

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course Name/Code

Date

### **5-Paragraph Narrative Essay Example: "The Road Test"**

*[The title is direct and practical, which fits the structure of a five-paragraph narrative. In this format, clarity and progression matter more than symbolism, though meaning still emerges through the experience itself.]*

#### **Introduction**

The week before my driving test, I drove the same practice route every evening, past the school, around the park, back through the residential streets where the stop signs were spaced evenly enough that I could run through the checklist in my head. I felt ready. My father had said I was ready. The car and I had reached an understanding. None of this turned out to be relevant.

*[This introduction establishes setting, preparation, and expectation. In a 5-paragraph narrative essay, the introduction should clearly set up the situation and hint that something will go wrong or differ from expectations.]*

#### **Body Paragraph 1 (Before)**

I arrived at the testing center twenty minutes early, which gave me time to watch three other people take the test before me. Two passed. One came back to the parking lot with the evaluator wearing the particular expression that means you have failed and we are both pretending this is not a significant moment. I watched him parallel park perfectly after the fact, alone in the lot, as if demonstrating to no one that he knew how. I understood the impulse.

*[This paragraph builds anticipation and shows observation. In narrative essays, the "before" section often focuses on waiting, noticing details, and building tension before the main event begins.]*

#### **Body Paragraph 2 (During)**

My evaluator was a woman in her fifties who wrote on a clipboard without looking up when she got in the car. She told me to proceed to the main road when ready. I proceeded. The first ten minutes were fine; I was careful, I was checking mirrors, I was narrating stops and turns inside my head like a pilot running pre-flight checks. Then we turned onto a street I didn't recognize. It was not on my practice route. There was a cyclist, a parked delivery truck, and a yield sign within a hundred meters of each other, and I handled all of them at approximately seventy percent of the confidence I'd had thirty seconds earlier. I passed the test, but not the way I had practiced passing it, smoothly and predictably. I passed it by adjusting to a situation I wasn't prepared for.

*[This is the main conflict of the essay. The “during” paragraph should focus on the challenge, uncertainty, and turning point. Notice how the writer contrasts preparation with real-time adaptation.]*

### **Body Paragraph 3 (After)**

The evaluator handed me the results sheet without ceremony. Passing marks in every category except one: left mirror check, noted as inconsistent. She got out of the car. I sat in the parking lot for a moment before going to find my father, processing the distance between how I'd expected to feel and how I actually felt. Not elated. Something more complicated: relieved, and also aware that the test had found the one thing I hadn't practiced.

*[This paragraph focuses on immediate reflection. In the “after” section, narrative essays often show emotional processing rather than action, highlighting how the experience feels rather than what happened next.]*

### **Conclusion**

I've thought since then about the cyclist and the delivery truck and the yield sign appearing in a sequence nobody told me to prepare for. The test was measuring something different from what the practice was measuring, not competence in known conditions, but composure in unknown ones. That's probably true of most tests when you look at them honestly. Preparation matters. But at some point, the situation is always going to be a street you haven't seen before.

*[The conclusion generalizes the experience into a broader insight. Strong narrative conclusions often move from a specific event to a universal idea, showing what the writer learned about life, skill, or uncertainty.]*

