

Narrative Essay: Your Literacy History, Your Ways of Writing, or Your Observations of a Master Writing Teacher

For your first essay, due Friday, February 1, please either narrate your literacy history or describe your writing processes.

Literacy Narrative

If you choose to write the narrative essay, you will **reflect on how you learned to read and write, and on how those events—and the people central to those events—have shaped you as a reader and writer.** You may focus on a single substantial chapter in your literacy history, or on a series of related events that have proven key in forming your attitudes about reading and writing.

Prewriting Questions: Begin with your earliest memories of learning to read and write, describing the various stages that led to mastery:

1. What **people** taught you to read and write—teachers, parents, siblings, friends, yourself?
2. What **processes** did they use to assist your acquisition of literacy?
3. How did those people and processes shape your attitude toward reading and writing and your preferences in reading and writing (poetry, fiction, nonfiction)? Be sure to consider negative influences as well as positive influences.
4. What conclusions can you draw about strategies that foster literacy for most learners? Can you link your conclusions with one or more of the theorists we have read so far?
5. How has your personal literacy history shaped your professional goals?

Reflective Narrative on Writing Processes

If you choose to write this reflective essay, you will **describe in detail your processes as an academic writer.** To clarify your processes—what works for you and what does not work for you—please focus on one of your recent works, explaining how each strength and weakness in the paper relates to your prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing processes. You should attach this illustrative essay to your reflective essay, but **do not hesitate to quote from your model paper** within your reflective essay to support a point about a strength or weakness of that model paper.

Prewriting Questions:

1. What controlling question did you set out to answer? What interpretive problem did you hope to solve? Did you generate your own question and problem, or did a professor provide each?
2. Did you succeed in finding a topic about which you actually care? To what extent does caring (or not caring) affect your processes? Can you relate your views on topic-selection to one or more of the theorists we have read so far?

3. What prewriting strategies did you employ to discover a controlling question and/or to begin answering that question? Can you trace particular strategies to particular strengths in your paper?
4. What revision strategies did you employ? Did peer-response work figure in the process? Did you actually write a revision strategy after writing and assessing your rough draft?
5. As you revise, do you separate “higher-order” concerns like content, organization, and clarity of thesis from concerns with correctness? Do you distinguish between editing for stylistic effectiveness from editing for correctness?

Narrative on a Master Writing Teacher in Action

If you choose this topic, you must first choose a faculty member who teaches a writing course this semester and then ask that teacher for permission to observe her/him on day of your mutual choosing. Please be sure to give a copy of this assignment sheet to the teacher so that she/he will understand your intent: **to tell the story of her/his teaching on that day.**

Prewriting Questions:

1. **How did the teacher begin the class?** Did she engage students in conversation before the session? Did she state, write on the board, or show on the projector the objectives for the day? Did she relate the day’s work to previous work or work to come?
2. **What activities filled the session?** How did the teacher engage students in discussion or activities? Did the students seem prepared? Did they participate freely? Reluctantly? What strategies did the teacher use to keep students engaged? Did the strategies seem effective? Why or why not?
3. **How did the teacher end the session?** Did she make a clear assignment and relate its purpose to work just completed?
4. **What theorists that we have read so far** seem to inform the teacher’s work? Did the teacher’s teaching uphold or undercut those theories? Your answer to these questions will probably be your “thesis,” the claim you want to make about this teaching story. Feel free to refer to the theorists and quote their ideas wherever seems appropriate in your paper.

Specifications

- **Rough draft** due Friday, **January 25**. Bring two copies to class, one to read aloud, the other to share with your peer, who will read silently as you read your draft aloud.
- **Revision** due Monday, **January 28**. Attach the rough draft and your peer’s written comments to your second draft. I will comment on the second draft and return it to you on Wednesday, January 30.
- **Final draft due Friday, February 1**.
- **Length:** 5-8 double-spaced pages, 12-point type