About the Genre: Personal Narratives

What is it?
Personal narratives tell a story that happened to the author. Personal narratives describe real events. Often they tell about a problem or conflict and how the author solved it. For that reason, a personal narrative often uses problem-solution organization. For example, a narrative may be about how the author lost something expensive and then found it again.

Personal narratives use descriptive language to make readers feel like they are in the story. For example, the author uses adjectives to describe how people or places look. The author also uses supporting detail to help the reader understand the situation. For example, the author describes how the problem began. Supporting details also explain how the author solved the problem and why the author chose the solution. The author may also describe his or her opinion or feelings about events. Personal narratives can be found in books, magazines, blogs, or even newspapers.

What is the purpose?
The purpose of a personal narrative is to entertain and inform. Personal narratives include interesting details to entertain the reader. Personal narratives can also be informative if the reader is in a similar situation.

What is the structure?
The author of a personal narrative can tell the events of the story in any order. However, it is most common to use chronological or time order. This means the author uses signal words such as first, next, and then, and describes the events in the order they happened.

Here are some other types of information that are usually included in a personal narrative:
- background information
- setting of the narrative
- why the events are unusual or interesting
- a problem or difficulty
- resolution of the problem

The conclusion of a personal narrative describes life after the problem or difficulty was solved. It explains how the author’s life has changed because of the solution. The ending may also include a lesson about life that readers can learn from the story.

Comprehension Questions
Mark each statement as T (True) or F (False) according to the information above.

1. A personal narrative can use problem-solution organization to tell a story about something that happened to the author.
2. The author of a personal narrative must use chronological order.
3. The purpose of a personal narrative is to both inform and entertain readers.