

Language & Me: A Literacy Narrative

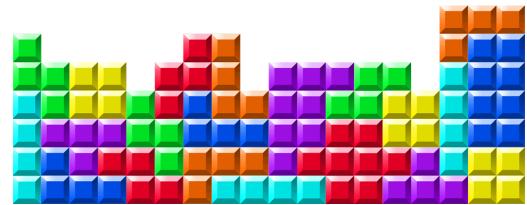
literacy (n)

1. the ability to read and write
2. competence or skillful knowledge in a specified area

What am I doing?

Write a literacy narrative in which you **share a personal story** about your growth toward or acquisition of literacy—your becoming fluent or competent in a particular thing—and **reflect on why this literacy matters to you**.

Most immediately, we think of literacy in relation to reading, writing, and communication, so I invite you to reflect on and possibly write about a formative experience you've had with language. However, literacy may also refer to your competence or fluency in a particular field, skill, or system. For example, we can speak of a soloing guitarist as “musically literate,” an accomplished chef as “culinarily literate,” a good policy-maker as “politically literate,” and so on.



Where should I start?

Below, I offer some prompts to get your minds and pens and fingers going. Feel free, though, to carve your own path, so long as it lives up to the genre of a literacy narrative and meets the expectations outlined in the next section. **Please do not answer all the prompts in your narrative.** That would be a list, not a narrative.

1. **Write about a time when you finally saw for yourself the power of (your) language.** This experience may have been in a classroom, while reading a particular text, or working on a particular assignment. However, it could just as easily have occurred beyond the classroom. What was the event? What made it revelatory for you? **Why does all this matter?**
2. **Describe a moment/experience when you finally learned how to do a particular skill.** What was the skill and when was the experience? Can you recover any reason(s) as to why it was this particular moment that it all clicked? **Why does all this matter?**
3. **Who has been your greatest literacy sponsor (i.e., someone who has guided you toward becoming literate)?** What did they do to help you acquire that literacy? What have you learned about yourself through their guidance? **Why does all this matter?**
4. The road to literacy often includes obstacles and adversity. **Describe a moment/experience when you overcame an obstacle to literacy:** a person, place, or situation that seemed at odds with your becoming literate. How did this affect your literacy? How did this affect you? **Why does all this matter?**

Who's my audience?

Charlesworth—someone who is terribly curious about your past experiences with various literacies and who cares deeply about your future literacies. A trusted peer in class may also read your work for peer review.

Any tips?

- Use the first-person “I”: how will you narrate if you don’t?
- Choose **ONE type of literacy** to write about: linguistic, athletic, musical, culinary, etc.
- **Show me, don’t tell me.** Draw on specific, concrete experiences to help tell your story and engage your audience. Use narration, detailed descriptions, dialogue, and reflection.
- Please **proofread** and **proofread again**.
- See my **“No Bull. Be Real” policy** below.

Write at least 750 but no more than 1000 words. Use a 12pt font that is easy on the eyes (Times New Roman, Garamond, Helvetica, etc.), and double-space your work.

Charlesworth's "No Bull. Be Real" Policy

Title is all in good fun, but the sentiment is serious. I want you never to write something that doesn't authentically capture your ideas, your feelings, your wonderings, etc. I want you never to "mail it in," to "give the teacher what you think he wants to hear," or to "BS your way through an assignment." No bull. Be real.