

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

Elia Peattie 1862–1935

Elia Wilkinson was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1862, and her family moved to Chicago, Illinois, in 1871. Elia grew up at a time when opportunities for women in the United States were quite limited. She was interested in writing and publishing, but few women at that time had a career outside the home, and her education was incomplete because of family responsibilities. However, she did not give up her dream of becoming a professional writer.

In 1883, Elia married Robert Peattie, a newspaper reporter, and they eventually had four children. In addition to raising a family, Elia began submitting articles to Chicago newspapers. In 1886, Peattie was asked to report for the art and society pages of a major newspaper. She became the first female reporter on the *Chicago Tribune* staff, which made her one of the first female newspaper reporters in the country. In 1888, the Peattie family moved to Omaha, Nebraska, where Robert became managing editor and Elia became a writer for the *Omaha Daily Herald*. By 1890, the newspaper had become the *Omaha World-Herald*, and Elia Peattie had her own column—the ultimate goal of many reporters. She began to write editorials dealing with public issues. Her columns covered the spectrum from local to international topics, and she became known for her insights as well as her humor.

The late 1800s and early 1900s are known as the Progressive Era—a time of social activism and reform. Progressives supported issues such as women’s suffrage and regulating the railroads and banks. Peattie was an intelligent woman with exceptional writing skills and the courage to address controversial issues. Through her columns, Peattie became an advocate for social reforms, such as women’s rights and the need for schools and hospitals. Peattie did not hesitate to express and defend her views, even when they conflicted with popular opinions. In the 1896 presidential election, the Progressives backed William Jennings Bryan, a Democratic candidate who supported their goals. Although Bryan lost the election, Peattie continued to endorse causes that Bryan advocated, such as women’s suffrage, which eventually became law.

During her years in Omaha, Peattie became involved in many charitable causes, such as programs for the poor, the homeless, and children. She also wrote more than thirty works of fiction, including *A Mountain Woman*—a short-story collection that depicts life on the Nebraska plains during the late nineteenth century. Her stories portray a recurring theme of women achieving personal goals.

Peattie and her family moved back to Chicago in 1896, where she became the literary editor for the *Chicago Tribune*—a position she held until 1917. During that time, Peattie participated in literary clubs, wrote and acted in plays, and continued to write articles and short stories for publication in the leading magazines at the time. Peattie and her husband later moved to New York, where they both wrote for the *New York Tribune*. They retired in Tryon, North Carolina, in the early 1920s. Elia Peattie died in 1935.

Peattie was a prolific writer whose published works include 25 books, 9 collected works, 6 plays, 57 short stories published in magazines, 32 short stories and novelettes for children, 19 essays, and 13 poems. An incomplete list of her newspaper publishing includes 800 editorials, columns, and feature stories in the *Omaha World-Herald*, and 5,000 book reviews in the *Chicago Tribune*. The number of her published works is impressive; but the variety of genres and the diversity of topics are even more remarkable.