

Year Four, Weeks 20–27

Narration exercises will lengthen slightly to ten to twelve paragraphs. After reading the passage independently, the student will continue to answer a directed narration question with three or four sentences, and will write down the first two sentences of this narration for herself.

Dictation exercises will lengthen slightly to 25- 30-word paragraphs, repeated three times. You will also repeat the final sentence in these long dictations an additional time, if necessary.

The pattern of Week 20 will be followed in Weeks 21 through 27.

WEEK 20

DAY ONE: Narration and Dictation

Allow the student to read the following story independently.

● **begin reading**

“YOUNG BENJAMIN FRANKLIN”

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a nineteenth-century novelist who also wrote occasional stories for children.

When Benjamin Franklin was a boy he was very fond of fishing; and many of his leisure hours were spent on the margin of the mill pond catching flounders, perch, and eels that came up thither with the tide.

The place where Ben and his playmates did most of their fishing was a marshy spot on the outskirts of Boston. On the edge of the water there was a deep bed of clay, in which the boys were forced to stand while they caught their fish.

“This is very uncomfortable,” said Ben Franklin one day to his comrades, while they were standing in the quagmire.

“So it is,” said the other boys. “What a pity we have no better place to stand on!”

On the dry land, not far from the quagmire, there were at that time a great many large stones that had been brought there to be used in building the foundation of a new house. Ben mounted upon the highest of these stones.

“Boys,” said he, “I have thought of a plan. You know what a plague it is to have to stand in the quagmire yonder. See, I am bedaubed to the knees, and you are all in the same plight.

“Now I propose that we build a wharf. You see these stones? The workmen mean to use them for building a house here. My plan is to take these same stones, carry them to the edge of the water, and build a wharf with them. What say you, lads? Shall we build the wharf?”

“Yes, yes,” cried the boys; “let’s set about it!”

It was agreed that they should all be on the spot that evening, and begin their grand public enterprise by moonlight.

Accordingly, at the appointed time, the boys met and eagerly began to remove the stones. They worked like a

colony of ants, sometimes two or three of them taking hold of one stone; and at last they had carried them all away, and built their little wharf.

“Now, boys,” cried Ben, when the job was done, “let’s give three cheers, and go home to bed. To-morrow we may catch fish at our ease.”

“Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!” shouted his comrades, and all scampered off home and to bed, to dream of to-morrow’s sport.

In the morning the masons came to begin their work. But what was their surprise to find the stones all gone! The master mason, looking carefully on the ground, saw the tracks of many little feet, some with shoes and some barefoot. Following these to the water side, he soon found what had become of the missing building stones.

“Ah! I see what the mischief is,” said he; “those little rascals who were here yesterday have stolen the stones to build a wharf with. And I must say that they understand their business well.”

He was so angry that he at once went to make a complaint before the magistrate; and his Honor wrote an order to “take the bodies of Benjamin Franklin, and other evil-disposed persons,” who had stolen a heap of stones.

If the owner of the stolen property had not been more merciful than the master mason, it might have gone hard

with our friend Benjamin and his comrades. But, luckily for them, the gentleman had a respect for Ben's father, and, moreover, was pleased with the spirit of the whole affair. He therefore let the culprits off easily.

But the poor boys had to go through another trial, and receive sentence, and suffer punishment, too, from their own fathers. Many a rod was worn to the stump on that unlucky night. As for Ben, he was less afraid of a whipping than of his father's reproof. And, indeed, his father was very much disturbed.

"Benjamin, come hither," began Mr. Franklin in his usual stern and weighty tone. The boy approached and stood before his father's chair. "Benjamin," said his father, "what could induce you to take property which did not belong to you?"

"Why, father," replied Ben, hanging his head at first, but then lifting his eyes to Mr. Franklin's face, "if it had been merely for my own benefit, I never should have dreamed of it. But I knew that the wharf would be a public convenience. If the owner of the stones should build a house with them, nobody would enjoy any advantage but himself. Now, I made use of them in a way that was for the advantage of many persons."

"My son," said Mr. Franklin solemnly, "so far as it was in your power, you have done a greater harm to the

public than to the owner of the stones. I do verily believe, Benjamin, that almost all the public and private misery of mankind arises from a neglect of this great truth—that evil can produce only evil, that good ends must be wrought out by good means.”

To the end of his life, Ben Franklin never forgot this conversation with his father; and we have reason to suppose, that, in most of his public and private career, he sought to act upon the principles which that good and wise man then taught him.

—From *The Fourth McGuffey Reader*
ed. by William H McGuffey

stop reading —■

You will now ask the student to summarize the passage in three or four sentences. To guide her towards a succinct summary, say, “Tell me about Benjamin Franklin’s attempt to build a wharf.” Her answer should resemble one of the following:

“Benjamin Franklin and his friends wanted to build a wharf. They used a nearby pile of stones that belonged to someone else. When their parents found out they had stolen the stones, they all got into trouble. Franklin said that stealing the stones was all right, because the wharf could be used by everyone, but his father told him that it was still wrong.”

“Benjamin Franklin and his friends were tired of standing in the mud to fish. They used a nearby pile of stones to build a wharf. But the owner of the stones complained to their parents, and they were all punished. Franklin learned that stealing was evil, even if it was done for the advantage of others.”

“Benjamin Franklin and his friends used someone else’s stones to build a wharf. They almost got arrested, and their parents punished them. Benjamin Franklin said that it was all right to take the stones, because the wharf could be used by everyone, and the owner of the stones was going to use them only for himself. But his father told him that he should never do evil in order to bring about something good.”

If the student has trouble choosing important details, ask these three questions:

What did Franklin and his friends do?

Why did this get them into trouble?

What was Franklin’s excuse and his father’s response?

Write the narration down, but do not allow the student to watch. Then ask her whether she can repeat the first two sentences of the narration to herself. If not, read her the first two sentences. Tell her to listen carefully, since you will only read it once. Encourage her to repeat it to herself until she can remember it, and then to say it out loud to herself as she writes it down.

DAY TWO: Dictation

Tell the student that Hawthorne’s story is based on a single paragraph in Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography, which he wrote himself and finished in 1771. Read this entire paragraph as the student listens. You will probably want to tell the student that “emmet” is an old word for “ant”:

There was a salt-marsh that bounded part of the mill-pond, on the edge of which, at high water, we used to stand to fish for minnows. By much trampling, we had made it a mere quagmire. My proposal was to build a wharf there fit for us to stand upon, and I showed my comrades a large heap of stones, which were intended for a new house near the marsh, and which would very well suit our purpose. Accordingly, in the evening, when the workmen were gone, I assembled a number of my play-fellows, and working with them diligently like so many emmets, sometimes two or three to a stone, we brought

them all away and built our little wharf. The next morning the workmen were surprised at missing the stones, which were found in our wharf. Inquiry was made after the removers; we were discovered and complained of; several of us were corrected by our fathers; and though I pleaded the usefulness of the work, mine convinced me that nothing was useful which was not honest.

—From *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
by Benjamin Franklin

You may want to discuss with the student how much of Hawthorne’s version was simply made up out of his own head so that it would be more interesting!

When you are finished, tell the student that you will be challenging her with a longer dictation than usual. Remind her that this is a paragraph (all of the sentences center around the topic of the wharf in the marsh) and that the first line should be indented.

Tell the student that you will read the selection three times. You will then ask her to write as much of it as she can remember. If she gets stuck, you will read the passage again from the point where her memory failed—but you’ll only do this once!

Before you read, tell the student to write the following words on another piece of paper. Each word is hyphenated: *salt-marsh*, *mill-pond*.

Be sure to pause at each comma, and to make a longer pause at the periods.

There was a salt-marsh that bounded part of the mill-pond, on the edge of which, at high water, we used to stand to fish for minnows. By much trampling, we had made it a mere quagmire. My proposal was to build a wharf there fit for us to stand upon, and I showed my comrades a large heap of stones, which were intended for a new house near the marsh, and which would very well suit our purpose.

DAY THREE: Narration and Dictation

Allow the student to read the following story independently.

● **begin reading**

“THE WHISTLE”

James Baldwin was a teacher who lived 1841–1925. He wrote many books for his young students. This tale is from one of those books. It is an interesting story—but Baldwin probably invented it, since it isn't in Benjamin Franklin's autobiography at all!

Two hundred years ago there lived in Boston a little boy whose name was Benjamin Franklin.

On the day that he was seven years old, his mother gave him a few pennies. He looked at the bright, yellow pieces and said, “What shall I do with these coppers, mother?” It was the first money that he had ever had.

“You may buy something, if you wish,” said his mother.

“And then will you give me more?” he asked.

His mother shook her head and said: “No, Benjamin. I cannot give you any more. So you must be careful not to spend these foolishly.”

The little fellow ran into the street. He heard the pennies jingle in his pocket. How rich he was!

Boston is now a great city, but at that time it was only a little town. There were not many stores.

As Benjamin ran down the street, he wondered what he should buy. Should he buy candy? He hardly knew how it tasted. Should he buy a pretty toy? If he had been the only child in the family, things might have been different. But there were fourteen boys and girls older than he, and two little sisters who were younger.

What a big family it was! And the father was a poor man. No wonder the lad had never owned a toy.

He had not gone far when he met a larger boy, who was blowing a whistle.

“I wish I had that whistle,” he said.

The big boy looked at him and blew it again. Oh, what a pretty sound it made!

“I have some pennies,” said Benjamin. He held them in his hand, and showed them to the boy. “You may have them, if you will give me the whistle.”

“All of them?”

“Yes, all of them.”

“Well, it’s a bargain,” said the boy; and he gave the whistle to Benjamin, and took the pennies.

Little Benjamin Franklin was very happy; for he was only seven years old. He ran home as fast as he could, blowing the whistle as he ran.

“See, mother,” he said, “I have bought a whistle.”

“How much did you pay for it?”

“All the pennies you gave me.”

“Oh, Benjamin!”

One of his brothers asked to see the whistle.

“Well, well!” he said. “You’ve paid a dear price for this thing. It’s only a penny whistle, and a poor one at that.”

“You might have bought half a dozen such whistles with the money I gave you,” said his mother.

The little boy saw what a mistake he had made. The whistle did not please him any more. He threw it upon the floor and began to cry.

“Never mind, my child,” said his mother, very kindly. “You are only a very little boy, and you will learn a great deal as you grow bigger. The lesson you have learned today is never to pay too dear for a whistle.”

Benjamin Franklin lived to be a very old man, but he never forgot that lesson.

Every boy and girl should remember the name of Benjamin Franklin. He was a great thinker and a great doer, and with Washington he helped to make our country free. His life was such that no man could ever say, “Ben Franklin has wronged me.”

“The Whistle” From *Fifty Famous People*,
by James Baldwin

stop reading —■

You will now ask the student, “Can you tell me about Benjamin Franklin and the penny whistle in three sentences?” The student’s narration should resemble one of the following (and there should be no reason for the student to need a fourth sentence):

“When Benjamin Franklin was little, his mother gave him some pennies. He met a boy with a whistle, and gave the boy all of his pennies for it. When he went home, he discovered that the whistle was only worth one penny.”

“Benjamin Franklin’s mother gave him a handful of pennies. He set off to buy a toy. When he saw a boy playing a whistle, he bought it with all of his money—even though it was only worth one penny.”

“When he was seven years old, Benjamin Franklin got a few pennies from his mother. He knew that he could buy something exciting with it—like candy or a toy. But then he saw a boy playing a penny whistle, and he wanted it so much that he spent all of his money for it.”

If the student has trouble choosing important details, ask these three questions:

What did Franklin get from his mother?

What did he buy?

Why was this a problem?

Write the narration down, but do not allow the student to watch. Then ask her whether she can repeat the first two sentences of the narration to herself. If not, read her the first two sentences. Tell her to listen carefully, since you will only read it once. Encourage her to repeat it to herself until she can remember it, and then to say it out loud to herself as she writes it down.

DAY FOUR: Dictation

Tell the student that the following passage from Franklin’s autobiography is the only information *he* gives us about his childhood spending habits. Before you give the student her dictation assignment, read this entire selection

aloud. You may wish to tell the student that a book of “polemic divinity” is a book that argues for a particular theological belief.

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with the *Pilgrim's Progress*, my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes. I afterward sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton's Historical Collections; they were small chapmen's books, and cheap, 40 or 50 in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read....Plutarch's Lives there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of [Daniel] Defoe's, called an *Essay on Projects*, and another of Dr. Mather's, called *Essays to do Good*, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life. This bookish inclination at length determined my father to make me a printer....

—From *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
by Benjamin Franklin

Now prepare the student to take the following sentences from dictation. Remind her that this is a paragraph and that the first line should be indented.

Tell the student that you will read the selection three times, but you won't read it a fourth time—it's shorter than the last dictation exercise.

Before you dictate, remind the student that *Pilgrim's Progress* is the title of a book, and so should be underlined.

Be sure to pause at each comma, and to make a longer pause at the periods.

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with the Pilgrim's Progress, my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes.