pop art could be easily understood by the viewer. Aunt Charlotte purchased a pop art print showing four pictures of a 1960s Volkswagen—a car like one her family used to own.

On the way home, Nina and Aunt Charlotte stopped to have some ice cream, and Nina

took some home for the boys' party. Aunt Charlotte spent some time with Nina's mother and the twins. Before she left, she expressed her gratitude to Nina for giving her an opportunity to share her memories of the past.

As the doorbell rang and the first guests for the sleepover began to arrive, Nina breathed a deep sigh of relief. This Saturday's hectic schedule had not been an oasis, but she was satisfied with the goals she had accomplished. What might have been a nerve-racking day had turned out to be more pleasant than she had anticipated. With flexibility and resourcefulness, she had overcome the obstacles of a challenging Saturday.

Grade 11 Informational

Wolves

As snow falls silently and settles like a thick comforter on the lodge pole pines, steam rises from Yellowstone Park's hot springs, imparting a vague odor of sulfur to the air. The silence is almost deafening—no summer tour buses, no laughing sightseers, not even the lone snowmobile of a park ranger punctuates the stillness. The howling in the distance can almost be mistaken for the winds sweeping down through the valleys and across the wide meadow, but the gray smudge against the snow signals a different source for the desolate reverberation. The gray wolf has returned to Yellowstone National Park after a decades-long absence that began in 1926.

Before 1870, hundreds of wolves roamed Yellowstone Park. By 1930, government programs to control predators resulted in the elimination of wolves from the entire western United States. For over thirty years, humans managed the Yellowstone animal populations, but, in 1969, a new philosophy became the basis for park management—natural processes and predators would be used to regulate animal populations. Along with the change in philosophy, a new way of calculating the number of wolves was used. This resulted in the species being officially listed as endangered during the 1970's. Serious discussions about how to address this dilemma began.

In 1980, the Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Plan was approved. The aim was to create two populations of gray wolves that could survive and grow in the lower 48 states. Progress did not occur quickly, however. In 1987 the plan was revised to include a goal of removing the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf from the endangered list. The new plan recommended that an experimental population of wolves be located in the isolated areas of Yellowstone National Park. Several more years passed as a special committee was formed. Federal park, forest and agriculture officials, conservationists interested in preserving the environment, hunters, and livestock representatives worked to hammer out a plan for how wolves could be brought back to Yellowstone.

The plan for reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone was not free of controversy. Animal rights activists and environmentalists argued the return of the natural predator was vital for the health of the park. Ranchers, on the other hand, worried about the impact the wolves would have on their livestock herds as they grazed the land on the park's periphery. Dozens of state, tribal and federal laws, treaties and even international agreements had to be considered. Input was collected from tens of thousands of groups and individuals from all 50 United States and 40 foreign countries.

Finally, in January of 1995, 14 wolves were captured in Alberta, Canada and brought to Yellowstone. Acclimation enclosures, rather like huge, round dog kennels, had been built in remote areas of the park. Wolves would be confined in these enclosures until they became accustomed to their new location. Large panels of specially designed chain link fence were transported from Omaha, Nebraska, flown into the park by helicopter, and assembled on site.

Each of the three 10-foot tall pens enclosed one acre. The newly formed wolf packs quickly organized within the pens where they would spend the next three months. In March of 1995, bolt cutters were used to create an opening in the fence. The packs were now free to roam the park.

In 1996, 11 more wolves were released in the park. By 2004, 300 wolves had made the park their home. The rescue of the species once endangered in the U.S. had made history.