

Autobiographical Narrative

Mary Lou
by Lynne Zielinski

<p>It was my first day as a newcomer to Miss Hargrove's seventh grade. Past "newcomer" experiences had been difficult, so I was very anxious to fit in. After being introduced to the class, I bravely put on a smile and took my seat, expecting to be <u>shunned</u>.</p>	<p>1. What is the purpose of this paragraph?</p> <p>2. How is the author feeling as she starts attending this new school?</p> <p>3. What do you think <i>shunned</i> means?</p>
<p>Lunchtime was a pleasant surprise when the girls all crowded around my table. Their chatter was friendly, so I began to relax. My new classmates filled me in on the school, the teachers, and the other kids. It wasn't long before the class nerd was pointed out to me: Mary Lou English. Actually, she called herself Mary Louise. A prim, prissy young girl with a stern <u>visage</u> and old-fashioned clothes, she wasn't ugly – not even funny looking. I thought she was quite pretty, but I had sense enough not to say so. Dark-eyed and olive-skinned, she had long, silky black hair, but – she had pipe curls! Practical shoes, long wool skirt, and a starched, frilly blouse completed the image of a complete dork. The girls' whispers and giggles got louder and louder. Mary Lou made eye contact with no one as she strode past our table, chin held high with iron determination. She ate alone.</p>	<p>4. What is the setting of this scene?</p> <p>5. Underline the descriptive details used to describe Mary Lou.</p> <p>6. What do you think <i>visage</i> means?</p>
<p>After school, the girls invited me to join them in front of the school. I was thrilled to be a member of the club, however tentative. We waited. For what, I didn't yet know. Oh, how I wish I had gone home, but I had a lesson to learn.</p>	<p>7. How is the narrator feeling? Why is she feeling that way?</p> <p>8. Underline the sentence that foreshadows that something bad is going to happen.</p>

<p>Arms wrapped around her backpack, Mary Lou came down the school steps. The taunting began – rude, biting comments and jeering from the girls. I paused, and then I joined right in. My momentum began to pick up as I approached her. Nasty, mean remarks fell unabated from my lips. No one could tell I'd never done this before. The other girls stepped back and became my cheerleaders. Emboldened, I yanked the strap of her backpack and then pushed her. The strap broke, Mary Lou fell, and I backed off. Everyone was laughing and patting me. I fit in. I was a leader.</p>	<p>9. What do you predict will be Mary Lou's response to the narrator's rude comments?</p> <p>10. Underline the sentences that describe what how the author is feeling during this event.</p>
<p>I was not proud. Something inside me hurt. If you've ever picked a wing off a butterfly, you know how I felt. Mary Lou got up, gathered her books and – without a tear shed or retort given – off she went. She held her head high as a small trickle of blood ran down from her bruised knee. I watched her limp away down the street.</p>	<p>11. How is the author feeling at this point in the incident?</p> <p>12. Circle the details that describe Mary Lou.</p>
<p>I turned to leave with my laughing friends and noticed a man standing beside his car. His olive skin, dark hair and handsome features told me this was her father. Respectful of Mary Lou's proud spirit, he remained still and watched the lonely girl walk toward him. Only his eyes – shining with both grief and pride – followed. As I passed, he looked at me in silence with burning tears that spoke to my shame and scalded my heart. He didn't speak a word.</p>	<p>13. How does the author feel when she sees Mary Lou's father?</p>
<p>No scolding from a teacher or preaching from a parent could linger as much as that hurt in my heart from the day a father's eyes taught me kindness and strength and dignity. I never again joined the cruel herds. I never again hurt someone for my own gain.</p>	<p>14. What is the purpose of the resolution of a story?</p> <p>15. Why is this event significant to the author?</p>