



Talking About Talk:
Dialogue in Personal Narratives
Workbook

Grade: 8
Subject: ELA

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Part 1: Direct and Indirect Quotes

1.1 Instructions

In the next box are eight sentences. They all contain quotes. Some quotes are **direct** and some are **indirect (paraphrases)**. For each sentence, circle whether the quote is direct or indirect.

Sentence	Quote
1	I said, "I'm just trying to do my job." DIRECT INDIRECT
2	They told us that he was supposed to be the calmest one. DIRECT INDIRECT
3	I was like, "I know some people." DIRECT INDIRECT
4	I offered to help the father carry some bags out to his car. DIRECT INDIRECT
5	The dad said that me being there made it feel like his son who had passed on was with them. DIRECT INDIRECT
6	She kind of like started telling me what to do at work. DIRECT INDIRECT
7	The birthday boy's dad said, "Thank you for making this the most special birthday party ever." DIRECT INDIRECT
8	We're like, "Let's rent the carriage." DIRECT INDIRECT



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1.2 Instructions

Choose two of the **direct quotes** above and rewrite them as **indirect quotes**.

Number	Rewritten Indirect Quote

1.3 Instructions

Choose two of the **indirect quotes** above and rewrite them as **direct quotes**.

Number	Rewritten Direct Quote

1.4 Instructions

A **dialogue tag** (or **speech tag**) is a short phrase, usually a noun or pronoun and a verb, that identifies the speaker in a conversation and indicates how they are speaking.

Examples:

They screamed, "...!"

"...?" Cheryl asked.

"...", Hyacinth said. "..."

"...", noted Alex.



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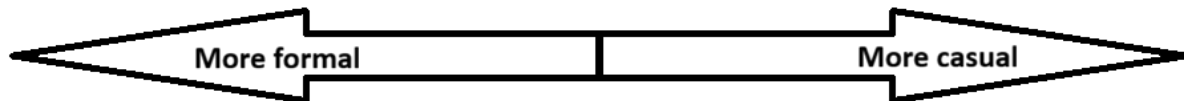
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Dialogue tags can come before, after, or even inside a sentence of dialogue. They provide context, clarity, and pacing for the reader. The choice of dialogue tags also gives an idea of how formal or casual the text is.

Go back to the sentences in 1.1 and underline all of the *dialogue tags*. Write the dialogue tags in the box below, deciding if they are more formal or more casual. If you can think of more dialogue tags, add them too!

Dialogue Tag Spectrum





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Part 2: Direct and Indirect Quotes in Personal Narratives

2.1 Instructions

Read the three stories below. Underline **direct quotes** with a **blue** pen. Underline **indirect quotes** with a **red** pen. Then answer the questions.

Story #1: “Birthday Party”

<https://mi-diaries.org/2025/08/20/13371/>

So, I was at work hosting probably what will be my last birthday party that I host there, unless I come back for a break. And the first birthday party that I hosted that night, it wasn't going that well because the fire alarm got pulled. And there was just some air of sadness to the party. Like, I couldn't figure out what it was, but I was trying to smile and make everything be perfect. But clearly because of the whole fire alarm thing, it wasn't going to be.

And at the end of the party, I offered to help the birthday boy's father carry some bags out to his car 'cause that's just something that I do for all the parties that I host. So, this time the dad said, “Yes,” when normally the parents say no. So I was carrying all the gifts out to the car, and the birthday boy's dad said, “Thank you for making this the most special birthday party ever.” And I said, “I'm just trying to do my job. I'm sorry about the whole fire alarm thing.”

And he says, “I don't really think you get it. My son was a twin, and his brother unexpectedly died. And this is his first birthday by himself.” And the thing that



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made it really special is, apparently, the boy's twin brother had the same name that I do. And the dad said that me being there made it feel like his son who had passed on was with them. And even though I really didn't do anything at all to make this party as special as it was for them, it was just like my existence and my presence and trying to bring light into it without knowing the good that I was doing that made it extra special.

And, I mean, that party did not give me a tip, but I feel like the impact that I was able to have on that family was just as important, if not more important, than any extra five dollars could've gotten me. So, yeah, sometimes you impact people in ways that you can never expect.



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Questions about Story #1: "Birthday Party"

1. Give one example of a direct quote in this story. What shows you that this is a direct quote?

2. This speaker uses both direct quotes and indirect quotes. What do you think is behind their choices? Give examples in your answer.

3. What do you think is the most important line of dialogue in this story? What function does this line have in the story?



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4. Make an argument for why the line you selected above is the most important.

5. What dialogue tag does the most important line use? Is it more formal or more casual?

6. Rewrite the most important line using a different dialogue tag. How does that change the tone of the sentence?

7. What is the purpose of the dialogue in this story as a whole?



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Story #2: “Coffee Shop”

<https://mi-diaries.org/2025/09/24/13493/>

I live right in between two beachy tourist towns and I go to school in one town, and then on the other side of me, that town is where I work. I work in a small coffee shop that serves coffee and waffles. It’s really sweet. I love it so much. And I’ve worked there for three years now, and just this summer, this past summer, would be my third year working there.

So I’m really one of the most experienced workers there, which is crazy because I’m only [a teenager]. I got hired super young. I don’t know if that’s actually legal, but it’s a small town. It’s a small town, and the coffee got made, and I got a lot of good tips because I’m kind of more of a social person, I can chat up customers. Like it’s just fun for me, you know?

So I had, like, a chat with my boss because she needed some new workers and I was like, “I know some people.” So I got two of my very best friends hired, and halfway through the summer I came back — because this summer, I actually did an exchange program where I went and I lived in Guatemala for a month. I went to school there, I like did culture there, really improved my Spanish there. You know, like just all the exchange things, immersion things that you would do.



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And so I came back and my friends had been working there all summer and I was like, “This is so great!” And then once I got back, one of my friends, who is a year older than me but like it never feels like that, she kind of like started telling me what to do at work and like teaching me things. And I’m like, “Girl, you realize I trained you?” And she’s like, “Oh yeah, but like, this has been done wrong.” And while like I really did appreciate a lot of the things she said, because some of the things she taught me, I was like, “Yeah, no, I’ve never known that hack, actually. That’s really helpful,” or like, “This is — yeah, I, I actually was never trained in this. I just kind of had to figure it out, so if you want to show me how to do it, that’s great.”

And we had a lot of grace for that, but it was just really funny to come back and be like, “Oh, you’ve worked here six months —” or not even six months, sorry, I’m thinking of that wrong. “You’ve worked here about a month and a half, and I’ve worked here three years and you’re telling me how to do some things.”



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Questions about Story #2: “Coffee Shop”

1. Give one example of a direct quote in this story. What shows you that this is a direct quote?

2. This speaker uses both direct quotes and indirect quotes. What do you think is behind their choices? Give examples in your answer.

3. What do you think is the most important line of dialogue in this story? What function does this line have in the story?



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Story #3: “Jim the Horse”

<https://mi-diaries.org/2024/08/21/11696/>

So on Mackinac Island, there are these carriages that you can rent. And you can drive your own carriage. It's pretty cool. So we've never done it before 'cause it's kind of expensive, but since Mackinac Island was our big family vacation this year, my parents were like, “Let's go all out. We'll do pretty much anything you guys want.” And we're like, “Let's rent the carriage.” So we go to rent the carriage and we have this horse named Jim. And he seems like a pretty good horse. They told us that he was supposed to be the calmest one, since my dad had never driven a carriage before. And they showed us the route that we were supposed to take.

So we're driving around in the carriage, and it's pretty fun. It's not something that we get to do a whole bunch. And then we get back by the cemetery in the woods where there's a whole bunch of carriage traffic, and it's kind of by that butterfly garden. And Jim the horse decides that he does not want to go left. So there are two paths at this intersection. You can go straight, or you can turn left. And they told us, “Oh, make sure you go left 'cause if you go straight, there's not supposed to be any carriage traffic, outside of the Grand Hotel people, on that trail.”

So we turned. Jim looks like he's going left, and he veers off down the path straight. So my dad goes “Whoa, Jim!” because that's what you're supposed to do to stop it. And Jim stops for a second. He looks back over his — well, it's not really his



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shoulder, but like, what would be his shoulder if horses had shoulders. He looks at us, and then he just keeps going, and my dad goes “Whoa, Jim!” and Jim doesn’t stop. He does a u-turn! And the number one rule for this was no u-turns. And after we did that u-turn, I could see why, because the carriage almost flipped upside down during the u-turn. Which by the way, was not even on the road, it was in the middle of the woods.

And then my brother because he’s eight and he’s scared, jumps off the carriage, and we think he’s gonna get run over by Jim who is like sprinting through the woods. My mom couldn’t get cell reception, so I had to call the people at the carriage company, who had to come out and save us. So they told us, “Hey, if you wanna keep going, you can.” And my dad and brother are like, “No! Why on Earth would we keep going? Jim tried to kill us.”

And I don’t think Jim was trying to kill us. Like, let’s be real. I think Jim is a good, good horse. He just got scared of something, or maybe my dad was a bad, bad driver, I don’t really know. But anyways, we ended up walking all the way back to the stable to get our money back. And when we got there, the guy was like, “What? Jim did this? Jim was such a good horse all season.” And there we go, we see Jim walking back with the guy. And he’s like, he looks like he’s smirking. It was really scary in the moment, but now it’s definitely funny.



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Questions about Story #3: “Jim the Horse”

1. Give one example of a direct quote in this story. What shows you that this is a direct quote?

2. This speaker uses both direct quotes and indirect quotes. What do you think is behind their choices? Give examples in your answer.

3. What do you think is the most important line of dialogue in this story? What function does this line have in the story?



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Part 3: Wrap-Up: Dialogue from My Life

3.1 Instructions

Answer the following questions about your own life.

Personal Direct Quotes

1. When you tell a story that involves talking, do you usually use more direct quotes or more indirect quotes? Why?
2. Give three examples of important lines of dialogue in stories from your life. These could be something that another person said to you or something that you said. Don't tell the whole story, just share one line of dialogue.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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4.2 Instructions

Compare the two versions of the story you wrote and answer the following questions.

Direct and Indirect Quotes Comparison

1. How do you think the tone of the same story changes when written with more direct quotes vs more indirect quotes?

2. Which version of the story do you prefer? Why?

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