



## MY OWN STORY

Stories about your life are important and writing them is easier than you think! Let's write about your successes, your thoughts, the events in your life so your own story is recorded and kept as part of your family's history.

In this activity you are going to write a personal narrative story. This is a type of story where you describe something that happened to you; something that is important to you. You can write about anything you want and in your very own words...it's your story. It will have such interesting and exciting descriptions that everyone will really enjoy reading it.

Emily Carr, the famous British Columbia artist, was also a talented writer. Words from some of her delightful narrative childhood stories are used as examples in this activity to inspire you. Now let's get started!

### RESOURCES

Choose one of these blank forms to help you organize your facts for the introduction, body and conclusion of your story. Download the PDF files and print. Both forms are provided by the Victoria Genealogical Society.

**FACTS TABLE for MY OWN STORY**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

INTRODUCTION	BODY	CONCLUSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set the scene:</li> <li>Who's going to happen?</li> <li>Where?</li> <li>When?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the action:</li> <li>What happened?</li> <li>Give details.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the end:</li> <li>Feelings of the end.</li> <li>Why is this story important?</li> </ul>

Victoria Genealogical Society  
43021 Victoria North PO  
Victoria, BC, Canada V8X 3G2  
250-360-2808 ~ [vgs@vgsociety.org](mailto:vgs@vgsociety.org)

**STORY MAP for MY OWN STORY**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTRODUCTION**  
Set the scene

---

**PARAGRAPH**

---



---



---

}

**PARAGRAPH**

---



---



---

**BODY**

Describe the events in order

**PARAGRAPH**

---



---



---

}

**PARAGRAPH**

---



---



---

---

**CONCLUSION**  
Importance of this story

---



---



---

Victoria Genealogical Society  
43021 Victoria North PO  
Victoria, BC, Canada V8X 3G2  
250-360-2808 ~ [vgs@vgsociety.org](mailto:vgs@vgsociety.org)

1. [Facts Table for My Own Story](#)
2. [Story Map for My Own Story](#)



## WHAT TO DO

### Choose a topic

In the activity [My Own Time Machine](#), you created a timeline chart which listed the dates and facts of events that happened to you. You can choose one of those events as the topic for your narrative story, or any other event that happened to you. It could be the greatest, most outstanding event of your life, or the smallest little thing that made you happy. It will be a good story if you choose something important to you!

When Emily Carr was a very little girl she and her mother were walking down Government Street, in Victoria, BC, when they had a brief meeting with a stray dog. In the story “Spotted Dog”, Emily explains this simple event was so important to her because: “...for that moment, he was my dog. The first I had ever owned. He introduced me to entire dogdom, and for that I love him still” (page 41).

### Brainstorm

Now you need to think of all the details of the event you have chosen. Sometimes it is hard to remember enough details to write a full and interesting story so shake out as many thoughts as you can and write them anywhere on a sheet of blank paper. Set a timer for 5 minutes and write words, phrases and sentences until the timer goes off. Don't worry about spelling and punctuation or if the words fit together. Just write your thoughts as they come, in any order. Don't stop writing until the time is up! This is called **freewriting**. Describe the people, the weather and the scenery; use action words as much as possible. How did you feel? Use words which describe the sounds, smells and colours you remember. Really paint a picture with your words.

In the story, “White Currant”, Emily Carr recalls the garden where she played as a child. See how she uses words to describe smells, sounds and her thoughts:

When you went there the colour and the smell took you and wrapped you up in themselves.

The smell called the bees and the butterflies from ever so far. The white butterflies liked it best; there were millions of them flickering among the pink flowers, and the hum of the bees never stopped (p.53).

### Organize the Details

Personal narratives usually tell a story **chronologically** and in 3 parts; the beginning, middle and end. There is usually one beginning (introductory) paragraph to set the scene or say why the story is important. The middle (body) of the story usually has at least 3 paragraphs describing the event or problem to overcome. The end (concluding) paragraph says what was learned or felt when the event was finished.

Organize the details on your freewriting paper into beginning, middle and end parts by using different colored highlighters or by just labeling each detail with the numbers 1, 2 and 3.



Remember to keep your story's events in the order in which they happened because this will really help the story flow and make sense.

Now take your organized details and transfer them from your freewriting paper onto a story map or fact chart. You can make your own map or chart; or use one of these:

[Facts Table for My Own Story](#)

[Story Map for My Own Story](#)

Now you have an outline for your narrative!

### **Begin Writing**

When you write, express yourself freely and always in your own words. You don't need to talk as though you are someone else, someone older or as you think people want you to talk. Be your own self and let your style come out because this is what will make your story so special!

Follow Emily Carr's advice to: "Be careful that you do not write or paint anything that is not your own, that you do not know in your own soul. You will have to experiment and try things out for yourself and you will not be sure of what you are doing. That's all right, you are feeling your way into the thing" (qtd. In Dilworth).

Another helpful writing tip from Emily is: "There are only two rules that I know in writing(:) see the thing as clear as you can and try to show it never using big words where a little one will do" (qtd. in Switzer xv).

Now, using your story map or fact chart, start writing. Set the scene. Tell the readers what the story is all about. You can begin with the word "I" since you are the main character in the narrative. Using "I" and "we" is called writing in the **first person** and personal narratives are usually written this way. As in this first sentence from Emily's "White Currants", your first sentence should make your readers interested in finding out more: "It happened many times, and it always happened just in that corner of the old garden" (p.53). Doesn't that one sentence make you want to find out what happened in Emily's garden?

After you have written your first paragraph, work through all the parts of your story making it as colourful as you can to hold the readers' interest. You can use words you or someone else would have actually said, just as if you were talking. Put quotation marks around those words. This is called **dialogue** and it will make your narrative jump to life! Your **dialogue** will also show your personality and the readers will get to know you. You can talk about how you learned a lesson. You can gently poke fun at yourself and tell humorous, good stories about other people if the funny details add to the story. But don't tell details that might embarrass others. Make sure your story is real and true – no imaginary details here!

In "Doctor and Dentist", Emily tells a good story about Dr. Helmcken: "When (the city of) Victoria was young specialists had not been invented – the Family Doctor did you all over



(p138). Dr. Helmcken knew each part of every one of us. He could have taken us to pieces and put us back together again without even mixing up any of our parts” (p.139).

Then she uses dialogue to let you know how she really felt when he treated her hurt knee: “The Doctor said, ‘Yell, Lassie yell! It will let the pain out.’ I did yell, but the pain stayed in” (Doctor and Dentist p.139).

Remember, your last paragraph should tell what you learned or felt after the event. Emily wrote “Spotted Dog” to tell us how she first learned to love dogs. Now tell your readers why you chose to write your story!

### **Revise and Edit**

Take a break after all that writing and come back a few hours later to reread and edit your story. Check your spelling, grammar and punctuation or have a friend check with you.

Ask yourself: Does your story makes sense? Do you stay on topic? Does your story flow in order from the beginning to the end? Do you always write in the **first person**?

Make any changes you think are needed and...**your story is done!**

### **WHAT'S NEXT?**

#### **Share: Then Write Some More!**

The story you have just written is a great beginning! Share it with your family and friends. It can be the start of a collection of stories you write about your life as you are living it. What a treasure these stories will be to your parents and other relatives. What a wonderful gift they will be to your future descendents!

#### **Keep a Journal**

Get ideas for more stories by writing a daily journal or diary.

#### **Collect Family Stories**

Ask others in your family to write their stories and collect them in a binder called *Our Own Stories*.

---

### **Works Cited**

Carr, Emily. “Doctor and Dentist.” *The Book of Small*. 1942. Toronto: Irwin, 1966. Print.  
---, “White Currant.” *The Book of Small*. 1942. Toronto: Irwin, 1966. Print.  
---, “Spotted Dog.” *This and That*. Ed. Ann-Lee Switzer. Victoria: Ti Jean, 2007. Print.  
Dilworth, Ira. *Forward*. Klee Wyck. 1941. Canada: Clarke Irwin, 1971. Print.  
Switzer, Ann-Lee. Introduction. *This and That*. Victoria: Ti Jean, 2007. xi-xx. Print.