

LITERACY NARRATIVE

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Outcomes

Students should:

- Focus on a purpose
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- Understand the relationship among language, knowledge, and power
- Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- Learn to use digital storytelling software; work with multiple modes and media to communicate intended meaning/narrative

Rationale

We will begin this academic journey by exploring the ways in which your attitudes about literacy and learning have developed over time. Many of your most important literacy experiences do not necessarily reflect the conscious decisions you made as a student, but they will inevitably influence your perspective about reading and writing as an educator. Whether these memories are helpful or harmful depends on the sense that you make out of your past experiences from your current, more mature perspective as an adult. Thinking critically about how your conception of literacy developed will help you to decide how you choose to foster literacy in yourself and others.

The Topic

Your assignment is to construct a digital essay about a **significant literacy event that helped to define you as a reader, writer, learner, or lover of language**. This experience can be from any time during your life, from your early childhood scribbling to your most recent encounter with technology. The experience can even be an event that happened to a family member or friend that has influenced your beliefs about literacy. Your actual experience is only the starting point. Your **critical reflections** about this small narrative experience will make your essay into a meaningful memoir. You will consider how this experience is significant to you because it taught you something about literacy or because it connects to one of your identities. It depends on how you tell the story.

Example topics others have used:

- Watching a grandfather treasure his books.
- Using basketball program statistics to impress elementary classmates.
- Writing notes in middle school to make friends with an outsider.
- Making greeting cards to cheer a father after chemotherapy treatments.
- Relating to mistreated Native American characters in cowboy novels as a gay adolescent.
- Watching television and reading about medical conditions to better understand your father's M.S. diagnosis.

Remember your powerful language experiences:

- Using language to speak up for yourself or others.
- Writing a piece that made you proud.
- Discovering literature or lyrics that intersected with your life.
- Reading an important letter or note.
- Seeking out information and learning about something significant.
- Sharing memories with family or friends for comfort or joy.
- Being labeled by others with a stereotype.

Suggestions:

1. Aim for a length of **3-5 minutes**.
2. Limit yourself to a **specific incident** that has influenced how you feel about reading, writing, or learning
3. **Dramatize** the event by including what people (yourself included) said, did, and thought
4. Include **sensory details** that will help the reader to see, hear, smell, touch, and taste what happened.
5. Explain the **life context** that made this one event significant to you as a person who is from a particular race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, locale, family, or religion.
6. Tell how your reactions and **critical reflections** about this experience have changed over time.
7. Use language in an interesting way. Include some well-written **descriptions** and **clever word choices** to help you make your point about the experience.
8. **Enhance** the facts if necessary, by using exaggeration or by constructing a composite event that links several smaller experiences combined together.
9. Add **metaphorical language/elements** to describe an important object, person, or action in your essay.
10. Organize your composition clearly so that it **flows** smoothly from one idea to the next.
11. Do not write something so private that you would be embarrassed if someone else read it.

The Process

You will experience the full writing process as you write this essay. From some extensive prewriting, script, and storyboards, you will develop a 3-5 minute digital story that brings together narration, image, print text, motion, and color in a richly layered multimodal composition. The goal here is to expand the definition of what counts as valued communication while also challenging students to work with multiple modes and media to communicate intended meaning. We will work with staff members in the *New Media Writing Studio* throughout this process.

