

PERSONAL NARRATIVE ESSAY

10% of Final Grade

English 1301

Foster

Rough Draft Due: Mon 9/16 (in person classes) // Tues 9/17 (online classes)

Final Draft Due: Fri, 9/20 by 11:59 pm, via Turnitin.com

Length Requirement

950 words, minimum

Formatting Requirements

- 11 or 12 point Times New Roman or Cambria font, double spaced, 1" margins.
- Your name and section number (CRN) in header
- Page number in footer

What To Do

Using *narration*, write a *true* story (or collection of short, related anecdotes) about yourself, using one of the following sub-topics as a way to reveal something about the “you” character you create in your narrative:

- Family situations
- Ethnicity or culture
- School or community events to which you have had a strong reaction
- Someone who influenced you
- A significant experience
- An intellectual interest and how it developed
- A life goal and how it developed
- A treasured object or place

Make sure your story/stories contain the following:

- CONFLICT (a problem, challenge, or obstacle you had to solve, overcome, or come to accept)
- DESCRIPTION/IMAGERY in key scenes where you want to maximize emotional impact. These are all tools you can use to create description/imagery:
 - five-senses information
 - figurative language [similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole]
 - adjectives and adverbs
 - interesting nouns and verbs [“machete” instead of “knife,” “dashed” instead of “went”]
 - connotative language [“leered” instead of “smiled,” or, for a positive connotation, “beamed”]
- CHARACTERIZATION (description, dialogue, and narrating of a person’s actions that together help us understand important characters’ personalities, values, unique characteristics, etc.)

- DIALOGUE (tell us the actual words, as best you remember them, not just the general content – use dialogue in places where you want the reader to focus attention, just as you use DESCRIPTION)
- ATTENTION TO DICTION
 - Control of tone and voice achieved through being consistent in your diction (do you narrate in a formal, elevated voice? an informal, down-to-earth voice?)
- ATTENTION TO SYNTAX
 - Variation in sentence length and construction (some short sentences and some long ones, some simple sentences and some complex ones)
- EPIPHANY (a realization or understanding about yourself, your life, or the meaning of an event – put this at or near the very end of your story)

How to Organize Your Essay

- Don't use an intro paragraph or thesis. Start by telling your story. You can start at the beginning, or you can start in a dramatic scene and use flashbacks to give exposition where needed.
 - You can put events in linear order (the order in which they happened), or jump back and forth between different times and places and use the shared themes or content of the stories to unite the different parts.
- Break paragraphs where you think you detect shifts in your narrative that call for paragraph breaks. Good places to break a paragraph:
 - The story has changed to a new location
 - Your paragraph has gotten really long
 - A new person enters the room, or someone leaves the room
 - Something new happens that changes the direction of the story
 - A new person is talking
 - (Example of paragraphing for dialogue)

The orange kitten looked up at them with mute appeal wound herself around Lee's ankles. "Let's take her home," he said, turning to Bill.

Bill looked down at the cat. "Don't we already have enough cats?" he asked.

Lee replied, "You can't have too many cats."

"Thinking like that is how people wind up on that TV show *Hoarders*," Bill shot back.

But Lee wasn't listening. He'd already picked up the kitten and begun walking toward their car.
- The epiphany should be at the end. You will not have a "conclusion" paragraph per se, but you should give some thought as to what you want your reader to take away in the final paragraph of your essay. What did you learn about yourself, other people, the true nature of things or about the world or life? How did you change, or how did life change, because of your experience(s)?