

Writing Practice

1. Did you see elementary school as a sanctuary or as something quite different? Write a narrative essay that conveys to readers what school meant to you when you were a child.
2. In addition to school, television was a sanctuary for Barry and her brother. Did television watching (or some other activity) serve this function for you when you were younger? Is there some activity that fills this role now? In a narrative essay, tell about your own "sanctuary."
3. What role does college play in your life? Write an article for your school newspaper in which you use narrative to illustrate what school means to you now that you are an adult.

THIRTY-EIGHT WHO SAW MURDER DIDN'T CALL THE POLICE

Martin Gansberg

This newspaper story uses objective language to tell about an incident that occurred in New York in 1964. As Gansberg reconstructs a crime two weeks after it happened, he gives readers a detailed picture of the sequence of events that led up to a young woman's murder—in full view of thirty-eight of her "respectable, law-abiding" neighbors. As you read, consider how you might have acted if you had been a witness to this tragedy.

For more than half an hour 38 respectable, law-abiding citizens in Queens watched a killer stalk and stab a woman in three separate attacks in Kew Gardens. 1

Twice their chatter and the sudden glow of their bedroom lights interrupted him and frightened him off. Each time he returned, sought her out, and stabbed her again. Not one person telephoned the police during the assault; one witness called after the woman was dead. 2

That was two weeks ago today. 3

Still shocked is Assistant Chief Inspector Frederick M. Lussen, in charge of the borough's detectives and a veteran of 25 years of homicide investigations. He can give a matter-of-fact recitation on many murders. But the Kew Gardens slaying baffles him—not because it is a murder, but because the "good people" failed to call the police. 4

"As we have reconstructed the crime," he said, "the assailant had three chances to kill this woman during a 35-minute period. He returned twice to complete the job. If we had been called when he first attacked, the woman might not be dead now." 5

This is what the police say happened beginning at 3:20 a.m. in the staid, middle-class, tree-lined Austin Street area: 6

Twenty-eight-year-old Catherine Genovese, who was called Kitty by almost everyone in the neighborhood, was returning home from her job as manager of a bar in Hollis. She parked her red Fiat in a lot adjacent to the Kew Gardens Long Island Rail Road Station, facing Mowbray Place. Like many residents of the neighborhood, she had parked there day after day 7

since her arrival from Connecticut a year ago, although the railroad frowns on the practice.

She turned off the lights of her car, locked the door, and started to walk the 100 feet to the entrance of her apartment at 82-70 Austin Street, which is in a Tudor building, with stores on the first floor and apartments on the second.

The entrance to the apartment is in the rear of the building because the front is rented to retail stores. At night the quiet neighborhood is shrouded in the slumbering darkness that marks most residential areas.

Miss Genovese noticed a man at the far end of the lot, near a seven-story apartment house at 82-40 Austin Street. She halted. Then, nervously, she headed up Austin Street toward Lefferts Boulevard, where there is a call box to the 102nd Police Precinct in nearby Richmond Hill.

She got as far as a street light in front of a bookstore before the man grabbed her. She screamed. Lights went on in the 10-story apartment house at 82-67 Austin Street, which faces the bookstore. Windows slid open and voices punctuated the early-morning stillness.

Miss Genovese screamed: "Oh, my God, he stabbed me! Please help me! Please help me!"

From one of the upper windows in the apartment house, a man called down: "Let that girl alone!"

The assailant looked up at him, shrugged, and walked down Austin Street toward a white sedan parked a short distance away. Miss Genovese struggled to her feet.

Lights went out. The killer returned to Miss Genovese, now trying to make her way around the side of the building by the parking lot to get to her apartment. The assailant stabbed her again.

"I'm dying!" she shrieked. "I'm dying!"

Windows were opened again, and lights went on in many apartments. The assailant got into his car and drove away. Miss Genovese staggered to her feet. A city bus, O-10, the Lefferts Boulevard line to Kennedy International Airport, passed. It was 3:35 a.m.

The assailant returned. By then, Miss Genovese had crawled to the back of the building, where the freshly painted brown doors to the apartment house held out hope for safety. The killer tried the first door; she wasn't there. At the second door, 82-62 Austin Street, he saw her slumped on the floor at the foot of the stairs. He stabbed her a third time — fatally.

It was 3:50 by the time the police received their first call, from a man who was a neighbor of Miss Genovese. In two minutes they were at the scene. The neighbor, a 70-year-old woman, and another woman were the only persons on the street. Nobody else came forward.

The man explained that he had called the police after much deliberation. He had phoned a friend in Nassau County for advice and then he had crossed the roof of the building to the apartment of the elderly woman to get her to make the call.

"I didn't want to get involved," he sheepishly told police.

Six days later, the police arrested Winston Moseley, a 29-year-old business machine operator, and charged him with homicide. Moseley had no previous record. He is married, has two children and owns a home at 133-19 Sutter Avenue, South Ozone Park, Queens. On Wednesday, a court committed him to Kings County Hospital for psychiatric observation.

When questioned by the police, Moseley also said that he had slain 23
Mrs. Annie May Johnson, 24, of 146-12 133d Avenue, Jamaica, on Feb. 29
and Barbara Kralik, 15, of 174-17 140th Avenue, Springfield Gardens, last
July. In the Kralik case, the police are holding Alvin L. Mitchell, who is said
to have confessed to that slaying.

The police stressed how simple it would have been to have gotten in 24
touch with them. "A phone call," said one of the detectives, "would have
done it." The police may be reached by dialing "O" for operator or SPring
7-3100.

Today witnesses from the neighborhood, which is made up of one- 25
family homes in the \$35,000 to \$60,000 range with the exception of the
two apartment houses near the railroad station, find it difficult to explain
why they didn't call the police.

A housewife, knowingly if quite casually, said, "We thought it was a 26
lovers' quarrel." A husband and wife both said, "Frankly, we were afraid."
They seemed aware of the fact that events might have been different. A dis-
traught woman, wiping her hands in her apron, said, "I didn't want my
husband to get involved."

One couple, now willing to talk about that night, said they heard the 27
first screams. The husband looked thoughtfully at the bookstore where the
killer first grabbed Miss Genovese.

"We went to the window to see what was happening," he said, "but the 28
light from our bedroom made it difficult to see the street." The wife, still
apprehensive, added: "I put out the light and we were able to see better."

Asked why they hadn't called the police, she shrugged and replied: "I 29
don't know."

A man peeked out from a slight opening in the doorway to his apart- 30
ment and rattled off an account of the killer's second attack. Why hadn't
he called the police at the time? "I was tired," he said without emotion. "I
went back to bed."

It was 4:25 a.m. when the ambulance arrived to take the body of Miss 31
Genovese. It drove off. "Then," a solemn police detective said, "the people
came out."

Reacting to the Reading

1. Preview the essay. As you read it more carefully, highlight and annotate as needed to help you understand the writer's ideas.
2. Place a check mark beside each passage of dialogue Gansberg uses. Then, add brief marginal annotations next to three of these passages.

Reacting to Words

- *1. Define these words: *staid* (paragraph 6), *shrouded* (9). Can you suggest a synonym for each word that will work in the essay?
2. What is Gansberg's purpose in using terms like *respectable* (paragraph 1), *law-abiding* (1), and *good people* (4)? What is your reaction to these words?

Reacting to Ideas

1. What reasons do the witnesses give for not coming to Kitty Genovese's aid? Why do *you* think no one helped her? Do you think the witnesses should be held accountable for their lack of action?

- *2. Suppose Genovese's attack were to occur today. How do you think her neighbors would react? What might be different about the situation?

Reacting to the Pattern

1. What other patterns could Gansberg have used to develop his essay? For instance, could he have used comparison and contrast or exemplification? Given the alternatives, do you think narration is the best choice? Why or why not?
- *2. Gansberg uses many transitional words and phrases, including references to specific times, to move readers from one event to the next. List as many of these transitions as you can, and note any you believe should be added.

Writing Practice

1. Write a narrative essay about a time when you were a witness who chose not to become involved in events you were observing.
2. Find a brief newspaper article that tells a story about a similar incident in which bystanders witnessed a crime. Expand the article into a longer essay, inventing characters, dialogue, and additional details.
3. Retell Kitty Genovese's story—but this time, have a witness come to her rescue.

C Description

A **descriptive** essay tells what something looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels like. It uses details to give readers a clear, vivid picture of a person, place, or object. In "Graduation," Maya Angelou describes her school and her fellow students. In "The Grandfather," Gary Soto describes a beloved family member.

For more on how to write a descriptive essay, see 14C.

GRADUATION

Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou is a poet, historian, actress, playwright, civil-rights activist, producer, and director. At the request of President Clinton, she wrote and delivered a poem at his 1993 inauguration. "Graduation," from her autobiographical *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), presents a vivid picture of a specific time (the 1930s) and place (the rural Arkansas town of Stamps). Against this backdrop, the young African-American students at Lafayette County Training School prepare for their high school graduation. As you read, notice how Angelou moves from a general description of the school and its inhabitants, to a more specific physical description of the school's exterior, and finally to a description of the students eager for graduation.

The children in Stamps trembled visibly with anticipation. Some adults were excited too, but to be certain the whole young population had come