

ordered any tour guides. I opened the door just a crack, enough to catch a glimpse of my unexpected visitor – dark, twinkling, merry chocolate brown eyes set in a round, honest face.

After politely telling him that I didn't want or need a guide, he still refused to leave, although he was terribly cheerful about it. An idea then occurred to me. "Do you know where this is?" I showed him the address. His eyes widened in mock horror. "That is the ghost town – we do not go there. No one lives there anymore. Bad, bad place." I shook my head impatiently. "Fine, but how can I get there?"

He seemed to consider this for several long moments, looking at me doubtfully, as if he were trying to decide if I was quite sane. I appeared to pass his test, however, as he heaved a great sigh at last, and mournfully informed me that he would take me there – for a price. I balked at the sum he mentioned, but agreed in the end – what choice did I have? I'd come this far already.

We set out in the late afternoon, when the sun was beginning to sink lower in the horizon. Through the endless dunes we rode, on sturdy little mules that seemed little bothered by the heat. At last we, reached our destination, a lonely little cluster of squat white houses, pinkish in the rays of the setting sun. As the sun sank sluggishly beneath the horizon, I noticed that one of the houses had the warm glow of lamplight coming from it. I smiled to myself, unseen by my chatty guide in the cool blue twilight. My search was almost at an end – it appeared that I'd finally found my enigmatic aunt.

[Word count – 633 words]



Example 2: A bad Story

Write an essay based on Flight

Flying is a very exciting experience that many people around the world have nowadays. I have flown to Thailand, Australia and Japan with my family. The most interesting flight I experienced was when my mother, my father, and I flew to Australia. It was also a very frightening flight.

We were on the way to Changi Airport when we realized that our passports were actually still at home. So we had to go back and get our passports. When we arrived at Changi Airport, the luggage check-in counter had a very long queue. There were many Singaporeans in the queue with us who were also going to Australia.

When it was time to board, we walked up to the plane and took our seats. The flight attendants were all very nice and greeted us when we boarded the plane. Taking off was a very exciting experience. The feeling of leaving the ground is really very unique, although some people don't like it very much.

When we were in the air, we were watching the in-flight entertainment. It was very entertaining. Suddenly, howling, tempestuous winds rocked the plane and everyone started to panic. The pilot announced that it was just some minor turbulence, but I was very scared. My mother is afraid of flying, and she was even more scared than me.

The plane rattled and shook and the passengers all buckled their seatbelts. Someone's baby started crying, making my father very irritated as he does not like loud noises. The turbulence carried on for 20 minutes. I was beginning to get quite worried. Without warning, my stomach turned over

many times as the entire plane dipped in the air. A few passengers shrieked, but mostly everyone was just silent.

After another ten minutes of the swaying, the plane returned to normal. The rest of our flight to Perth was peaceful, and we got down from the plane happy and excited. I will never forget that memorable plane flight as long as I live.

[Word count – 333 words]



Good versus bad

Which story did you prefer? Most people would prefer to read the first example. Take note that it contained certain elements that make a story enjoyable to read:

Elements of A Good Narrative Essay

1. It created **suspense**. Good stories make the reader wonder what will happen next – whether the narrator of the story will achieve their goal.
2. It had **vivid descriptions**. Contrary to what you may have been told, good descriptions are about writing simply, but painting a clear picture of the story's scene in the reader's imagination. You don't need to use extremely advanced vocabulary to do this.
3. It had a **simple, clear plot**. A lot of Singaporean students have problems with this – they either have pitifully thin plots in which nothing exciting happens, or they (unwisely) think that the more complicated their plot is, the more points they will score for content. Nobody enjoys being confused. Keep your plot simple and easy to understand, but interesting.
4. It had a **unique plot**. Most people would think of airplanes when given 'flight' as a topic to write about, but the author has come up with a completely fresh idea – how many people would think of flying to a different country to look for a long-lost relative when given this topic to write about? Think out of the box and allow yourself to be creative.
5. It did not have **irrelevant/ uninteresting action**. The unexciting bits, like going through customs, or packing luggage, or even checking in to the hotel, were cut out, just like in a movie. The reader doesn't need to know what colour toothbrush the narrator of your story is using, unless it turns out that the story's villain has an extreme phobia of yellow toothbrushes (i.e., unless it is **relevant**).
6. It had interesting **characters**. The cheerful guide who refuses to go away and is very talkative – this is an example of a colourful character. You don't need to take up a whole paragraph describing a character to make him/her interesting. Use their actions, mannerisms, and physical traits to make them memorable.
7. It provided the reader with **vital, relevant information** without giving too many details. The main points of information that the reader would like to know would include who the narrator and other main characters are, what her goal is, why she is doing it, and where the action is taking place. This is the bare minimum that you should provide in your essay.

Of course, these are not the only things that go into a good essay. We will look at those in much more detail in later chapters, but these are the vital characteristics of well-written essays. No matter how wonderful your vocabulary is, or how flawless your grammar is, you simply cannot score for your content if you ignore