



ELA/Literacy
Released Item 2017

Grade 10
Narrative Task
House When It Was Occupied
VH001877

Today you will view the painting “House by the Railroad” and read the poem “Edward Hopper and the House by the Railroad” (1925). As you read, pay close attention to the information in the poem as you answer the questions to prepare to write a narrative story.

Read the poem “Edward Hopper and the House by the Railroad” (1925). Then answer the questions.



Edward Hopper and the House by the Railroad (1925)

by Edward Hirsch

Out here in the exact middle of the day,
This strange, gawky house has the expression
Of someone being stared at, someone holding
His breath underwater, hushed and expectant;

- 5** This house is ashamed of itself, ashamed
Of its fantastic mansard rooftop
And its pseudo-Gothic porch, ashamed
of its shoulders and large, awkward hands.
But the man behind the easel is relentless;
10 He is as brutal as sunlight, and believes

The house must have done something horrible
To the people who once lived here
Because now it is so desperately empty,
It must have done something to the sky

15 Because the sky, too, is utterly vacant
And devoid of meaning. There are no
Trees or shrubs anywhere—the house
Must have done something against the earth.
All that is present is a single pair of tracks

20 Straightening into the distance. No trains pass.
Now the stranger returns to this place daily
Until the house begins to suspect
That the man, too, is desolate, desolate
And even ashamed. Soon the house starts

25 To stare frankly at the man. And somehow
The empty white canvas slowly takes on
The expression of someone who is unnerved,
Someone holding his breath underwater.
And then one day the man simply disappears.

30 He is a last afternoon shadow moving
Across the tracks, making its way
Through the vast, darkening fields.
This man will paint other abandoned mansions,
And faded cafeteria windows, and poorly lettered

35 Storefronts on the edges of small towns.
Always they will have this same expression,
The utterly naked look of someone
Being stared at, someone American and gawky,
Someone who is about to be left alone
Again, and can no longer stand it.

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5. In the poem "Edward Hopper and the House by the Railroad (1925)," the speaker, who has been studying the painting "House by the Railroad," claims that the house now **is so desperately empty**. Write a narrative story that describes the house in the past when it was once occupied. In your story, use details from the poem and painting to help you describe what it must have been like to live in the house before it was abandoned.

Anchor Set

A1 – A10

No Annotations Included

Under the stretch of the sleepy blue skies, in the drawn out plains and praries of the American countryside, there was, of all unnatural structures, a mansion of true American beauty. Fifty years ago, there it was built in the heat of the summer and the bitter of winter. It was constructed with the strong will of a young man who recently came into a small sum of family inheritance. He funded a long stretch of rail tracks for his means of transportation (though it would never be used much often). Why, people would wonder, why would a human live in such a lonely place? The man, whose name will have been long forgotten in time, sought beauty.

"You fool, what do you intend to find out there! A good waste of money, this is!" people told him. Of course he kenw no one could understand the mind of such a person as himself. He wasn't searching for money, he wasn't searching for love or success. If you asked him, on any typical day exactly what it was he wanted to find, you'd never get the same answer twice.

"Happiness," he would say on Monday. "To find the souls who roamed the land before I," was Tuesday's answer. Every so often, he would ask *himself*, what he wanted to accomplish. "Myself." He would whisper through the empty corridors of his mansion. It mattered not if anyone heard his answers, or even understood them, so long as he knew. The man was searching to find himself.

No one came to visit the beautiful house, who slowly became sunbleached and dusted with grime. Over the years, the man didn't mind the loneliness. It was in his dwelling- the lonely house in the lonely prarie that housed the lonly little man- was his passion. He loved his house above all other things. It was his house that still believed in him. They relied on each other, like two real souls in dependance. As long as the man still lived, the house vowed in silent oath that it would stand proud for the man. The house saw through his inspirations and tantrums and loneliness. The structure saw the man for his one-man crusade and admired it. It was proud to hold a man of such great 'importance'. It stood high and mighty in the hot sun and the cold winters, giving a sense of purpose in the way it sat.

The house would see that his day was safe with a roof over his head. The man was proud to sit on his porch on the hottest of days, in the cool of the Gothic porch shade, and call his house his protector and savior. The friendship of the kind soul and the wooden dwelling would last for fifty years. Fifty long and lost years later, the house would watch its owner lay in the bed as he did every morning, but one day did not wake to see the day. The few relatives who stopped in every few days to care for the old man found him there that very morning. They carried the man out like a soldier who lost his dignity.

His achievements were unrecorded and his inspirations were all but dead. The spirit and true happiness of the land was gone. Everything he had lived for, was all for naught. As proudly as the man came, he left without a word of farewell. From that day on, the house seemed slightly dimmer, slightly bent, and somewhat ashamed of its lost cause. The house became a foolish attraction. It did not need to produce shade anymore, and the sky and the sun became meaningless. It no longer thought of the prarie as a place of solitude and inspiration as the man saw, but of dry and vacant land. The tracks were devoid of any meaning, since the man was the only one it served. The house was now all that remained of the man- a skeleton of his pride, so desperately empty.

There was no more man. There was no more love. There was no more purpose. The house was now ashamed to sit in its desolate existance.

Score

Anchor Paper 1

Written Expression

Score Point 4

I used to be quite the sight. My exterior always the brightest of all bright whites, my windows always clean, the panes always a lovely baby blue, and my roof was always exquisite, that is, until my owner had died.

Her name was Martha, she was very, very particular about how she kept me on the inside. All of my flooring was always swept and mopped. She always polished the counters and tubs, never a speck of dirt, dust or grime to be found. Always throwing the most spectacular tea parties, and dinner parties. We really enjoyed each others company, or well, atleast I did, being as I am a house, I never reallly was able to talk to Martha.

One day she had left by cab, to go off into town. She hadn't cleaned me that day, or even at all that week to be honest. It was like she had lost interest in me. She was gone an awful long time, and when she came back, she was very unkempt.

She went straight to the parlor, and laid on the sofa, her face was stained with her running make up. Oh how I wished I could have helped. She laid there for a while until the telephone began to ring.

She ran to the sound of the bells of the phone, lifted the ear piece and put the microphone to her mouth. "Hello?" Martha said.. "Oh, yes, I will be just fine.. I um.. Yes,.." She said as her conversation continued, I could not hear the person on the other end. "It is my heart. Doctor Tomas said to prepare for final days, get everything ready..." The room fell silent. She began to cry. "Yes, okay, good bye." She hung up and went on to the master bed room, to pick out her finest dress and shoes. I knew what she was doing. I could not believe it.

Days upon days had passed, with different people coming in and out of me. Martha was no longer here to clean up my insides, make my outsides exactly how she had wanted, or to tend to the flower gardens she had planted all around my perimeter. That's when I began to feel extremely sad. I knew my beloved Martha was gone for good.

My paint began to chip, my shingles began to slip off, falling on the ground all around me. The real estate agent brought many, many people through my doors, all of them refusing to go past the parlor, because of how filthy I had gotten, due to the death of my owner.

I became so ashamed of my apperance. I had hoped the sun would go down and never come back up so that no other eye would ever see me again. I just want to be left alone forever, to never be bothered, or depressed again. Just alone.

Forever.

Score

Anchor Paper 2

Written Expression

Score Point 4

This house tells a story that has never been told. Some pass and wonder why it is unoccupied, but to know the answer you have to enter inside.

One day a young lady with the name of Charlotte passed the house and wondered why it would be abandoned, so she went inside to have a look around. This house had been the talk of the town for a while. No one had ever seen the house in use and no one knew the reason for that. Upon entering the doors Charlotte could tell the house had been vacant for a while. Dust filled the house and it was dated. It also looked as if whoever left the house did so in a hurry. Nothing was packed up; everything was just strown around the house. Charlotte noticed that only one bedroom of the four was in use. There were clothes of a man and woman. There were also pictures of them scattered across the dresser. The bed was unmade and there were suitcases out. Charlotte so desperately wanted to know who lived here and why they left so she went searching around. She rummaged through the bedroom opening drawers, looking in the bathroom, and eventually she moved the sheets on the bed. This revealed a letter that said

" Dear Charles,

I am sorry to leave so quickly with no notice. Never doubt the love I have for you. I just do not fit into this little town nor do I fit into your family. I'm sorry for the plans I've ruined along with our dreams of being together. Well...those dreams aren't completely ruined. If you truly love me, catch the next train and follow me. Mr. George, at the train station, will help you find your way

Love,

Amy "

Charlotte was so excited to have found this letter!eh It reveals the history of the house. She thought this house must have held a young couple in love. Amy was staying in the house and in the town only because she loved Charles. But the thing was Amy did not fit it. So she left and did this to test Charles love for her. And by the looks of the place, since everything was left behind, Charles must have caught the next train to go be with his Amy.

Charlotte now knows the truth of what happened to the house and why it's abandoned. It wasn't the trash everyone made it out to be. It was a house abandoned for love.

Score

Anchor Paper 3

Written Expression

Score Point 3

It was a happy house with scribbles on the walls of the play room and a library with books that could entertain the mind for years. It was a content house with the little kitchen and firestove that warmed winter's chill. It was a proud house with its tall pillars and balconies that held its family. Every morning it let the light in to wake up the children, every night it kept the cold out and protected its owners. And it loved its owners. Loved how the father would fix every scratch on its surface and the children would keep it alive with their wails of laughter. Loved how the mother would fill it with wonderful smells, breakfast, lunch and dinner and how grandfather would spend hours reading its books.

But that was a long time ago. That was before its family moved into the city so the father could work in the stock market and the family could live in a tall building with no balcony and no firestove. That was before it was left all alone like it had never been part of the family, never offered its protection and comfort and warmth.

Now its empty and abandoned. Nobody fixes its scratches or fills it with good smells and laughter. Nobody reads its many book or heats up in front of its firestove. One time a storm blew a branch into one of its windows and shattered it. And there it stays, shattered window and faded scribbles. Waiting for its family to return home, and soak in the love it has so much to give. But they never come back, and it waits and waits hoping that they will. But they never do.

Score

Anchor Paper 4

Written Expression

Score Point 3

On a warm spring morning a Pseudo-gothic house sat on the lot. The lot was located on the far outskirts of a small Ohio city. The town was in a rising area of industry. It just so happened a worker from one of the steel factories was just married.

The man's name was Charles, he was twenty-six. Charles just married to the daughter of the CEO of his company. His wife Nicolette fell deeply in love with him at first sight. Two years ago they met when the company was built by her father, Richard. Once Charles and Nicolette were married Richard offered to build Nicolette her dream home. Nicolette always dreamed of having a English style gothic home.

Richard agreed to build her the house, only if Charles kept working for him. Charles didn't mind the hard work, he had a gorgeous home and an amazing wife. Having dinner on their porch watching the new steam trains bring things into town. Life was good for Charles.

With all the extra money Charles had from not having to pay for his house he would treat Nicolette every weekend. People envied them. Most people couldn't even afford their rent. Charles was an intelligent man, he could tell people hated him. Having a great boss that treated his workers right was a major bonus. Charles wanted to give back to the community.

Charles said to Nicolette, "I feel like we are the happiest people in this small town."

She agreed asking, "What would you like to do about that?"

Charles said, "I want to build a park and throw parties."

"That sounds great!", Nicolette said.

In the summer Charles started to build his park.

The citizens of that small Ohio town fell in love with their park. It was still obvious that some people still envied Charles and his life.

Charles always felt an ominous object looming around him. It followed him everywhere. He asked his preacher about it and Charles figured out the lot his house was built on was an ancient Indian burial ground. Later that day he went home and Nicolette was gone.

He searched for months and could never find her. He went crazy in the gothic house.

Score

Anchor Paper 5

Written Expression

Score Point 2

A family of seven has just recently moved into the bright, refreshing orange house. It was freshly built and still had the smell of paint. As children fought over their bedrooms, the parents settled in and unpacked boxes of their belongings. The floor was shiny and the roof was raven black. Everything about it shouted new and the family loved that feeling about it. As their children slowly matured into young adults, the house wasn't looking so new anymore. The once shiny floor was now covered in scuff marks from years of play. The walls were almost tinted with a dark shading. The roof, after years of weathering, was now looking dull and gray no longer a sharp rich black. After the years this family spent in this house, the mother and father of this family were growing old and the children were moving out. Without children, the large house was unneeded and the couple started thinking about the future of their living areas. After another five years, the last of the children moved out and the couple was alone. The house now dull and depressed, the couple decided to abandon the house and purchase a much smaller home. The legacy of the house will stand but its being will perish.

Score

Anchor Paper 6

Written Expression

Score Point 2

This house was big. This house made are family look small. I asked daddy why he picked this home. He told me it caught his eyes. I didnt think so. I missed are old house, old town, old neighbors, and old friends. I went upstairs to pick my room since we had extra rooms me and my brothers did not have to fight for a room. I picked the smallest room. For some reason I just like the cozy small room. I looked outsied the window and I saw the railroad. In the distance i could hear a faint sound of a train. My brothers thought the sound of trains were loud and annoying. To me the trains were peaceful. It made me think of this journy and that I was still on the train but not yet reached my destination. I look in my closet and there was a small door. I got closer and opened it. It was a small passage way. Since I was the smallest of my brothers I thought I would go first before telling them. I was a big room. It was filled with toys. I thought maybe the last people to live here left them. Maybe this house wasn't so bad after all.

Score

Anchor Paper 7

Written Expression

Score Point 1

The house once use to be beautiful in the sunlight. There were kids runnign through the halls, bouncing off the sea-blue walls. Now the walls are taped up waiting to be painted. There use a sweet scent of flowers going through the house when the windows were opened, from the flower garden around the house outside. Now it's all weeds and dead plants. There use to be a sweet aplle smell coming from the kitchen when they would make apple pie. It use to be a vivid house full of glorious things. All thats left now are the empty walls itself and some wire on the wall.

Score

Anchor Paper 8

Written Expression

Score Point 1

The house had been occupied before, but now it is empty since nobody lives there anymore. It must have been nice to live in the house if what the poet is saying about the house is true. Although nobody lives there so something might be bad about the house. The poet makes the house sound like it is one of a kind and anyone would love to live there although if the house is abandoned then someone might not want to live in it.. I personally would like to live there because the poet makes it sound like a nice house to live in but just over time people had not felt the need to move into this nice house.

Score

Anchor Paper 9

Written Expression

Score Point 0

In the beginning of the poem it talks about how the strange gawky house has an expression of being stared at someone who holding their breath underwater. which means that the house is starting at nothing to where it feels like someone or something holding their breath. Then it talks about how the house compares itself like a human and where it is ashamed of everything on how it looks. The artist believes the house is brutal to sunlight because he believes the house must have done something horrible to the people who once lived there. He says that because the sky is utterly vacant and devoid meaning, there are no shrubs or trees or other things anywhere. but always there will be a utterly naked look of someone being stared at, someone being left alone, and again no one can no longer stand it,.

Score

Anchor Paper 10

Written Expression

Score Point 0

Practice Set
P101 - P105

No Annotations Included

This place, my home, is always bustling with activity. Day to day it's noise upon noise upon noise. And adore it. I wouldn't give it up for the world. This large house nicely sits a family of five under its beautiful mansard rooftop. The energy that flows through this house makes each of my family members peaceful and happy, like the house itself stands tall, proud, and confident.

Sometimes I stand on the pseudo-Gothic porch and stare into the sky, colored blue and filled with clouds. A few trees and shrubs littered the grounds of our yard and once in a while a train would pass by. We invite guests over on nice days, large lunches or dinners with family and friends and everyone would be overjoyed. This great house, lifting our spirits high into the sky. None of us ever imagined leaving this fine home.

Then one day my mother grew ill. The five of us thought it a simple cold that would work its way out of her system. But it never did. Each day she got worse, her skin grew paler, her eyes darker, and her stomach thinner. Nobody knew what to do. Soon after my father caught her illness and fell sick also. We were scared, reverted back to the children who needed caring.

We called to our nearby doctors and they took them in, but after days of research and medicine even the best doctors had no idea what to do. Our house sat alone and human barren while we wept. The doctors told us that to get the best care for them we'd have to move far away. We loved our house, however the illness that clung to our mother and father was a more pressing matter. We packed our things and set off as soon as we could. Over time the house grew sad as mother and father got healthier, though we never returned. We couldn't.

I want to go back, to visit the house, to remember all those happy memories that have carelessly been thrown out the window. I can't, however, because mother and father are not yet on their feet. I wonder about it sometimes. Is it still tall and proud? Or has it hushed, expecting us to return when we never will, its breath held as though underwater? Is the sky still filled and blue and the yard still littered with green? Or is the sky vacant and the trees and shrubs gone?

Does the train still pass? Do people still visit, also waiting our return? Maybe one day I'll find out.

Today a new family will be moving into a luxury house out in the plains. The family name is the Smiths. They have 3 kids Olivia shes 7. Joey who is 13 and the oldest son Fred who is 16 years old. As the family pulls up to the house they see a large white old fashion house with a bunch of trees in the front. It was like paradise to them. As they entered the house they saw a big living room with a kitchen right next to it. Inside was very nice and clean, the kids loved it the most because of how big there rooms were. Olivia went into her room and noticed a a bookshelf in the corner of her room. And one of the books on the shelf was called Life as a tree. The book was all about how people mess with trees and cut them down. As she kept reading she got to the part where it said trees fall down on houses more then any other thing. That scared her so she told her dad about the book and the dad just told her that it will be ok.

The next day Joey and Fred went out to play ball and thats when they noticed very dark clouds coming from the right side of the sky. They werent really concerned untill the lightning came with it. Joey and Fred ran into the house so fast. And just in a matter of minutes the lights in the house cut off they couldn't see anything. The rain came down very hard and it was scarrying Olivia. Then all of a suddend they heard a big boom and a crackling sound. They couldnt see where it came from so they had to wait untill the morning.

Next morning the family woke up to a flood in the house the whole lower floor was a mess and the trees outside had been destroyed One of the trees acually fell down. That was the loud sound they heard. A couple of days later the family decided that the house isnt really them, so they moved a cuple days later into a better and smaller house for the family.

Fred one day went back to the house to see how it looked and when he went back theyre were no trees no bushes. The windows were boarded up and it looked a mess. He was kinda sad because that was the home he use to live in. And till this day no one has moved into the house.

the house is ashamed of its brutal as the sunlight. This poem tells the characteristics of the place, and how old it looks and how the sunbeams off it the man is really old and needs help to fix the house.

Here now live, the sky lost of any inhabitants. No bird flies in the sky. No cloud drifts above my head. The sun burns bright and strong against my mansard rooftop. I am alone now. The trains no longer pass. Trees no longer grace me with their presence. It wasn't always like this. There was a time where the clouds used to greet me. There was a time where the birds would sing a melody that would wake me up to a placid, beautiful morning. Those were the times where I felt happy.

People used to live in this house. I remember it well. There were three people living in my domain at the time. A woman, tall with sunset red hair and eyes green as the grass that used to grow in my yard. She lived with her husband, a carpenter who used to take the train at the train station nearby. In the house was also a small kid. I watched twenty-seven years ago as the little child was born, me as a shield for both the child and the family. Life had been born here, but life was not guaranteed to stay here...

The family, the Dawsons, lived here for eighteen years. We lived in harmony, as if the world had stopped and just for a brief moment there was nothing but pure bliss. As they aged, however, the stylist of time game me the makeover of age as well. Eventually, the husband and wife died as all life does. The sky weeped that day. The trees and bushes whistled in the wind. The birds sung a mourning song. Only the son was left.

The son lived in this house for three more years with his uncle until he had finished school. One day, he started packing his things, on a search for a job in the city. He had been born in this house. He had been raised in this house. We shared good times, he told me stories and told him history. He had left, promising to come back one day, successful and possibly even married so that more life could be born within my walls.

He left five years ago and that was the day the birds stopped singing, the sky became vacant, the trees and bushes shrivel away with time. I sat here and waited. Days turn into weeks. Weeks turn into months. Seasons had come and past. Five years have passed. A man passed by with the same ashamed look as i had. Maybe he had been abandoned. Just when I had thought someone had come to see me, the man disappears, onto visiting houses and other places just like me.

I wait again, my only company being the railroad nearby. The trains no longer greet me with a hello. Nothing seems to come to me anymore. I still wait. I wait until a train finally parks at that train station nearby. I wait for a tall man with coal colored hair like the carpenter that had died behind my walls, with green eyes like the grass that had once graced me with its appearance. I wait for him to take those steps down the train station towards this strange, gawky house that I've become. I wait again. I wait again for the boy who used to tell me stories.

I walked up to my new house and gawked at it in awe. It was such a unique house, it was beautiful. "I can't wait to explore the interior" i thought to myself. I opened the door and couldnt believe my eyes. The mud room was huge! you could see the stairs that lead to the upstairs when you walked in right away. I took off my shoes and proceeded to walk up the stairs excited to pick out my room. I ran my hand through the banister and it was so smooth. I first came upon the first room which was the master room my parents would be staying in. It had a bathroom in it and a huge walk in closet! i went to the next room and it also had a bathroom but was a little bit smaller than my parents. I went to check out the closet which was also a walk in and discovered a hidden door. i opened the door and there was a tunnel so i went in it. I went through the tunnel and it led to a secret room that no one could find. I obviously knew which room i was keeping now! I went back to my room and decided to unpack.

Practice Set

(Order of Scores: Written Expression, Conventions)

Paper	Score
P101	3,3
P102	2,2
P103	0,0
P104	4,3
P105	1,1