



THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF NARRATIVE LETTERS

GRADE 10B

Introduction

Narrative letters are often like a quick phone call to a friend over some piece of news you've just got to share. They can be about:

1. An everyday incident without much consequence
2. The proudest/happiest moment of your life
3. An unusual thing you've done.

In this booklet we have aimed to help students write the perfect letter. And have included:

- ✓ Basic format for the letter
- ✓ Register reviews
- ✓ Notes on the three types of situations
- ✓ Example letters
- ✓ Common errors
- ✓ Useful phrases

We hope that all this will build up your confidence about your writing skills and help motivate you to write with a great enthusiasm.

ENJOY!!

Teacher's Note:

The model answers in this booklet are written by students and they do contain some register errors. The reader is encouraged to identify them and correct them.

TYPE 1 NARRATIVE LETTERS

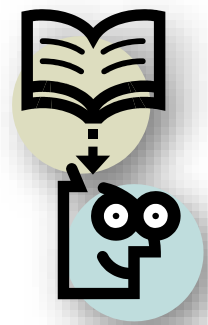
Narrative letters are friendly letters. They are not written to a friend to ask them how they are doing. As the name indicates, “narrative” means “story”. So in a narrative letter you briefly narrate something exciting that happened to you to a friend. There are 3 types of narrative letters, but this chapter will only be about **Type 1 narrative letters**.

Type 1 narrative letters mostly include something that happened to you which did not result in any serious consequences. It could be any of the following situations:

- Sighting a celebrity.
- Getting locked in/out of your house.
- Getting stuck in an elevator.
- Being caught in the middle of a fight in school.

Tips for a good narrative letter:

- You should use your imagination so that your letter will be more interesting. However, do not bluff or make you look like a hero.
- Do not include things that are impossible such as you flying up into the air to catch a crashing airplane. Your imagination should be as realistic as possible.
- Do not be too emotional and dramatic through the letter.
- Write everything in the same order it happened.
- Using time sequence phrases, connectors and feelings in your letter will make it interesting.



INTRODUCTION:

<i>I can't wait to tell you...</i>	}	<i>what happened to me...</i>
<i>I am dying to tell you...</i>		<i>who/how/what</i>
<i>You'll never believe...</i>		
<i>You'll never guess...</i>		

The introduction should be as short as possible.

BODY

- Describe what happened before the main event. (it should be something ordinary like having coffee with your friends or shopping)
- Include time sequence phrases. E.g.: in the morning, by this time, in the end, within no time...etc.
- Show feelings. E.g.: I was horrified to learn that, I was furious to know that, I was delighted to see that...etc.
- Include personalizing phrases. E.g.: I wish you were there, as you can imagine I was terrified, if only you were there...etc.



CONCLUSION

The conclusion of a narrative letter should be short just like the introduction. It could be concluded by sentences like: *“Well, I must dash now, got to tell Ben about it”* or *“Looking back, it was one of the most happiest moments in my life”*

Example narrative letters

Write a letter to a friend about getting stuck in a lift. Your letter should be no more than 150-200 words long. Try to include the following points:

- What you were doing before getting stuck in the lift
- What happened in the lift
- How you finally got out of there

Dear Rose,

You will not believe what happened to me yesterday. It was the most frightening but also the most exciting thing that ever happened to me.

I went up to my dad's office to get his car keys to go to the mall with some friends from school. My dad's office is on the top floor so I had to use a very ancient looking elevator. I surely wouldn't climb the stairs all way up to the top floor as you know.

The stupid elevator was really slow and it felt like hours to get the thing moving. I kept pressing the button like crazy. After it got moving it suddenly stopped halfway. I was so terrified. I kept pressing all the buttons I found. You know how much I panic in situations like that. I tried to call my dad but there was no signal in the elevator, not even a security camera to let people know I was stuck in there. I was so scared! It was really creepy. I tried my best not to panic but it was all too frightening. I kept having bad thoughts about being stuck in there forever.

Finally, after about twenty minutes, the elevator started moving! It was in a sudden so I was really shocked and surprised. When I got to my dad's office I was as pale as a ghost, but everything went back to normal after the shopping trip. I wish you were there with me when I was stuck in that creepy elevator. We would probably throw a party in there!

I must dash now. Have to tell the whole family about it.

Yours,

Jennifer

(274 words)

Write a letter to a friend about an attempted robbery in a local shop. Your letter should be between 150-200 words. You should include the following points:

- What you were doing at the shop
- How you reacted
- What happened after the robbery

Dear Henry,

Wait till you hear what happened to me this morning in a local antique shop. I am still quite shaken by it.

I went to the antique shop to buy a present for my best friend Maya. She loves ancient things so the antique shop was the perfect place to look for. The antique shop doesn't get many customers from here but it is a very interesting place. The shopkeeper is quite an old man but very warm and friendly.

When I went there, there was a "closed" sign on the door, so I turned back and headed home until I heard something breaking inside the shop. I quickly rushed toward the shop to see what happened. You know how curious and adventure seeking I am. I saw the old man Hendricks lying gagged on the floor. There was an open window so I went in and helped him untie himself. The old man's story was pretty shocking. There was a robbery in the antique shop and the robbers tied him up. They couldn't find anything valuable so they took sum cheap antiques and left. Hendricks thanked me for helping him out and gave me a beautiful Egyptian bracelet for Maya.

I really wish you were there with me. We could have found the robbers then. I saw a page on the local newspaper about the police searching for them but no news about finding them yet.

I have to dash now, got to tell Maya about my heroic actions.

Yours,

Noel

(251 words)

Write a letter to a friend about a fire breaking in your school. Your letter should be no more than 150-200 words. In your letter you should include the following points:

- What you were doing before the fire.
- How it happened.
- What happened after the fire.
- How you reacted to the fire.

Dear Adam,

You won't believe what happened to me at school this morning. It was frightening but also a very thrilling experience.

We were having lunch in the cafeteria when we heard the fire alarm go off in the Chemistry lab. All of us rushed there and I remembered that my little sister Kate was in the chemistry lab. I also rushed into the lab through the crowd but the lab was empty. I was terrified and scared that something might have happened to her. You know how protective I am of Kate. I wish you were there to see the look on my face!

In the end I found out that Kate was not in the chemistry lab. She was in the biology lab. I was really relieved and felt a little stupid of being so paranoid. No one was really hurt in the fire. It was just a small harmless fire caused by a wanna be "mad scientist" student. I can never tell my family or Kate about how stupid I was. They would probably laugh at me.

I have to dash now. Have lots of homework to do.

Yours,

Ben

(189 words)

You were at your local swimming pool when something interesting happened. You decide to write to a friend describing the event.

In your letter you should:

- Describe what you saw.
- Explain how you reacted.
- Say what happened in the end.

Dear Zack,

You won't believe what happened to me yesterday at our local swimming pool. It was so frightening.

I went with my family swimming as I usually do on Sundays. I usually practice there for the school swimming tournament. Everything was normal and peaceful when suddenly I heard a little girl cry out loud. Everyone was gathered around the pool and I also went up to see what happened. You know how curious I get.

I saw a little girl in the pool unable to swim. Everyone just stood there not knowing what to do. Even I was paralyzed for a brief second and I suddenly realized that the girl was your little cousin Ella. I went forward and pushed the lifeguard in to the pool so that he will rescue little Ella.

In the end, my plan worked out perfectly. The lifeguard took Ella out of the pool and she was alright. I was glad I pushed him into the pool. I wish you could have been there.

Well, I must dash now. Have to tell my friends from school about what happened.

Yours,

Cole

(183 words)

TYPE 2 NARRATIVE LETTERS

PICTURE THIS:

You are overweight and your friends can't imagine you walking a mile and yet you have just completed a marathon!! What would you do???

OR you have extreme fear of water and yet your cousin had convinced you to try scuba diving.

In such cases of your little personal triumphs you need somebody or anybody to tell your tale and that's where narrative letters come in, just like a quick call to a friend over a hot piece of gossip or news.

DON'T FORGET:

It's a letter to a friend and not a report!! So don't go stating just a version of the incident. Make sure to personalize and keep a friendly tone.

We'll be taking a look at:

Types of situation where you've found yourself doing a daring or unusual thing. Something that your friend wasn't expecting!!! like:

- You're not fond of big animals but you spent an entire afternoon galloping on a horse at your uncle's farm.
- You don't like performing in front of people but you took part in the school play/concert.

Introduction:

- You don't want to waste any time retelling your tale.
- Your word limit is 150-200 (not much) so keep it short!!!

HELPFUL PHRASES:

- I'm dying to tell you....
- You won't believe..
- I can't wait to...
- You'll never guess\believe
- Guess what...

DON'T FORGET TO SET THE TIME WITH PHRASES LIKE:

- this weekend ..\morning\afternoon..
- last night
- yesterday
- note: you could even drop in a few names\location to create interest...

HOW TO KICK START!!

EX:1 You'll never guess what Jules and Anna made me do last night

EX:2 You won't believe what Clara and I did this morning

EX:3 Guess what I've done just now!

EX:4 I'm dying to tell you about my little adventure this afternoon.

CONCLUSION:

Keep this brief too! You'll be dying to run off and tell someone else all about it..won't you??

HELPFUL PHRASES..

- Well, I must dash now..I've got to..
- Well, I must go now..I want to..

HOW TO BUNDLE IT ALL UP!!

EX:1 Well, I must dash now, I've got to tell Rachel all about it!

EX:2 I must go now. I want to give Brad all the exciting details..

EX:3 I've got to run now. Jane wants a blow by blow amount!

EX: 4 I'll give you more gory details later. Mum wants me hip down over to the grocery shop.

EX: 5 Well, I must run now. I want to call Blaine and tell him the news!

BODY:

To spice up your letter, make good use of..

WHS!

- who were you with?
- what were you doing ?
- when did it happen?

EX 1:I was leafing through the paper this morning..

EX 2: Clara and I were chatting inside the girls' locker room when..

TIME SEQUENCES

EX 3-we were just about to go over to Grans place.

EX 4-IN the end-it turned out to be a spectacular..

FEELINGS-

were you..

- horrified?
- delighted?
- thrilled?
- amazed ?

PERSONALIZING

Two simple ways to personalize are:

1. refer your friends' knowledge of your character

EX.1 as you can imagine.. I was petrified....

EX.2 I don't need to tell you.... how thrilled I was

EX.3 you know me- always the adventurer!

2. Refer to your friends' characteristics/ abilities

EX.1 I wish you would been there... you would have kept a cool head!

EX.2 it's a pity you weren't there ... we would have had so much fun..

Example letter 1: Writing to a friend after you spent an afternoon parachute jumping:

Dear Zoe,

I am dying to tell you what we did this afternoon.

Clara and I were on our way home from tennis practice when we saw an advertisement for a parachute jump. You know how impulsive she can be. She signed us both up and begged me to come along!

Sitting next to her on the claustrophobic little plane was an absolute nightmare. She kept chattering about this and that while I just sat there with chattering teeth and wobbly knees.

After a while the instructor asked us to strap ourselves in and line up. My fingers fumbled so much I needed help with getting everything on! When it was my turn I took one look down and decided to bail out! You know how I feel about heights don't you? Clara however had no intention of letting me live and gave me a sneaky shove!

The first few seconds were horrific but after I had the courage to open my eyes I had an absolute blast! The scenery was spectacular. Once I landed I couldn't wait to get back up again!

I got to go now. I want to call Jane and tell her all about it!

Love from,

Anna

(200 words)

Example letter 2: Writing to a friend about going horse riding

Dear Hanna,

Guess what I did this weekend!

Mom and Dad had a workshop in Leeds so they decided to send me away to Uncle Ben's farm. At first I refused point blank to go but mom wouldn't budge either so I packed up and went along.

The whole ride there I did nothing but sulk but once I got there I felt bad about it and decided to be a good sport. I even offered to help clean out the chicken coop! Uncle Ben had other plans and took me out into the paddock. He told me he was going to take me horse-riding as a treat!

When he lifted me up on to a black stallion my stomach turned queasy. He then taught me how to handle the rein and send me off in a gentle trot.

After a while I got the hang of it and really enjoyed myself. I trotted around the paddock a few times and then raced off into the fields. Uncle Ben wouldn't let me try jumping but I talked my cousin Rupert into giving me a few lessons! I wasn't a star pupil but I did get a couple of wicked bruises which put both of us in huge trouble. We had to clean out the cow sheds!

Mom and Dad teased me a lot when I told them I had a good time! I m planning to go back there soon. Maybe you could tag along. I'm sure you'll turn out into quite the country girl!

I have to run now-Janet will be wanting to here all about this

Lots of love

Alexis

(268 words)

Example letter 3: writing to a friend about a fight you got into.

Dear Aria,

You won't believe what I have just done!

I was on my way to Aunt May's place when I noticed a crowd gathered near the park. I decided to see what it was all about and headed that way.

As I pushed my way into the crowd I saw a boy at its center. With a jolt I realized it was John from school. Do you remember him? He had been showing off with a few dirt bike tricks. They were pretty good but his attitude sure wasn't!

After a while most people went off on their way but I decided to hang around for a while. You know how I get about anything dare devilish don't you? I was practically itching to try it all by the time he was finished. So I went over to him and asked him to show a couple moves.

All he did was laugh and told me that I didn't have the skills he did! Can you believe it? I started to walk away but he reached up and gave me a hard poke in the ribs. The next thing I knew my fists reached out and punched him. We both took a few swipes at each other before someone came and separated us.

I actually feel pretty good about it but mom's furious of course. I'm on chore duty for the next three weeks!

Will have to give all the gory details later. I have to go take out the trash.

With love from

*Jason
words)*

(250

Example letter 4: writing to a friend going scuba diving.

Dear Emily,

You'll never believe what Ricky and Scott made me do this morning.

We were at the dock goofing off when Zoë's dad invited us to go snorkeling with him. I told the guys I didn't want to but Scott threatened to tell mom about the F I got in History class so I had to tag along.

They kept threatening to throw me overboard the whole boat ride out into the reef edge. But once we reached there Mr. Gillard told them to cool it and get serious. By this time I had turned a delicate shade of green and was shaking all over. When everyone got into their gear we all jumped into the water.

I felt terrified at first but soon enough felt right at home. We didn't waddle in deep but still managed to catch sight of gorgeous fish and corals. Ricky swore he saw a huge sting ray but no one believes him since they aren't in season yet.

All too soon we had to head back. Over hot chocolate we got Mr. Gillard to promise us he'd take us out again next week. I think i 'm completely over my fear of the deep!

Must dash now. I want to call Rena and tell her all the details.

Best wishes,

Julian

(218 words)

Dos and Don'ts:

✗ Don't begin by classifying your letter

ex: I'm writing to tell...

✓ Do keep your introduction short and attention grabbing

✗ Don't use word like firstly and secondly. It will sound like a report and not a letter

✓ Make use of connectors like at first ,when and As.. instead

✓ Include feelings and set the scene so your friend can get the feel of your story

✗ Don't get so caught up in the story that you forget it's a letter.

✓ Personalize.

✓ Create interest through contrast.

✓ Keep the conclusion short too.

✗ Don't include a whole lot of drama. It has to be convincing!

TYPE 3 NARRATIVE LETTERS

A narrative letter is similar in some ways to a telephone call, when you rush in and picked up the phone to tell your friend all about something which has just happened to you: “hot news”! You phone because what happened was exciting or because you think your friend will find it interesting.

There are three types of situations that involve narrative writing in the exam:

- Type 1 situations: writing a letter to a friend about something that could happen to you in everyday life
- Type 2 situations: writing a letter to a friend about what you have done that is daring
- Type 3 situations: writing a letter to a friend about your happiest or proudest moment

In this section, we'll be focusing on the **Type 3 situations: writing a letter to a friend about your happiest or proudest moment**

Main things to keep in mind

- Establish which type of narrative letter is needed before starting to write
- Establish the audience
- Establish the implications
- Establish the facts according to the information given and implied in the question
- Narrative letters need to be written in friendly register.
- You have to hook the reader's attention
- Personalizing is very important as it will make the reader feel that he is included in your thoughts as you write and his feelings and opinions have been taken into account.
- You need to support your ideas in order to make them acceptable to your friend
- Do Not fall into the trap of listing

- Paragraphs need to be shown by indenting the first line of each new paragraph so that it lines up under the comma following the name(this is because the letter is hand-written in the exam)

Friendly Register: Review

- ✓ Do not use slangs
Eg: I like to chill out at the beach
- ✓ Do not shorten the words to look phonetic(in other words, to look the way they sound)
Eg: how ya doin?
- ✓ Do not use Text message/ SMS-style phonetics, such as ‘u’ for ‘you’, or small ‘i’ instead of ‘I’, or a number to represent a word, for example ‘4’ instead of ‘for’, and so on

When writing in friendly register, you should try to simplify your language as much as possible. When you try this, you will find that simplifying language very often involves expanding it; a large number of simple words are needed to explain or replace bigger words.

For example **social interaction** could be expressed in friendly register by a phrase such as **mixing and getting on with people**.

Phrases

Introduction

I can't wait to tell you

I'm dying to tell you

Wait until you hear

} about/what/what happened (to me)...

} who/how.....

You won't believe
You'll never believe
You'll never guess

} what happened (to me
who/how.....

Don't forget to say when the incident happened

...this morning

...this afternoon

...just now

...a few minutes/moments ago

Time sequence phrases

- ✓ I'd/he'd/we'd (only) just + past tense, when
Eg: we'd only just sat down at our desks when the fire alarm went off
- ✓ The moment/ minute I/ he/ we/ + past tense
Eg: the minute I walked into the room, I noticed something strange
- ✓ I / he/ we was/ were just aboutwhen + past tense....
Eg: We were just about to catch the bus, when there was a deafening noise.
- ✓ Just as I/he/we was/ were about to...
Eg: Just as we were about to catch the bus, there was a deafening noise
- ✓ As I /she/we + past tense/ past continuous
Eg: As I opened the door I heard a scream
- ✓ Before + active verb (not the ing form of the verb, which is formal)
Eg: Before I shut the door, I checked if I had my keys.

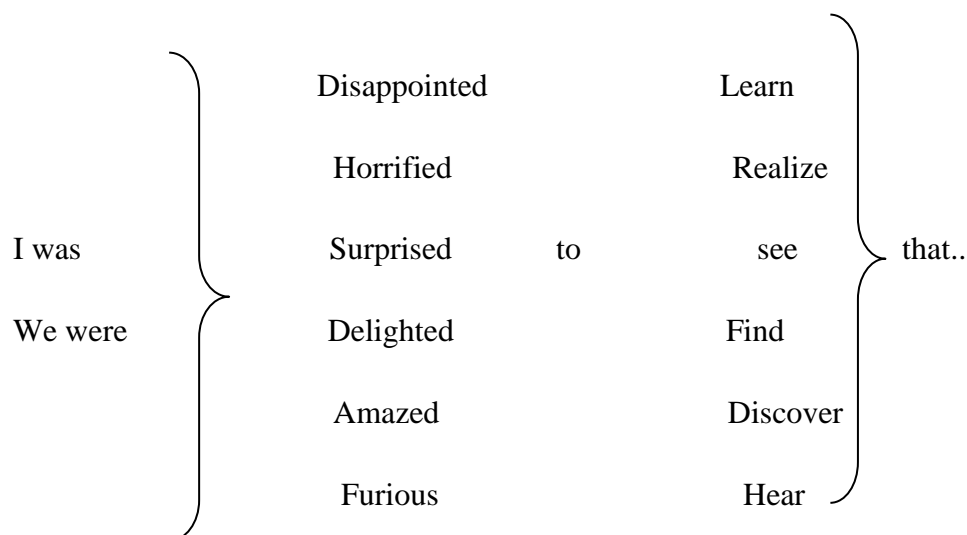
- ✓ After what seemed like ages...
Eg: After what seemed like ages, the lift door opened.
- ✓ In the morning/ afternoon/ evening
- ✓ All afternoon/ night
- ✓ By this time
- ✓ In the end
- ✓ For the first time in my life
- ✓ It only took a moment
- ✓ About...hours later
- ✓ Within no moment

Personalizing phrases

- ✓ I don't need to tell you how excited I was...
- ✓ As you can imagine, I was terrified...
- ✓ As you know, I can't stand heights...
- ✓ You know me- I always panic in emergencies...
- ✓ I wish you'd been there
- ✓ If only you'd been there

Concluding paragraph

- ✓ Well, I must dash now- I've got to tell Sam all about it
- ✓ Well, I must go now- I want to call Sarah and tell her the news!
- ✓ (looking back) I think it was probably one of the happiest moments I can ever remember!Feelings



Writing the letter (basic plan)

Main Features

- Write chronologically: in other words, write about the events in the same order they actually happened including
 - a definite beginning
 - a climax (the most dramatic or interesting moment in the story)
 - a definite conclusion
- Set the scene using, using 'Wh' questions
- Include time sequence phrases
- Include connectors
- Include feelings and how they change during the narrative

Greeting

In every case **use** standard **Dear**. **Do Not** use Dearest/ My best friend/ My dearest

Eg: **Dear Mariam,**

Introduction

- The introduction should be very short
- Don't forget to say when the incident happened
- Do not begin your story by classifying it: “I am writing to tell you about my proudest/ happiest moment” (put this in the summary instead)
- Use personal reference in the introduction
- The introduction should hook the reader’s attention

(The plan is based on a lottery win)

EG: “I can’t wait to tell you my news!”

Body

- Begin this part of the letter by describing what was happening before and leading up to the main event. A good way of doing this is by answering some of the Wh questions
- Include time sequence phrases
- Include connectors (using connectors help the story to flow)
- Include feelings...for example excited, relieved or frightened etc....
- Include personalizing phrases
- Support your ideas

“I was listening to the results of the lottery on the TV when I realized I’d won”

Concluding the letter

- The conclusion need to be very brief
 - this is because of the number of words you needed to tell the story
 - and also because you are in a hurry to tell everyone else about what happened

“The prize money wasn’t very much – but at least it should pay for some driving lessons... and maybe a small car? This was certainly the happiest day of my life

Sample letter 1

You won a scholarship to a well – known college/ school

Dear Aleeza,

I am dying to tell you what happened this weekend! I think it was probably the happiest moment of my life!

As you know I always had this dream of going to a well - known university for my higher studies. Last month as I was reading the news papers I came across a notice that the University of Harvard had scholarships open for 50 students. I was filled with excitement though I knew that the chances of winning one of those scholarship was 50 – 50.

I applied as soon as I could. I felt nervous a bit when I learnt that more than 1000 students were in the war with me to grab hold of one of those scholarships.

After what seemed like a hundred years the names of the scholarship winners came out! I was shaking when I was trying to find my name in those 50 lucky winners. When I finally found it I was very relieved and excited! I don't need to tell you how happy I was!

Well I must dash now! I have got to call Vivien and tell her all about it!

With love

Amaany

Sample letter 2

You met a member of your family for the first time

Dear Asil,

You'll never guess who I met this morning!

I was helping my mom do some grocery shopping at the local supermarket. I was having a hard time finding all the grocery on the list because the shelves in the store had been rearranged.

After I managed to find everything on the list, I went to look for mom. I found her talking to a stranger whom I had never met before. I went to her side curiosity burning inside me. When the man saw me you'll never believe what he told me. He said that he was an uncle of mine.

As you know I have never known a family member other than my parents because I have been living abroad far away from the rest of my family. When I saw my uncle for the first time it was a very happy moment for me. Probably the happiest moment of my life so far!

Well I must dash now! I have got to call Jane and tell her all about it!

With love,

Eshal

Sample letter 3

A teacher who is always tough on you gave you a good mark for a piece of work

Dear Imani,

Wait until you hear what happened yesterday!

As the art period bell rang our art teacher Mr. Jones entered the class. I always dreaded art class because I had a grudge against Mr. Jones. Sometimes I wished I could skip art class or runaway from the class room. No matter how hard I worked in the art lessons Mr. Jones never gave me a good compliment.

Mr. Jones instructed us that we were supposed to design a garden which was a bit out of the ordinary because we always sketched pictures in the art classes. I don't know why, but, I felt determined to impress Mr. Jones this time. I began on my design and to my surprise I was the first one to complete it first from the whole class.

I looked at my design before handing over to Mr. Jones and found myself satisfied with the work I had done. My heart was beating fast which was quite unusual. What Mr. Jones said after examining the design was unimaginable! He told me that he had never seen such a beautiful garden design in his life! That was probably the proudest moment of my life!

Getting such a compliment from Mr. Jones was beyond my dreams. I still can't believe it. Can you?

With love from,

Limya

Sample letter 4

Happy moment of your life

Dear Jenifer,

You won't believe what happened this weekend!

Two weeks ago I heard that a large marathon was going to be held all around the city. One of my friends George suggested that I could try and run the marathon which would help me to lose weight. I thought about it and accepted the challenge.

So, I joined the race and although I didn't win, I finished it before a lot of others. The moment I crossed the finish line, I felt that I had overcome my fear of not finishing the marathon, since as you know, I was overweight.

Many of my friends had attended the race and were surprised that I managed to run continuously without stopping throughout the entire race. The day was probably the happiest and proudest moment of my life!

Now you know all about the most exciting goal which I set myself and managed to do successfully, take good care of yourself. I am looking forward to seeing you.

Love,

Ali

(168 words)

Sample letter 5

You won a competition

Dear lafhaan,

How are you? It's been so long since I wrote to you.

Hey did you know I have just won first prize in a singing competition in our town. It was a competition held in remembrance of a famous country singer who passed away 6 years ago.

At first I never thought that I'd make it through to the finals 5 but surprisingly I did. At that moment I was sure if I tried hard I could win it. Finally the unforgiving days of practice bloomed the flower of victory making me the winner of the competition. I was so happy but, I was overjoyed when I heard that the prize was a two week holiday to anywhere i choose in the WORLD with a friend. In this opportunity I would love to go to America. It's always been my dream to go there.

I can't wait to go to America but I don't want to go alone. So would you like to join me? I am sure you would enjoy it. I can't wait to hear from you.

With love from,

Xyn

(183 words)

CONCLUSION

The right format, a rich vocabulary and a great imagination! A narrative letter can be tricky to write without all this! We've handed you the basic tools. Keep developing and make the best use of everything included. The phrases, situations and example letters included will have really gotten your creative juices flying. So grab your pens and start writing!

Hope you all have enjoyed poring over this booklet!