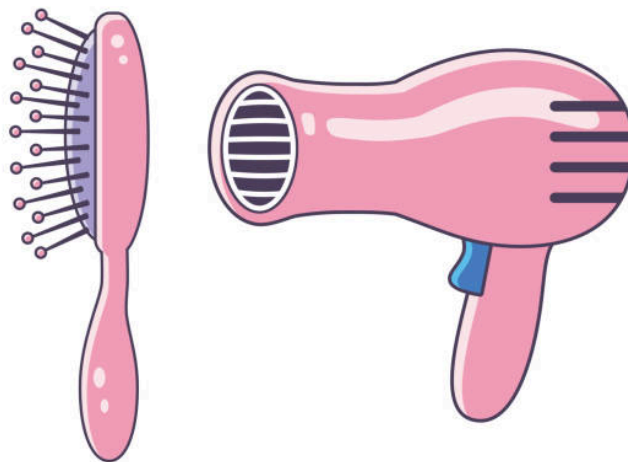


Genre	Word Count	Craft Choices/Experimenting with Mentor Texts
Personal Narrative	1677 words, but I will cut one of the leads	<p>Lead from <i>Rethinking Normal</i> (one sentence)</p> <p>Alternative lead from <i>Educated</i> (dialogue)</p> <p>Backstory woven in</p> <p>Paused for “I thought” to add inner monologue</p> <p>Dialogue to characterize people in the scene</p> <p>Colon for emphasis.</p> <p>Use of white space to slow the story, pacing.</p> <p>Repetition borrowed from Daniel Beatty’s “Knock, Knock”</p> <p>Figurative language: simile, metaphor, allusion, personification,</p> <p>Sensory language: mostly color, texture, sound (not much smell)</p>

	Narrative Elements	
	<p>Mentor Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lead from <i>Rethinking Normal</i> (one sentence)</li> <li>● Alternative lead from <i>Educated</i> (dialogue)</li> <li>● Grammar for a Full Life Colon for emphasis.</li> <li>● Repetition borrowed from Daniel Beatty’s “Knock, Knock”</li> </ul>	
	Narrow focus of personal discovery/understanding based on a singular event, revealing why it is important to who you are today	
	Introduction for effect: action, dialogue, reaction, setting – introduced time, place, characters, conflict	
	<p>Characterization of self and others STEAL:</p> <p>Speech, thoughts, effect on others/reactions, actions, looks- gestures, style, personality</p>	
	Dialogue that moves the narrative along, reveals elements of the self, others, and context (and formatted meaningfully)	
	Scenes with sensory language: the reader feels like they are in the scene with a sense of physical or abstract space depending on the content- smell, sound, taste, gestures, textures, colors, temperature, sensations, symbolism	
	Thoughts and feelings: In the scene, there is a phrase that includes “at that moment I thought” or zooming out of the	

	scene, a break in the story to reflect on how it made you feel at the time, maybe what you understand now in recrafting it	
	Logical sequence for effect: start at the end, middle, transitions of time and place, effective paragraphing, pacing of beginning, middle, end	
	Strong conclusion: project time forward, end with a scene, end with reflection but avoid explaining everything, circular ending	
	Language/Mechanics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong verbs</li> <li>• denotative/connotative meaning</li> <li>• Figurative language</li> <li>• Varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	
	Other text features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Images, charts</li> <li>• headings</li> </ul>	

The Pink Hairdryer that (S)T(r)angled Sisterly Love  
By Sarah J. Donovan



I was born May 21, 1973.

But it was not a very *special* day because I wasn't the first or even the second to be born into our family. I was number 9. Yes, that number is 9, and there would be two more following me— one in 1974 and another in 1976— but at the time, there were 8 before me. And that means that 8 times before me, my mother came home with a baby. So cute. Not. I learned later during many tense family dinners that the oldests resented their parenting roles, having to change

diapers and soothe crying babies in the middle of the night so that Mom and Dad could attend to sick toddlers or catch up on laundry or bills.

So on the day I was brought home, everyone had to learn how to make space for one more person in the two bedroom, 800 square-foot house ten miles west of Chicago when this little bundle of joy (i.e., me) was carried across the threshold. One more mouth to feed. One more person to share the already tapped affection reserves. Welcome.

On May 21, 1985, I was initiated into the grown-up birthday routine. This meant the end of birthday parties or cupcakes to take to school. Looking back, I think it was a miracle that my mother was able to manage birthday celebrations at all, not to mention up to age eleven for each of us.

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~~“That’s not fair!” shouted #10. As she banged on the bathroom door, her ginger curls bounced along her back in silent frustration.~~

~~“Hurry up! I have to get to school early for cheerleading practice,” yelled #6, sitting on the top stair, pulling on her hoodie. The window air conditioning unit was blasting the upstairs hallway.~~

~~I heard the racket ruining the solitude I sought. I knew the urgency my sisters felt as I had been on the other side of the bathroom many times begging for a turn. But on that May 21st, I just slid the lever of my new pink hairdryer to “high” and let the 1800-watt roar drown out the noise of the numbers.~~

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When I woke up the morning of my twelfth birthday, I was startled to see #10’s big blue eyes staring at me.

“Hurry up,” she whisper-shouted. “Your present is waiting for you besides your breakfast cereal bowl. I wrapped your gift myself.”

Rubbing my eyes and smoothing my wild cowlicks on the crown of my head, I stood from my sleeping blankets, rolled them up, and rested them alongside #10’s on the closet floor.

Growing up in a family of eleven children and having to share rooms with up to five siblings, there was no space or money for beds. All my life, my siblings and I only knew sleeping on the floor, elbow to elbow with my sisters.

With my bed tucked away, I stumbled down the stairs to breakfast confused. I knew what my birthday present was. I bought it at the drugstore with the cash Mom gave me the day prior, but I had already wrapped it and hid it in the drop ceiling of the basement. Only sweet and stealthy #10 extracted the package and knew its contents now, and I wanted to keep it that way.

A three-inch-by-twelve-inch box wrapped in leftover Christmas paper and a card taped to the top rested beside an empty cereal bowl. The Christmas-tree covered box was the only sign that today was “special” -- a symbolic celebration of the day, twelve years prior, that I was born #9. I sat at the ten-foot-long picnic-like dining table alone until #10 brought over a box of generic Cheerios.



“Sorry -- no milk, again,” she said apologetically as she slid onto the bench beside me. “Aren’t you going to open your present?”

The rest of the house was somewhere between sleeping and showering, so I thought for a minute. If I opened the present, then everyone would know what it was and ask to use it -- that is, assuming #10 kept its contents a secret, which was unlikely. Still, if I timed it right, I could be the first to use it and maybe, just maybe keep it to myself for a few days if I could find a new hiding place. Nobody “owns” anything in a family of eleven, even if it is a birthday present.



Shoving one more dry spoonful of cereal into my mouth, I grabbed my still-wrapped present and raced down the creaky basement stairs to wash the cowlicks out of my long brown wavy hair. #8 was wrapping her hair in a towel, so as soon as I heard Madonna singing through her basement bedroom door, I knew the coast was clear.

A few years ago, my dad noticed the arguments about bathroom time in the mornings were reaching a new DEFCON level. Always the problem-solver, he decided to modify the basement laundry room sink, the place where the washing machine expelled dirty water, into a public vanity with a mirrored cabinet with a towel shelf. He figured the girls could at least have one more place to wash their hair and brush their teeth. When I turned twelve, there were just six kids left at home -- all girls -- and with just one bathroom, to say that this vanity saved lives is not an understatement.

After I put my gift between my bare feet and covered it with a towel, I turned on the faucet and began washing my hair vigorously in the sink. It was the fastest shampoo-job in my life. As I twisted the water out of my hair, I heard #s 9 and 10 moving in their basement bedroom, so I grabbed my gift and took the creaky stairs two-by-two up two flights. I did my best to step on the perimeter of the stairs to minimize the creaks. There was only one place I would have the privacy I needed to open my present and be the first to use it: the bathroom.



As I got to the top of the stairs, I actually felt my herd of sisters closing in. The creaky stairs must have alerted others that it was morning, and the battle for minutes in the bathroom was about to commence. I slammed the door, grabbed the nail scissors from the cabinet, closed the toilet lid and ripped off the Christmas tree paper along with the card. I cut open the plastic packaging with the scissors, nearly ripping open my thumb while I was at it. And as I pulled the pink hair dryer from its packaging, I literally heard the angels sing, saw the skies of heaven open, “Ah!”

Bang-bang. Bang.

Fists pounded on the door, muffled voices pushed through the wooded fibers. Plug in the hair dryer. (This one had the new Appliance Leakage Circuit Interrupter.) A communal hairbrush from the drawer. No time to gaze at my visage in the mirror. No time for a “happy birthday to me.” Hit the reset button and...

Bang. Bang-bang.

I turned on the hair dryer to drown out the sounds, but my hands were shaking. The bristles of the brush snagged in my long locks. #7 always warned me against using a brush on

wet hair. I needed two hands to break the brush from my mane, but I didn't want to turn off the hairdryer. I didn't want to hear the knocks and the voices. I placed the pink hairdryer on the counter; the cord was dangerously close to the wet sink as the 1800-watt vibration made my birthday present dance on the counter like a wind-up plastic bunny. All of the sudden, the hair dryer fell to the floor--and so did I.

Near tears, I slumped on the bathroom floor trying to break free from my brush when I noticed the card near the floor vent. I released the brush to dangle as I picked up the card. A birthday card. But I never bought myself a birthday card.

The cover was a drawing of me with my crazy hair, all wild over a daisy-print sundress, skinny legs sprouting out like flower stems. #7, the artist, had drawn it. And inside the card were signatures from my siblings--all of them. The card must have been passed around for weeks to get everyone's signature--those living in the house and those with bathrooms and homes of their own.

Bang.

Bang.

Bang.

The rhythm of the bang was slower like my heart.

I pushed down the power lever of the hairdryer to silence its roar.

I looked in the mirror --brush dangling, waves recoiling.

I looked at my hazel eyes, the color I shared with #s 6 and 7, the almond shape I shared with #s 8 and 10. Ginger curls, blond waves, brunette cowlicks -- the sisters also carried genes that resisted order.

Even if I could get the brush out of my hair to finish my blowout, within minutes of stepping into the May humidity, my hairline would revolt and little spirals would form. The hairdryer was a terrible idea for a gift.

Opening the door a crack to be sure I would not be punched by a bang, I locked eyes with #10 mid-WAP. "Help?" I pleaded.

Pushing the door open all the way, I let #10 into the bathroom to see the spectacle of wrapping paper and plastic packaging strewn about the floor tile. "Of course, take a seat in my office," said #10 with a grin, pointing to the toilet.

Just then, #6, rushing to get to school early, pushed her way into the bathroom, took off her hoodie, and picked up the pink hairdryer. "Oh--can I use your hairdryer? It's okay, right?"

Before I could respond, the 1800-watt roar was now a musical purr.

And as #10 untangled my hair and #6 used my birthday present, I realized that I was surrounded by the presence of presents. Happy birthday, Sarah. I thought. (Sisters will be around a lot longer than the hairdryer.)