**File Name: N11-12R All the Roads to Kansas**

**Narrative**

**Grade 11**

**Range of Writing**

**Engages and orients the reader by setting out a situation and its significance, establishing a point of view, and introducing a character:** The writer succinctly sets the context and focus (the mother running off, the child waiting for the grandmother) for the story to follow. The narrative is told from the perspective of a third person narrator.

**All The Roads to Kansas**

 I was six years old when my mother ran off with the pizza delivery boy. She sent a note in the mail to my grandmother that read, “Katie’s at home. Needs food and clothing. Jane.” Gramma drove the one-thousand-seven-hundred-twenty miles from Kansas to pick me up, pulling into the trailer lot in her blue, wood-paneled station wagon, slamming the car door behind her. I was sitting in a rusty hubcap on the from lawn, my chin cupped in my palm and my heart thundering wildly when she said, “Well, I’m here.”

 She wore a pink silk handkerchief around the beehive of her blue-tinted hair, a paisley mu-mu and orange scuffs on her feet. Red, plastic-rimmed glasses hung from the chain around her neck and a cigarette dangled from the corner of her pink-painted mouth. She was terrifying.

**Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the character** of the grandmother from the child’s perspective

 She was perfect.

 She crossed the front lawn without saying a word, opening the door to the trailer as she looked back, once, for me to comply. I followed her, remaining stubbornly, apprehensively, at the front door. She bustled around the house, bundling up all my clothes and tying them with a piece of twine she found heaped in the back of her Buick. Before she decided it was time to leave, she trussed me up in my snow gear, explaining tersely, “It’s cold in Kansas this time of year.”

**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—**leaving home behind and going to Kansas

 I had been sitting inside the trailer, alone, for three days. Leaving for Kansas was the most spectacular adventure I could imagine, so wondrous I could barely believe it was real. She hauled me into the Buick, grunting at the dead weight of my tense body, and we sat on the leather bench seat of her car as she let it idle in the lot. She was flicking cigarette ashes out the open window when I mustered up the nerve to pinch her, just to make sure I wasn’t dreaming.

 “What--?” she narrowed her gaze at me, dragging on the cigarette so the tip gleamed in a bright orange “O” between her lips.

**Uses precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, and characters**

 “You’re real,” I whispered in wonder.

 “As much as you are,” she huffed, tossing the cigarette from the car and cranking up the window. “Just don’t make a habit of pinching people to test out that theory, ‘kay, Sugar?” She rammed the car into reverse and sped away from the lot. The pieces of my childhood were fading as fast as the scenery, and yet I was filled with a sense of bone-deep elation. For the first time in three days, I smiled.

 I saw Gramma cut a look at me out of the corner of her eye, and nod. She glanced back at the road when she pulled the slip of paper from her pocket, and said, “It’s all you’ve got of your momma, so I figured you’d want to keep it.”

**Creates a smooth progression of events**

 I was six, and I couldn’t read the words my mother had hastily scrawled on a grocery receipt, but I kept that piece of paper fisted in my hand all along the roads to Kansas. “Gramma,” I whispered after a few hours, barely awake and suddenly terrified, “are you ever gonna bring me home?”

**Provides a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is resolved over the course of the narrative:** the grandmother recognizing the sadness and importance of this moment for the child, whose old home and mother are now gone

 I could see her eyes in the passing lights of oncoming cars, watching them fill up with giant, watery tears, saw them go soft and achy. “Oh, Katydid,” she murmured gently, reaching out in the darkness to clutch the fist that held my mother’s letter. “We’re getting there.”

In this narrative, the writer tells the story of a young child who has just been abandoned by her mother, and whose grandmother has come from far away to claim her. The narrative is told from a third person point of view, the young child, but the grandmother is the most significant character in the story.

The writer uses some dialogue and descriptive detail, which capture the hardscrabble existence of the child (“*sitting in a rusty hubcap on the from lawn”*) and the commanding presence of the grandmother (“*She was terrifying. She was perfect.”).*

To develop the story, the writer uses a clear sequence of events beginning with the grandmother coming to pick up the narrator, to create a cohesive whole by the end of the narrative.

Beginning with the first sentence (“*I was six years old when my mother ran off with the pizza delivery boy”),* the writer builds carefully toward the outcome that this child will not see her mother or her home again, and that the grandmother is in fact rescuing her.

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