

File Name: N11-12P (Better Than the Sunset.)

Narrative

Grade 12

On-Demand Writing - Uniform Prompt

(Better Than the Sunset.)

Adam sat on the porch and watched the clear blue sky. Today was his sixth birthday and all he wanted was to watch the sunset. It was only noon and he had hours to go. Inside the house his mother was cooking and his father was out in the fields. He didn't mind being alone on his birthday. He liked the quiet.

He sensed it before he saw it. Something felt wrong. Everything was too quiet, much the same as the minutes before a hurricane. Those moments were magical. The world seemed to stand still; the air charged with electricity.

Waiting to explode into chaos.

Today was no different. A cloud that had not been present only seconds before covered the sun. Adam looked up and squinted into the still bright sky. The cloud covering the sun was alone. It would not be a thunderstorm. Suddenly a huge shadow loomed before him. It sped forward from the tree line and deftly made its way towards him.

Time slowed down and he watched as animals exploded from their hiding places. The wide yard was chaos as a hundred tiny bodies ran for cover. His breath caught in his throat and while he *was* afraid he could not

Engages and orients the reader by setting out a situation and its significance, establishing a point of view, and introducing a character:

The writer delays the introduction of the problem of the dust storm, instead focusing on a setting. The narrative is told from the perspective of a third person limited narrator.

Establishes the problem (coming of the dust storm) and its significance, using narrative technique of suspense

Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the events, setting, and character

Uses a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome, the coming of the storm

tear his eyes away. There was something beautiful about the way the cloud of black dust crept towards him, swallowing everything in its path. To him it looked like a monster. Big and ugly and destructive and yet somehow extraordinary at the same time.

Uses description and reflection to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome, how the child will experience the storm

He vaguely registered that his name was being called, but there was nothing urgent enough to tear him away from the havoc unfolding before his eyes. He ignored the voices and watched as his mother's flowerbed was swallowed in seconds. Next were the tractor and then the shed. His big blue eyes grew wide as the cloud of angry, swirling black dust drew ever closer. His heart pounded now not from fear, but from something else. Adrenaline sang through his veins. It was exhilarating to watch his own death approach. He had no intention of dying today, but he couldn't bear to run inside and lose sight of this beautiful destruction.

Reflection builds towards the outcome of how child will experience this storm

The voices grew more and more frantic and the swirling mass of dust threatened closer and closer. And still Adam sat, watching and waiting for what was to be swallowed next. The shadow of this beast loomed over the house and he craned his head back to watch the hurricane of dust descend upon him. If possible time slowed even more. The door behind him burst open, the wood creaking and groaning in protest at the force shoved against it. The span of seconds in which his father ran towards him, shouting his name, stretched and seemed to become years. His footsteps pounded against the rotting planks of the porch, the noise exploding in Adam's ears. He looked between his father and the black monster, which had now reached the bottom step.

Creates a smooth progression of events

Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the events, setting, and characters: Here, the writer conveys the danger of the moment

His father's strong arm reached towards him and closed around his body like a metal vice. His small bones jarred from the impact. He watched over his father's shoulder as the storm wailed closer.

I'll catch you, it seemed to be mocking.

As suddenly as time had slowed, it began again. The dust exploded around them just as his father slammed the door, shutting out the world.

Black dust curled under the door and shifted forward in fury. His mother shoved a wet towel in the crack and pressed another to Adam's face.

Together, the three of them huddled in the middle of the room, gasping and hacking and choking for air. But Adam didn't mind. He had only one thought as the black dust wormed its way into his lungs and stole his breath.

That was better than the sunset.

Creates a smooth progression of events

Provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is resolved over the course of the narrative: The writer contrasts the danger of the storm with the child's experience of it to establish an ironic ending.

In this on-demand narrative, the writer tells the story of a child experiencing a dust storm during the days of the Dust Bowl. He focuses it around the irony of such a dreadful thing being such a magical experience for the child. The main character is the child, and the narrative is told from a third-person limited point of view.

The writer uses a clear sequence of events to develop the story, beginning with the main character watching the sunset and using the notion of the sunset to create a cohesive whole by the end of the narrative. The writer uses no dialogue; most of the detail is provided through reflection on the part of the child and through vivid description of events. The child's state of mind—shocked but also thrilled—is captured through this reflective detail. The narrative concludes with the child thinking, "*That was better than the sunset,*" an ironic resolution that is appropriate to this narrative and that suggests the maturity of the writer.