**File Name: N8R Deadly Ink**

**Narrative**

**Grade 8**

**Range of Writing**

**Deadly Ink**

**Queen Elizabeth I**

**Engages and orients the reader by establishing a context for narrative.** The key conflict / focus in the story, “to freedom, to life” (or not) is introduced, though not yet fully developed

One tiny black leg gracefully sweeps forward. Then five more identical legs immediately follow. The distance covered is just slightly over a mere quarter of an inch. Carried on its face is no discernible expression. The same face carried from the first introduction to oxygen. To freedom. To life. The little bug pauses shortly from its purposeful stride.

Yes indeed, there is much happening outside in the country of England. The year is 1587, and the month February. Everyone still wishes me to be married, but I do not think it a wise idea. Should I hand my country over to someone else who will recklessly run England? No. I owe it to my subjects to keep them safe as long as possible, and for as long as I am alive. I also at the moment need to keep my country safe from France and Spain who seem to be plotting against me, planning to take over this country.

**Uses a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events,** as attention shifts back to the bug.

**Engages and orients the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator,** Queen Elizabeth**,** in the first person.

However, my attention is focused on the bug. Such a frail, helpless looking character.

The task at hand requires only a signature from me. My name, written identically countless times before. The consequence of signing this paper are far bigger than any paper put forth in my past existence, unfortunately. This time my signature means the death of a fellow human being. My cousin, Mary, the Scottish queen.

**Uses precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey events:** The writer uses details to **develop suspense of the internal conflict the** Queen is struggling with, her character, and the events of the story

The bug continues its deliberate march forward, this time coming closer to the figure standing across from me, the woman reading the paper. It seems to glance upward at my huge figure looming over it. Threatening, but at the moment sitting still.

There is no question about what I must do. Mary has been kept in many different prisons here after being accused of plotting her husband’s murder and after escaping prison in Scotland to come asking for my help. I had no choice but to keep her here. I have kept her here for over twenty years. I could not leave her helpless.

**Uses narrative techniques of pacing, reflection, and description to develop the character of Queen, the events of the story,** and the internal conflict she faces.

Now, however, Mary is guilty of high treason. She was found to be communicating with France and Spain. She has been devising plans with them to take over England. To let her live would be wrong. Nevertheless, she is a relative of mine. In addition, she is a queen. How can I put to death royalty? The hand belonging to none other than me has to sign the paper for her death. Is there a special term for me giving approval to Mary to be killed? Regret? Shame? Murder?

Uses a bug as a metaphor for Mary

A hand seemingly unnoticed by the bug raises into the air.

**Shifts perspective back and forth** between the bug and the Queen to help create dramatic tension

My signature is the task at hand. My signature is Mary’s death. The tip of my quill pen finds its way to the paper. My heart beat finds its rate speeding up.

**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,** focusing the reader on what is about to happen, both to the bug and to Mary

I look up just in time to see the hand of one of my guards falling, slicing through the air. A foot away from the table. Half a foot. Two inches.

The little bug looks upward at the hand falling above its back. It panics. The frail legs start to move as fast, and almost faster, than the bug knew it could. Not fast enough.

A cold chill runs down my back, causing my hand to shake at the impact of the other hand hitting the table. Of the other hand hitting the bug. I look down at my signature. Elizabeth. In the middle of the “z”, there is a tiny fault where my hand slipped. The bump is hardly noticeable to those who would glance at my signature in the future. However, engraved in my mind is my name holding the mistake in the “z”, holding the bug’s death, and holding Mary’s death.

**Provides a conclusion** of the bug’s death and Mary’s death that **follows from events of the story.** The lack of reflection on Elizabeth’s part indicates that the time for reflecting is over and she has taken action.

For this narrative from an eighth-grade social studies class, the student was asked to write a narrative showing a moment of critical importance in the life of a historical character the class had studied. This writer effectively introduces a character, Queen Elizabeth I, and tells the story of her decision to execute her cousin Mary. The writer uses the bug as a narrative device to build the dramatic tension as Elizabeth tries to come to her decision.

The writer develops a structure in which the focus shifts back and forth between Elizabeth’s ruminations on her cousin’s fate and that of the bug that symbolically represents her cousin, a use of metaphor that is not stated in the Standards at this grade level. The event sequences unfold naturally and logically. The writer uses precise words and phrases and sensory details to tell the story and to develop Elizabeth as a character. She sequences events so that they build inexorably to the outcome of the death of both the bug and Mary, an aspect of narrative writing not stated in the Standards at this grade level.

The narrative concludes almost abruptly, as the bug is killed and Elizabeth arrives at her decision that Mary must be executed. It seems to reflect the firmness with which she finally decides, after having struggled mightily with the decision.

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