**Literacy Narrative Essay Assignment**

Due Dates:

Learning Objectives:

Students will practice:

* Using narrative structure
* Writing rich descriptions
* Organizing a paper around a central theme rather than a traditional thesis statement
* Supporting claims with evidence, such as logic, reason, direct quotes, personal observation, etc.

The Assignment:

Literacy narratives are stories about an author’s experiences with reading, writing, or speaking. Often, these narratives focus on specific complications in the author’s experience and explore how the author overcomes (or attempts to overcome) those complications.

For this assignment, you will write your own literacy narrative. This narrative will describe a personal experience (with reading, writing, or speaking) that taught you something about yourself and/or the world.

Choosing a Topic:

Narratives have different structures and conventions than the essays you have written in this class so far. Narratives give you room to be more creative; they provide opportunities to try new methods for organizing content, presenting ideas, introducing characters and dialogue, and so on. However, all good narratives share some characteristics. Good narratives are clear and focused. Good narratives are interesting. Good narratives are detailed and richly descriptive. Most importantly, good narratives are significant; they teach the reader something about the author, the world, or themselves as a deeper meaning behind the story is revealed. Therefore, it is important to choose a topic that is meaningful to you. If the topic is meaningful to you, it will be easier to explain why the topic might be meaningful to the audience.

Generally, short literacy narratives focus on one particular event or one series of events that take place over a short period of time. Avoid choosing a topic that will require explaining many events, characters, settings, or that occurs over a substantial period of time. You only have four pages, and the detailed description that a narrative requires will make it difficult to cover a topic with too many characteristics.

Writing the Essay

Most narratives do not have traditional thesis statements: a single sentence that summarizes the overall purpose of the text. Instead, narratives focus on storytelling and the purpose is typically unveiled as the story progresses. This means that a sentence or sentences that contain the “big picture” message – what resembles a traditional thesis statement in a narrative – can appear towards the end of the story.

One common strategy for writing a narrative is to reverse-engineer the story. Start with the message you want your audience to get out of the story, then think of what the audience needs to know to arrive at that message. Ask yourself questions like: Which characters are integral to the story? Which events must the audience understand before they reach the end? Which settings are most important in the story? And so on.

Alternately, you can try the tried-and-true tactic of splitting your story into a beginning, middle, and end. Creating a timeline of events, settings, and characters is useful for both strategies.

Requirements:

* Your paper must be 4 full pages, minimum
* Use standard MLA essay format:
  + typed
  + double spaced
  + 12 point font
  + 1” Margins
  + Times New Roman
  + Works Cited and in-text citations (if applicable)
* You will submit your final draft in Canvas as either a .doc or .docx file

Things to Consider:

* “Writing Literacy Narratives” from *The Norton Field Guide to Writing* includes instructions for organizing and writing literacy narratives. It is posted on our Canvas site.
* Chapter 8 in our textbook is about writing autobiographies. This chapter provides useful strategies for brainstorming, drafting, and revising.
* We will look over some examples of literacy narratives in preparation for your narratives. One example we will watch and discuss is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s “The Danger of a Single Story.”
* You will also choose a literacy narrative that interests you from the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives and write a brief reflection.
* If possible, it may useful to interview characters who appear in the story. You can ask how they remember events or to describe events from their perspective, which might add details that you would otherwise miss. Additionally, if you are using dialogue in your story, interviewing can help you capture the person’s speech, which will help you write convincing dialogue.
* If you choose to interview for your narrative, you will need to cite the interview/s. The citation process for personal interviews is simple compared to citation for other sources. I will teach you how to cite interviews in a video.
* You can use first person (I/me) in this paper. As always, avoid second person (you).

*From DH*