

English 101, University of Kansas
Instructor: David McCalmon
WRITING PROJECT 4: Revision

For your fourth writing project, you will transform your first writing project either into a science-fiction short story or a personal narrative.

GOALS:

1. To demonstrate your ability to utilize rhetorical appeals, even inside a new genre.
2. To demonstrate your ability to write a competent analytical paragraph with thorough analysis.
3. To experiment with “grammanalysis,” the practice of purposely avoiding empty words to generate analytical thinking, inventive sentence structures, and vivid description.

GENRE:

1. Personal narrative.
2. Science-fiction space-alien short story.
3. Propose a different genre. I must pre-approve it before you begin work.

SAMPLE TEXTS (we will read these together in class):

1. “The Chase” by Annie Dillard (personal narrative)
2. “The Sentry” by Fredric Brown (sci-fi short story)
3. “The Author of the Acacia Seeds” by Ursula K. Le Guin (sci-fi short story)
4. “Wanderers and Travelers” by Arkady Strugatsky and Boris Strugatsky (sci-fi short story)

ASSIGNMENT: PART ONE

OPTION #1: PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Personal narratives find their use as a genre in conveying a moral lesson, a feeling of importance, or a fascinating experience to a reader. You might have to write one to gain admission to a school, job, or program. It's a useful genre to master because it's an entertaining genre to read. If you write a personal narrative well, your readers will come away with a better idea of who you are as a person, something you value in life, and hopefully, an idea about how they can live life better, too. Your personal narrative should "strike a chord" and leave something unresolved, and yet by doing so, offer a sense of poignancy. Unlike in an argumentative essay, you should refrain from detailing the moral lesson explicitly: whereas the writer of an argumentative essay renders his thesis explicit, the writer often only implies the main idea of a personal narrative.

OPTION #2: SCIENCE-FICTION SKETCH

Turn your first assignment into a science-fiction story about a space alien visiting Earth to learn about the native inhabitants. Naturally, once here, you (the alien) will want to make friends so that you can better understand your environment. What do you find useful about Earth? What do Earthlings have just plain backward? What friends do you as an alien attempt to make? Remember, as an alien, you may have different values than you do as a human -- maybe you avoid making friends with humans because you find insects or buildings or birds or trees more interesting. Maybe, as in *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, you mistake cars for the dominant lifeform of the planet -- or some twist to a similar effect.

ASSIGNMENT PART TWO -- Analytical Paragraph

No matter which option you choose, you'll follow your narrative or story with an analysis. Write ONE analytical paragraph that argues that you used each rhetorical appeal -- logos, pathos, and ethos -- well. Unlike the analytical paragraphs we have thus far written in class, this one will employ THREE pieces of evidence with THREE corresponding pieces of analysis. Make sure that your claim addresses the rhetorical appeals, makes a value judgment about them, names the audience of your personal short story or sci-fi sketch, and defines/divines the purpose of the piece. If you've written a sci-fi story, talk about the space alien's audience rather your meta audience -- the reader.

ASSIGNMENT PART THREE -- Reflection

- How did writing inside the point of view of your personal narrative's rhetorical situation or of the space alien's change your perspective?
- Did you find revising to avoid using forms of 'be', 'not', demonstrative pronouns, or vague words worth it? Will you continue to avoid these words now that you have written a paper without them; do you feel it improved your writing?
- Of what part of your narrative or story do you feel you most proud?
- What did you find most difficult?

REQUIREMENTS

- Your narrative or story should reach 750-1000 words.
- Your analytical paragraph will run as long as it needs to -- make sure you have sufficient analysis, but also, make sure that you have no empty analysis -- analysis that says little or nothing. It must have THREE pieces of evidence and THREE corresponding pieces of analysis -- unlike the usual two of each. This way, you can analyze each of the three rhetorical appeals as they appear in your narrative or story.
- Proofread your work well before turning it in, several times.
- No forms of 'be', vague words, demonstrative pronouns, or uses of 'not'.

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

1. You'll need to define/divine the audience and purpose of your piece yourself. Do so before you start! Feel free to ask me if you hit the mark. For the sci-fi story, we're talking about the audience of your fictional alien character (from whose first-person perspective you'll write) rather than your reader's. For the personal narrative, figure out your ideal reader. If you choose to write as a space alien, think about what your species looks like, how their bodies function, how their brains think -- these considerations will dramatically affect the way your alien speaks and addresses his audience! If you write a personal narrative, consider your audience's value system accordingly.
2. Your audience determines your purpose. Choose your audience carefully. Articulate your purpose to yourself (and to me, if you like) before you begin.

BRAINSTORMING

- Sci-Fi Story
 - If writing a sci-fi story, invent a name for your character. Write a brainstorming page detailing how your character looks, their value system, their goals on this planet, their social proclivities, and any other information you find relevant. Identify the audience. Articulate the rhetorical situation. Maybe make a drawing of your character. Make a list of emotions the character feels.
- Personal Narrative
 - If writing a personal narrative, identify your own value system. Describe your appearance and the environment you'll describe. Articulate your goals. Identify your audience. Articulate the rhetorical situation. Make a list of emotions you might feel in the narrative.

GRADING CRITERIA

1. Write a fun, engaging, well-paced personal narrative or science-fiction short story that reimagines your first writing project as a new genre.
2. Demonstrate your ability to employ rhetorical strategies.
3. Write a correctly structured analytical paragraph that features a topic sentence with a comprehensive claim, THREE pieces of evidence, THREE pieces of analysis that explain and examine how the evidence proves the claim, and a conclusion statement that restates the claim of the topic sentence. Generate thoughtful and insightful analysis about your personal narrative or short story and the rhetorical choices you made in it.
4. Write a reflection about your process.
5. Eliminating demonstrative pronouns, forms of 'be' and vague words can dramatically improve your writing. Furthermore, writing positively or using forms of negation other than 'not' can give you better anchor points from which to describe your ideas.

Consequently, for this assignment, I will deduct **two points** for each form of 'be', each vague word, each use of 'not,' and each demonstrative pronoun. You can find yourself with a grade below ZERO really fast if you ignore this part of the grading criteria.

I will deduct **one point** for every unskillful replacement. For instance, if you generate an awkward sentence due to an obvious elimination of 'be', you'll lose a point. Example of a poor revision: "We are free to do what we want" finds no equal in the revision of "We become free to do what we want". Instead, you might write, "Having freedom, I can do what I want". In most cases, you'll need to rewrite and restructure a sentence to eliminate these words rather than simply insert a synonym.

Pro tip: While you might find **CTRL+F** helpful, if the word has a punctuation mark attached to it, you might miss it unless you search for the word with the punctuation mark. Use in combination with your active proofreading and with peer review.

Forms of 'be'

am
is, are
was, were
be, being, been

Demonstrative pronouns

this, that, these, those

Not

'Not'

Vague words

something, thing, stuff

get, getting
got, gotten

etc., etcetera