Unit 5: Can Dreams Come True?

About the Genre: Observation Report

What is it?
Narrative writing describes a sequence of events or actions. Narrative writing is often used to tell stories. Another use of narrative writing is in observation reports. An observation report is a written description of what took place during a period of time. The writer of an observation report writes down everything he or she sees and hears while observing another person or group. Usually the observation is made in order to understand the behavior of the person or group. Such observations are often made by teachers or psychologists. The observation report should include only what was observed. It should not include opinions or suggest reasons why an action took place.

What is the purpose?
A person or group is observed in order to watch their reaction to a particular situation or item. A teacher or psychologist, for example, might observe children to help understand how they learn a new skill or why they cannot learn to read. College students who plan to become teachers often are required to observe classes in order to understand how successful teachers manage their lessons.

What is the structure?
An observation report includes information about the person or persons being observed, such as age, place of observation, and reason for the observation. What follows is a description of all the actions the observed person made and the words the person said. The length of the report depends on the length of the observation period. A one-hour observation might result in a one-page report, for example.

Comprehension Questions
1. Who usually writes an observation report?
   a. a tourist
   b. a teacher
   c. a newspaper reporter

2. What kind of information should NOT be included in an observation report?
   a. opinions
   b. actions
   c. reasons for the observation

3. Why might it be necessary to observe a child?
   a. to read to the child
   b. to better understand why a child is having trouble learning
   c. to correct bad behavior immediately